

Research report

Jobcentre Plus customer survey 2011

by Nicholas Howat and Emily Pickering

Department for Work and Pensions

Research Report No 775

Jobcentre Plus Customer Survey 2011

Nicholas Howat and Emily Pickering

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Glossary and abbreviations

Contact channels	Ways in which customers can contact Jobcentre Plus, e.g. by telephone, in writing, in person or online.
Contact type	The reason for making contact with Jobcentre Plus, e.g. making a new claim, checking eligibility or having a review meeting. The contact type the survey focused on was based on a hierarchy with those contact types involving more interaction with the service prioritised.
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions.
Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)	A benefit for people who cannot work because of an illness or disability. ESA was introduced in October 2008 to replace Incapacity Benefit (IB) and Income Support (IS) paid on the grounds of incapacity.
Fortnightly Jobsearch Review (FJR)	All Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants are required to attend regular jobsearch reviews (usually every fortnight) in order to keep getting their benefit. The reviews will cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• what the claimant has been doing to look for work and any changes they might need to make to improve their chances of success;• any additional help needed.
Incapacity Benefit (IB)	A benefit paid to people under State Pension age who cannot work because of an illness or disability. IB was replaced by ESA in January 2011, and since then no new claims for IB have been accepted.
Income Support (IS)	IS is a benefit paid to people on a low income who are working less than 16 hours a week. It can also be paid to lone parents, people on parental leave or carers. ESA replaced IS paid on the grounds of incapacity for new claimants from October 2008.
JSA	Jobseeker's Allowance.
New Jobseeker Interview (NJI)	All new JSA claimants will have an NJI with an adviser to discuss and agree some: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• realistic and achievable job goals;• jobsearch activities that will offer the best chance of finding work. <p>As part of this interview, the adviser will provide information, advice and guidance on appropriate vacancy and training sources, along with any practical advice required specific to claimants needs, e.g. for lone parents or claimants with a disability.</p>

Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS)	An executive agency of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) which brings together two former separate executive agencies, The Pension Service and the Disability and Carers Service, which is responsible for providing financial support for customers claiming State Pension and Pension Credit, and disability-related benefits.
SOC	Standard Occupational Classification.
Work Focused Interview (WFI)	ESA claimants who have been placed in the Work-Related Activity Group after assessment (i.e. those whose disability does not severely limit their ability to work) are required to attend regular WFIs with an adviser. The interviews will cover: <ul data-bbox="622 716 1228 873" style="list-style-type: none">• job goals, skills, strengths and abilities;• steps to take in order to find suitable work;• any other problems or work-related issues.

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.

Where net figures are described in the body of the report these have been taken directly from the raw data and therefore, may not always equal the sum of the figures in the charts due to rounding. Similarly, figures may not always total 100 per cent due to rounding.

Summary

Background and objectives

These findings are based on the 2011 Jobcentre Plus Customer Survey, which involved 2,803 telephone interviews with contacting Jobcentre Plus customers conducted between January and March 2011. The main objective of the customer survey is to monitor satisfaction with the service and identify any particular elements of it which lead to higher or lower satisfaction. The survey was designed to focus on tracking one particular contact type (e.g. new claim, review meeting etc.) the customer has had with Jobcentre Plus in the last six months from start to finish¹. Further details on the background and objectives of the research can be found in **Chapter 1**.

This report presents findings from a subset of measures from the questionnaire and focuses in particular on key strategic findings in relation to drivers of overall satisfaction and the impact of particular elements of service delivery on contact volumes.

Overall performance

The key performance measure in the survey was overall customer satisfaction with the service. Overall respondent feedback is positive with **88 per cent of respondents saying they were satisfied with the service (Section 2.1)**. Thirty-four per cent were very satisfied and ten per cent said they were dissatisfied.

Respondents claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) were the least satisfied (Section 2.3.1) with 82 per cent saying they were satisfied. This group was also the most likely to say that the service was worse than expected and that the service needed improvement.

The overall satisfaction measure also reveals some key differences in satisfaction depending on the type of contact customers were focusing on in the survey. **This highlights issues with two contact types in particular: enquiring about eligibility for a benefit and reporting problems with an existing benefit (Section 2.2)**. Almost one-third (30 per cent) of customers who had enquired about eligibility were dissatisfied with the service compared with only one in ten (ten per cent) across the survey as a whole. The higher dissatisfaction amongst respondents who have reported a problem with their benefit is perhaps understandable and given that three-quarters (76 per cent) of this group still say they are satisfied with the service overall, this could be seen as a positive reflection of Jobcentre Plus' ability to handle problems. On the other hand dissatisfaction amongst customers checking eligibility is less understandable as this should be a relatively straightforward contact.

Overall performance also varied by customer characteristics. **In particular, women and younger respondents were more satisfied overall and professional respondents and those with disabilities were less satisfied overall (Section 2.3)**.

¹ The contact type the survey focused on was based on a hierarchy, with those involving more interaction with Jobcentre Plus prioritised over those which typically involved routine contact. For example, a claimant who had started a new claim within the last six months, but had also had other more routine types of contact with Jobcentre Plus such as Fortnightly Jobsearch Reviews (FJR) would be asked to focus on their experience of making a new claim for the purposes of the survey. For further details see Section 1.3.

Customers were given the chance to make suggestions of how Jobcentre Plus could be improved and to give feedback on the best things about the service at the end of the questionnaire, in two unprompted open ended questions. Interestingly the findings were mixed, **with staff being the most common aspect of the service mentioned by respondents both as an area for potential improvement and as the best thing about the service (Section 2.4)**. This shows that customers' experience with staff can differ greatly, but also that the service received from staff is an important and memorable area of the service experience as a whole.

The findings for overall performance are covered in more detail in **Chapter 2**.

The drivers of satisfaction

The key drivers of both customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction with Jobcentre Plus were derived using logistic regression. Analysing these drivers through the framework of the Kano model allows us to identify which are 'performance' factors which drive both satisfaction and dissatisfaction, 'hygiene' factors which can lead to dissatisfaction if missing but which will not contribute to higher satisfaction if done well and 'delight' factors which can lead to higher satisfaction but which will not lead to dissatisfaction if they are not delivered. This analysis highlights some key areas for focus to improve Jobcentre Plus' service delivery.

Firstly, **there are two key elements of service delivery (i.e. hygiene factors) that are being done less well for customers contacting Jobcentre Plus to check eligibility or to report a problem; completing the enquiry in a reasonable amount of time and being told what would happen next**. Additionally, these respondents are less likely to experience helpful and knowledgeable staff, something which drives both satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Secondly, **ESA claimants were less likely to experience two of the hygiene factors: completing the enquiry in a reasonable time and receiving suitable job suggestions**. ESA claimants were also less likely than other claimants to feel confident that their benefit payment was correct and clearly explained, and less likely to have been given clear timings by Jobcentre Plus on what they would do as a result of their enquiry. These two issues are 'delight' factors which if done well amongst ESA claimants will drive up their satisfaction.

Respondents whose previous or current occupation was professional, managerial or technical were less likely to be satisfied overall. Particular issues which came out in the Kano model for this group of respondents were that they were less likely to say that jobs suggested by their advisers were suitable (a hygiene factor) and less likely to rate the office conditions positively (a performance factor).

In terms of enquiry handling, there are two elements which are vital to do well in order to keep dissatisfaction to a minimum: completing enquiries in a reasonable time and telling customers what will happen next. Encouragingly, these things are already being done well for four in five customers, however, for particular transactions such as checking eligibility and reporting problems the service is falling down. Interestingly, providing clear timings for what Jobcentre Plus would do during the enquiry was not something that respondents saw as vital, but is something that will drive up satisfaction further if done consistently.

For customers actively looking for work, advisers suggesting different types of work other than the ones customers were interested in was a key driver of satisfaction. This suggests that respondents appreciate advisers being proactive in helping with their jobsearch. However, on the other hand, advisers suggesting jobs that respondents felt were unsuitable for them was a key driver of dissatisfaction, meaning it is vital for advisers to have a clear understanding of what is appropriate for individual customers.

The drivers of satisfaction are covered in more detail in **Chapter 3**.

Call handling and next steps communication

The way customer service agents handle and close off calls has a significant impact not only on satisfaction levels but also on contact volumes.

The amount of time customers waited for their call to be answered did not have a large impact on overall satisfaction. Indeed **it was only when respondents reported that they had to wait over five minutes that satisfaction was noticeably lower (Section 4.1)**. Instead it seemed to be the experience during the call that impacted most significantly on satisfaction, particularly if customers were left with unresolved questions or felt hurried during the call (Section 4.1.2). Customers checking eligibility or reporting problems were significantly more likely to experience either of these two situations.

Feeling hurried during a call or having unresolved questions also impacted on call volumes, with customers experiencing these situations reporting nearly two and a half times as many calls (Section 5.1.1). As a result of this, customers checking eligibility or reporting problems generated significantly more calls than other contact types.

Respondents who were transferred directly to someone else when their first point of contact was unable to help them, were twice as likely as those who were called back to report that they had to repeat all information, and this impacted negatively on satisfaction (Section 4.1.1).

Nearly nine out of ten respondents said that Jobcentre Plus did what they said they would but where service is failing respondents are significantly less satisfied (46 per cent) (Chapter 6).

Telephone call volumes for transactions are twice as high when respondents are not told what will happen next or kept up to date with progress and are nearly three times as high when they are not given clear timings (Chapter 6).

1 Introduction

Based on recommendations from a feasibility study into the future of customer surveys², Jobcentre Plus' survey is now anticipated to run annually, is focused on respondent feedback relating to a single contact they have made in the previous six months and is aligned with the Pensions, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS) survey.³ Finally, the revised questionnaire is designed to allow reporting of results against the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Customer Charter⁴ (see Appendix B for a summary of findings) and provide robust data on seven of the eight protected characteristics, detailed under the Equality Act 2010.⁵

This report presents the findings from the first year of the new customer survey. Due to changes to the sample (Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants are included for the first time) and questionnaire (changes to the wording and measurement scales) only limited comparisons are possible with previous surveys.

1.1 Research objectives

The main aim of the survey is to monitor satisfaction with Jobcentre service delivery and to help identify elements of the service that generate unnecessary contacts. Key objectives include:

- measure the overall level of satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus on an annual basis;
- determine which aspects of the service customers are the most and least satisfied with, including satisfaction with various contact channels;
- provide data on the customer experience by contact types;
- detect possible differences in satisfaction amongst different benefit groups (Income Support (IS), Incapacity Benefit (IB), ESA and Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)) and across diverse demographic groups;
- evaluate whether the key drivers of satisfaction and dissatisfaction remain consistent with previous evidence.

1.2 Sample

In November 2010, a sample of the four main unemployment claimant types was drawn from records held by the DWP. The sample was stratified so that a sufficient number of potential respondents was provided by the four benefit types and seven Jobcentre Groups. In addition, the

² Romanou, E. and Howat, N. (2010). *Feasibility study for the future Jobcentre Plus Customer Satisfaction Survey*. Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Research Report No 681 accessed online on 14 July 2011 at: http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/report_abstracts/rr_abstracts/rra_681.asp

³ This allows the reporting of results at a DWP level.

⁴ This was Departmental Strategic Objective Seven (DSO7) at the time of the feasibility study. The Charter can be accessed online at <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/about-dwp/customer-delivery/>

⁵ Equality and Human Rights Commission (2011). *New Public sector equality duty guidance*. Accessed online on 14 July 2011 at: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/new-public-sector-equality-duty-guidance/>

sample records were controlled for sex, length of claim (less than six months, six to 12 months, 12-24 months and 24+ months) and date of birth. Given some groups were oversampled, weights were then applied at the analysis stage, to rebalance the sample to be representative of the national Jobcentre Plus population.

As the records held by the DWP do not capture whether or not customers have had any interactions with Jobcentre Plus, respondents were screened to confirm they had contact within the previous six months.⁶ It should be noted that this approach means that the study is a survey of **contacting customers** rather than a survey of all claimants receiving a benefit from Jobcentre Plus.⁷

1.3 Questionnaire design

In order to better understand the customer experience respondents were not simply asked about their contact with Jobcentre Plus as a whole but were instead asked about their experiences with a particular contact in the last six months. This approach is more focused for the respondent and as such they are able to draw upon specifics when talking about particular delivery channels.

The contact the survey focused on was based on a hierarchy, with those which involved more interaction with Jobcentre Plus prioritised over those which typically involved routine interactions. Table 1.1 shows the hierarchy of contact types as used in the survey and the proportion of respondents who were selected for each. Since the selection was based on a hierarchy the distributions presented in Table 1.1 do not represent the distribution of contacts that Jobcentre Plus deals with. For example, customers checking eligibility in the survey would be customers who had enquired about eligibility for a benefit in the last six months, but had not made a new claim for a benefit, customers reporting problems with benefits in the survey would be customers who had experienced problems, but who had not checked eligibility or made a new claim, and so on. As such, Table 1.1 is intended to illustrate the range and scope of the contacts that are covered by the survey. An alternative approach of asking about the history of the most recent contact was considered but it was felt that for JSA this would lead to undue prominence being given to the fortnightly review meetings.

⁶ Therefore, feedback relates to the period from June 2010 – March 2011.

⁷ Claimants who had found a job since the sample was drawn and were no longer receiving any benefits from Jobcentre Plus were eligible for the survey as long as they had had some contact with the service in the prior six months.

Table 1.1 Priority contact

	%
Started new claim	27
Claim JSA	17
Claim ESA	5
Claim IS	3
Claim other benefit	2
Eligibility check*	5
Reported problem**	8
Review meeting***	34
Change of circumstance	7
Discussed job opportunities	5
Fortnightly review meeting	3
Update request	2
Arranging an appointment	1
Looked for job vacancies	1
Requested a form	1
Request for help with funding	1
Tried to get help with a form	1
Made a complaint	*
Unable to specify a transaction****	4

Base: All respondents (2,803).

* Only customers who had not progressed from enquiring about eligibility to making a claim would be included here.

** This would include a delayed or missing payment, or closure of a claim, for example, and would typically be problems with an established rather than new claim since these customers had not started a new claim within the last six months.

*** This excluded fortnightly review meetings, and would include, for example, Work Focused Interviews (WFIs) for ESA claimants or ‘restart’ interviews for JSA claimants who have been out of work for more than six months.

**** Customers who could not specify a transaction were directed past the channel specific questions.

The questionnaire is then designed to gather feedback on the overall experience of the single contact, enabling it to assess parity of the experience in relation to:

- the Jobcentre Plus contact channel used (this can be telephone, face-to-face, online or written contact); and
- customer demographics.

To assess parity, the questionnaire asks customers for feedback against each of the four DWP Customer Charter commitments, ‘right treatment’, ‘right result’, ‘on time’ and ‘easy access’.

Finally, the questionnaire is able to provide an estimate of the volume of contacts, by asking respondents to indicate how many times they needed to contact Jobcentre Plus before it was resolved.

1.4 Fieldwork

All respondents were sent an advance letter two weeks before the start of fieldwork (see Appendix C), 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. Customers could also return a pro forma requesting a postal questionnaire for those who were hard of hearing or for the interview to be conducted in a language other than English.

The fieldwork took place between 19 January and 30 March and in total 2,803 interviews were completed. All telephone interviews were conducted using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) and the average interview length was 26 minutes.

1.5 Interpretation of data and analysis

When interpreting the findings for this survey, it should be borne in mind that the survey is based on a **sample** of customers (not the total population). This means that all findings are subject to sampling tolerances. However, all differences highlighted in the report are statistically significant at the 95 per cent confidence level unless stated otherwise. The data was analysed using SPSS 17, using chi-square to explore variation in satisfaction by responses to individual questions, followed by statistical modelling using logistical regression.

2 Overall performance

Jobcentre Plus' Business Plan 2010/11⁸ highlights that improving service delivery involves putting customers at the centre of what it does. Central to this ambition, is ensuring that Jobcentre Plus is providing service parity, regardless of a customer's location, demographics or reason for making contact. To assess this, the questionnaire captures a range of demographic characteristics⁹, with this chapter presenting the results of analysis into the variation in reported overall satisfaction.

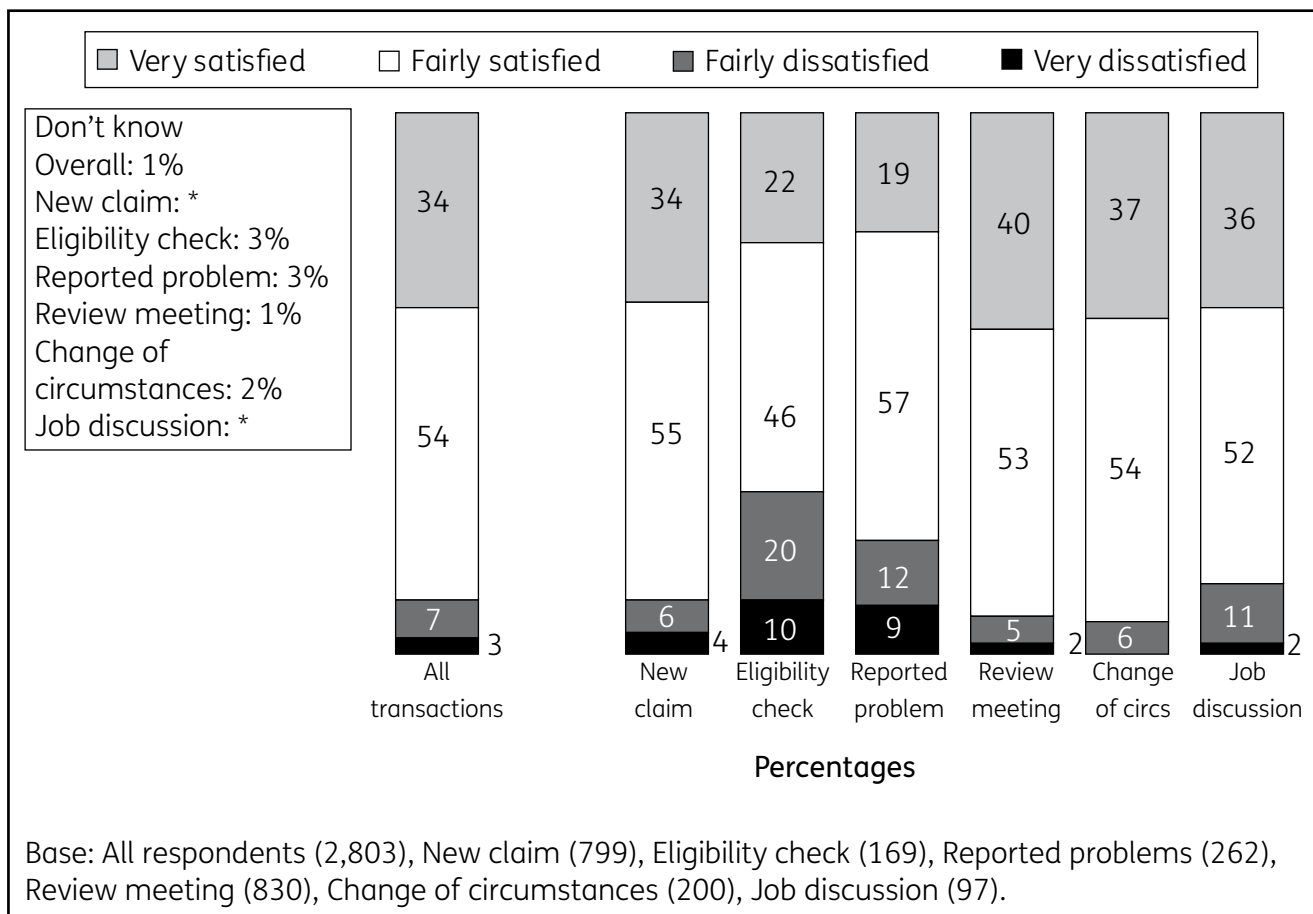
2.1 Overall satisfaction

The primary measure of the overall performance of Jobcentre Plus is a question which asked respondents to indicate how satisfied overall they were with the service. This question uses a four point satisfaction scale running from very satisfied to very dissatisfied. Almost nine in ten (88 per cent) respondents said they were satisfied with the services offered, with just over a third (34 per cent) saying they were very satisfied. One in ten respondents (ten per cent) were dissatisfied.

2.2 Satisfaction by contact type

Satisfaction varied significantly by contact type and Figure 2.1 shows overall satisfaction for the six most significant contact types in the survey.

Figure 2.1 Satisfaction, by most significant transaction



⁸ Jobcentre Plus (2010) accessed online at: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/jbbp-1011.pdf>

⁹ The demographic section covers each of the protected characteristics specific in the Equality Act 2010, with the exception of pregnancy and maternity.

Respondents whose contact was to enquire about eligibility for a benefit or to report a problem with their claim, are significantly less satisfied overall than other contact types. In contrast to this, respondents whose contact was having a review meeting, or reporting a change of circumstance, were significantly more satisfied than others.

It is perhaps understandable that customers who were reporting a problem were more likely to be dissatisfied with Jobcentre Plus as they had received a negative experience. Indeed, the fact that despite this, over three-quarters of customers said that they were satisfied with the service (76 per cent) could be seen as a positive reflection of the service’s ability to turn around potentially negative experiences.

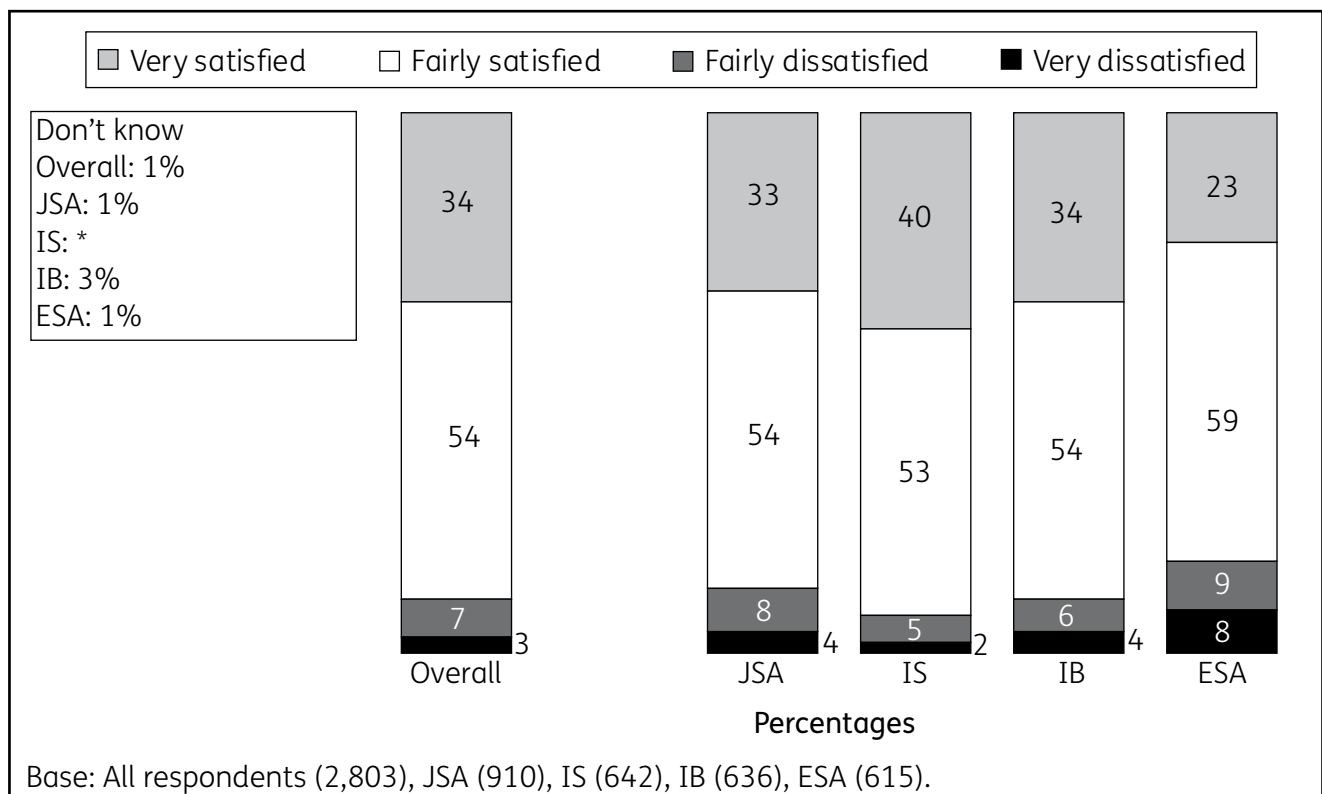
However, the lower satisfaction scores for customers who were contacting to check benefit eligibility are less understandable as this should be a relatively straightforward contact. The base sizes are small, but initial analysis by benefit type does not indicate that the issues are focused on any particular claimant type. Instead the problems for customers checking eligibility seem to be directly related to how their contacts are handled (see Sections 4.1.2 and 6.1 for full details).

2.3 Satisfaction by customer characteristics

2.3.1 Benefit type

Figure 2.2 shows the breakdown of satisfaction levels by benefit type.

Figure 2.2 Satisfaction, by benefit type



As Figure 2.2 shows, Income Support (IS) claimants reported the highest levels of satisfaction while Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants reported the highest levels of dissatisfaction. The higher levels of dissatisfaction for ESA claimants may relate to the higher levels of conditionality

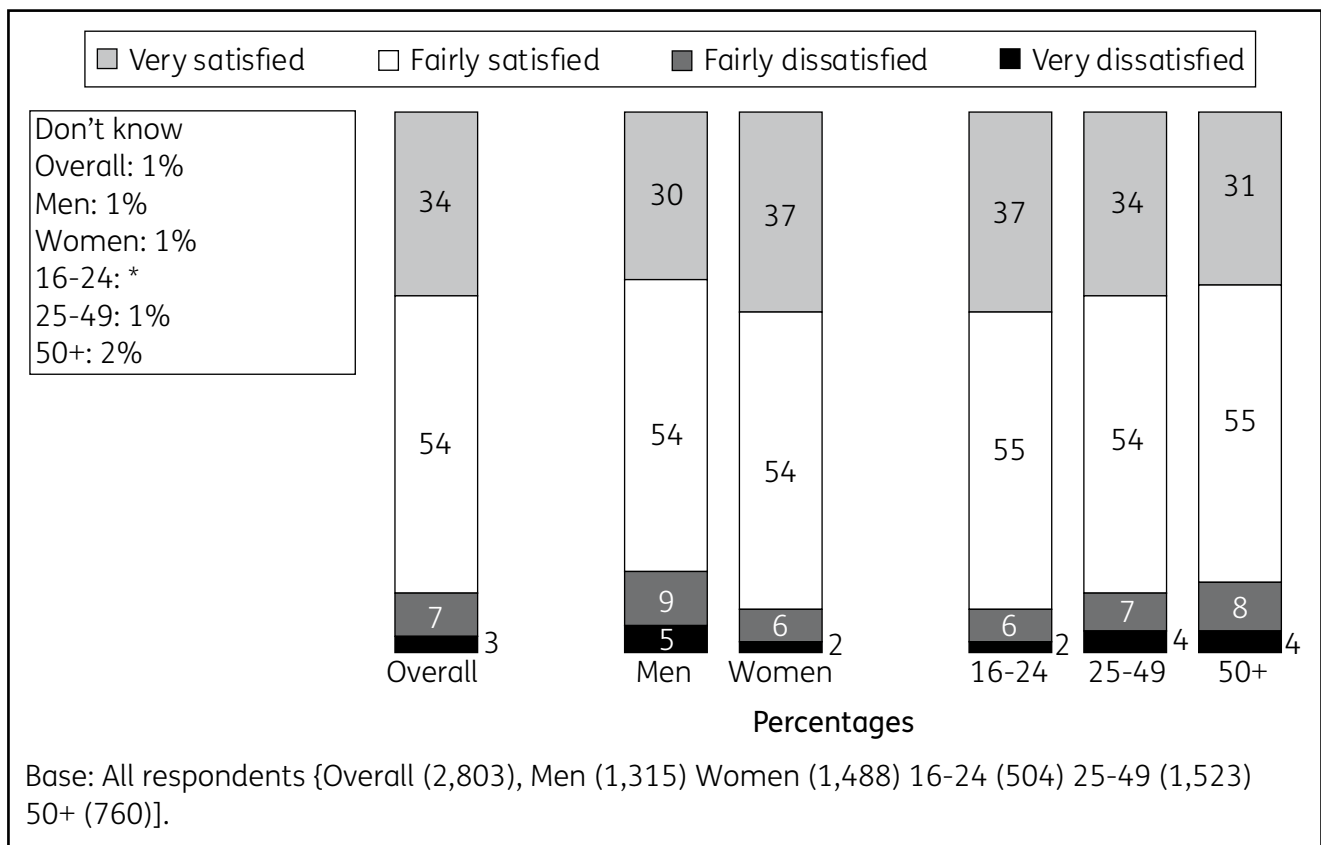
that these claimants are now subject to. However, further analysis suggest that there are also transaction specific issues, including, the time taken to resolve contacts, the suitability of suggested jobs and the understanding and confidence in the benefit amounts they are receiving. Detailed analysis is presented in Chapter 3.

2.3.2 Gender and age

Overall women were more satisfied than men (91 per cent compared to 84 per cent), as shown in Figure 2.3. The gender difference is driven by Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA) and IS claimants, amongst whom the difference in satisfaction between genders is significant (93 per cent compared to 84 per cent for JSA claimants and 93 per cent compared to 86 per cent for IS claimants). There were no significant differences in satisfaction between women and men amongst IB or ESA claimants.

Younger respondents were the most satisfied overall, with 16-24 year olds reporting higher satisfaction levels than older respondents. As Figure 2.3 shows, 92 per cent of 16-24 year olds were satisfied compared with 86 per cent of respondents aged 50 or over. This difference is **only** due to age differences in satisfaction amongst JSA claimants, as there were no significant differences by age amongst any of the other three benefit types. One-fifth (19 per cent) of respondents aged 50 or older claiming JSA reported that they were dissatisfied with the service Jobcentre Plus provides.

Figure 2.3 Satisfaction, by gender and age



2.3.3 Occupation

The time gap between drawing the sample of benefit claimants and carrying out fieldwork for the survey meant that inevitably some respondents had found work at the time the interview was carried out. Respondents who were in work at the time of the survey reported lower satisfaction levels than those who were still unemployed and claiming a benefit (83 per cent compared to

89 per cent). Again, this difference is entirely being driven by JSA claimants as only a very small proportion of respondents claiming other benefits had found work. Respondents who had found work were asked whether they found this job through Jobcentre Plus or independently; the majority (83 per cent) had found the job independently which may explain the lower satisfaction levels amongst respondents who had found work.

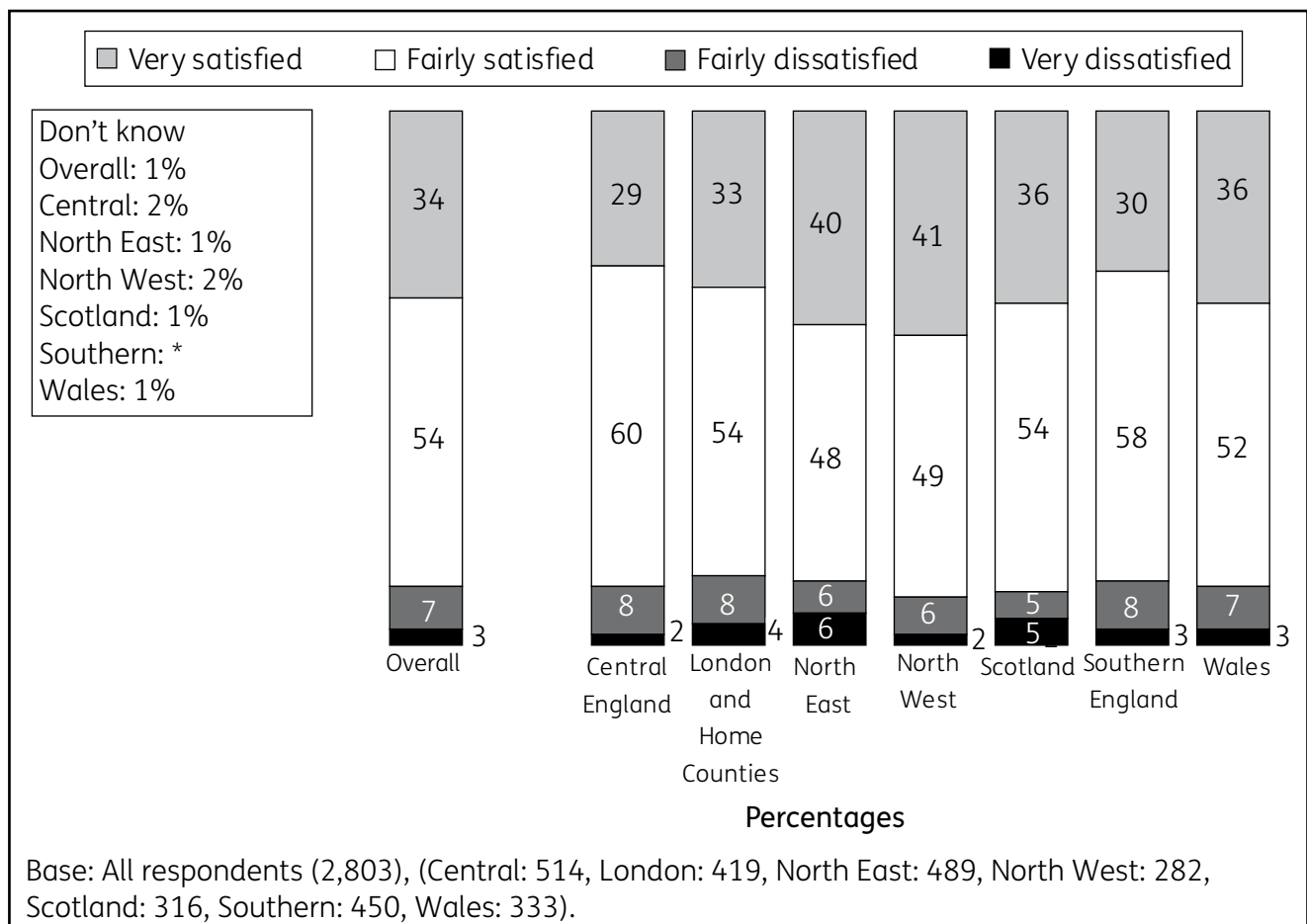
Additionally Standard Occupation Classification (SOC) was collected for respondents in the survey based on either their current or most recent job where relevant. Respondents who are currently or had previously been in professional, managerial or technical occupations were less likely to be satisfied with the service overall than respondents from other occupations (82 per cent compared to 88 per cent). This difference is only significant amongst respondents in the 50+ age group, for respondents aged 50 or under there were no differences in satisfaction between white collar and other occupations.

As would be expected educational level was highly correlated with occupation type, and a similar pattern emerges when analysing satisfaction levels by highest qualification level. Respondents who had a degree were less likely to be satisfied with Jobcentre Plus services overall than other respondents (80 per cent compared with 90 per cent).

2.3.4 Jobcentre Plus group

Overall satisfaction was consistent across the seven different Jobcentre Plus groups, with no significant differences in the netted satisfaction scores. Figure 2.4 shows the scores for each area.

Figure 2.4 Satisfaction by Jobcentre Plus group



2.3.5 Disability

Respondents who had a longstanding illness, health problem or disability which limits their daily activities were less likely to be satisfied overall (84 per cent compared to 92 per cent). However, differences in satisfaction levels only seem to be affected by certain types of illnesses or disabilities, namely:

- problems with movement (84 per cent compared to 90 per cent);
- sensory problems (75 per cent compared to 89 per cent);
- cardio-respiratory problems (84 per cent compared to 89 per cent);
- psychological or behavioural problems (82 per cent compared to 89 per cent); and
- fatigue or stamina problems (71 per cent compared to 89 per cent).

2.3.6 Overall satisfaction by other characteristics

Overall satisfaction was analysed by a number of additional demographic variables and the following were found to have no significant impact on satisfaction levels:

- ethnicity;
- religion;
- sexuality;
- whether English is the respondent's first language;
- length of claim (with the exception that those who were no longer claiming a benefit were less satisfied than those still in receipt of a benefit);
- caring responsibilities.

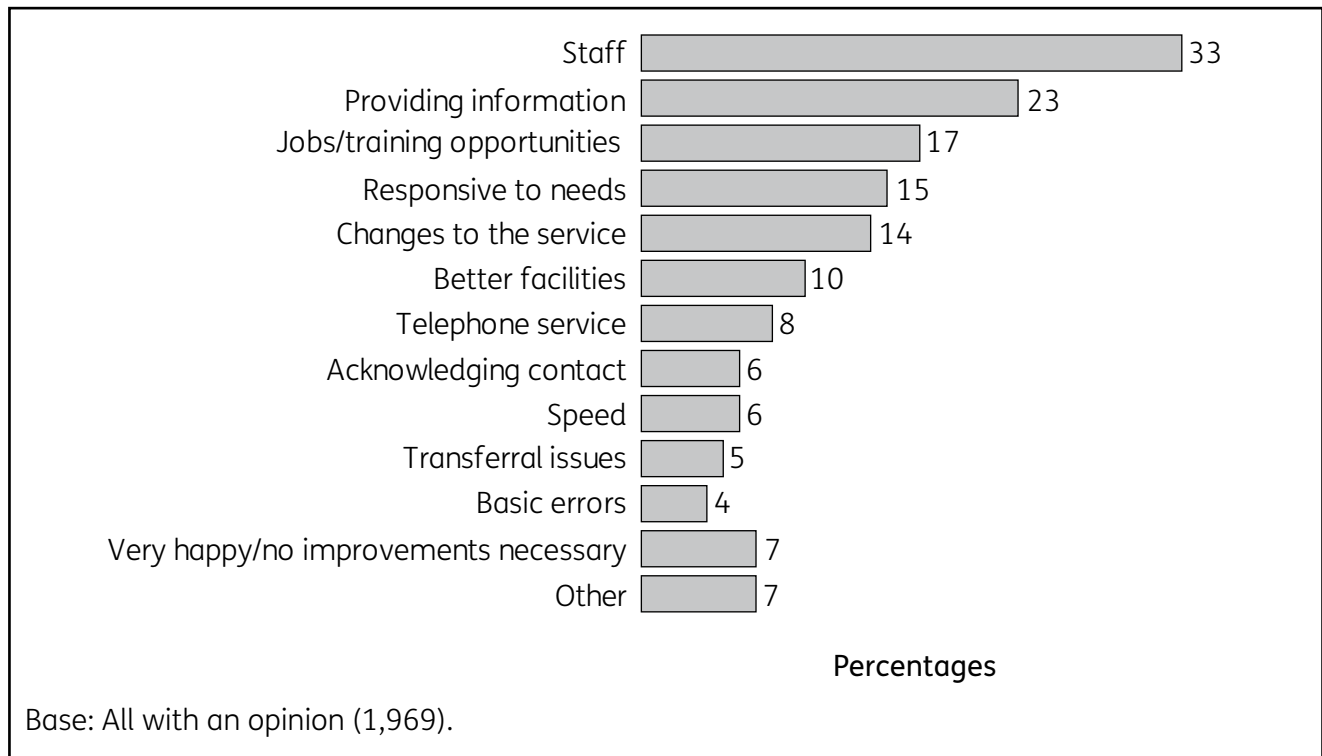
2.4 Customer voice

2.4.1 Improvements to the service

Near the end of the survey all customers were given the chance to make suggestions of how Jobcentre Plus could be improved. Respondents' answers were recorded verbatim in an open ended question and then coded. There was a wide variety of detailed responses, therefore, these have been grouped together into categories to assist analysis. Figure 2.5 shows customers' suggestions for improvement. 30 per cent of respondents did not have a suggestion for improvement¹⁰ and these respondents have been excluded from subsequent analysis.

The main area for improvement mentioned by customers was the staff, mentioned by a third of respondents (33 per cent) who had an opinion about improvements to the service. However, interestingly this was also the category mentioned by the highest proportion of customers when asked what the best thing about the service was, which is discussed further in the following section.

¹⁰ Respondents gave 'Don't know' or 'Refused' responses.

Figure 2.5 Customers' opinions of how Jobcentre Plus could be improved

JSA customers were more likely than other customers to mention that improvements to staff were required (38 per cent compared with 29 per cent), which is likely to be because JSA customers will have the most regular contact with members of staff. Improvements in relation to staff mentioned by customers included: 'Staff need to be more patient, understanding or sympathetic' (eight per cent) 'More knowledgeable staff/better trained' (eight per cent), 'Staff should be more helpful' (seven per cent), 'Staff should be more friendly/approachable' (seven per cent), 'Staff should show more respect/not be rude' (six per cent), and 'Staff are always busy/need more staff' (five per cent). Verbatim quotes from customers in relation to staff improvements are included below:

'Staff should treat you as an individual not as a statistic, and not assume everyone's situation is the same.'

'They could spend more time with customers, giving us more information and not being judgemental. They should treat customers with respect and be more helpful.'

'Better training and information for the staff so they can help you with what other services are available and also what other benefits you are entitled to.'

The second most common category of suggestions for service improvement was providing more information. This included 'Make sure people know what they are entitled to' (seven per cent), 'Providing simpler information that is easy to understand' (four per cent), 'Better advertisement of services and benefits provided' (four per cent), 'Improve the website and make better use of technology' (four per cent), and 'Better communication' (four per cent). In addition a small number of customers mentioned being more proactive in contacting people, and notifying customers of changes to their benefits.

14 Overall performance

Customers claiming Incapacity Benefit (IB) and IS (28 per cent and 27 per cent respectively) were the most likely to mention that Jobcentre Plus could improve the information they provide, which may be due to the fact that these customers will not have regular contact with Jobcentre Plus.

Some verbatim quotes from customers in relation to information improvement are as follows:

'They should offer more information about the benefits you are entitled to without having to chase them up for help. They should also tell you about benefits you could get if you were in work.'

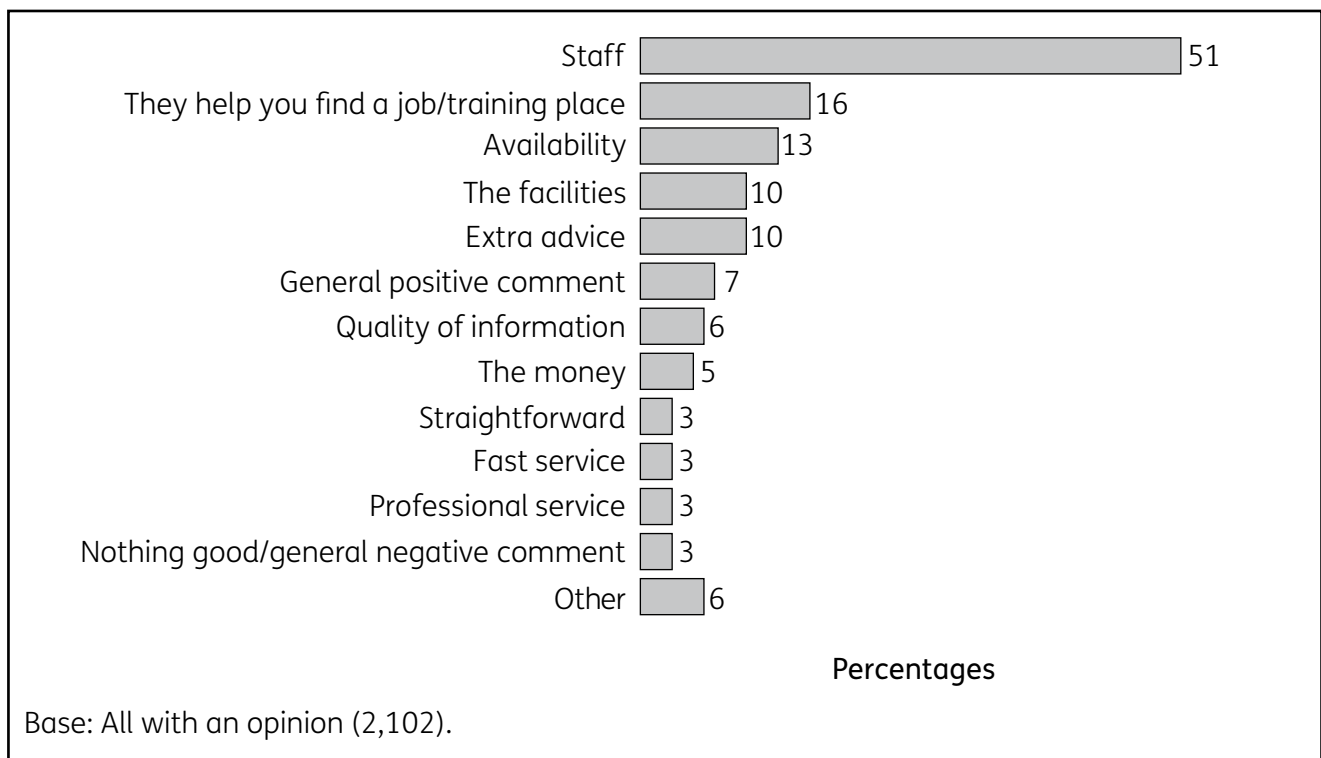
'I just feel they could explain things in black and white so everyone can understand without the jargon.'

Providing appropriate privacy for needs, an issue which is explored later in Section 4.2.1, was spontaneously mentioned by seven per cent of respondents who had an opinion at this question. This has been included in the category 'Responsive to needs' in Figure 2.4.

2.4.2 Best thing about the service

In addition to asking about suggested improvements, customers were also asked their opinion about what the best thing about the service was. Most customers were able to give a positive comment although around a quarter did not have an opinion (23 per cent); these respondents have been excluded from subsequent analysis¹¹. Figure 2.6 shows the results from this question.

Figure 2.6 Customers' opinions of the best thing about Jobcentre Plus



¹¹ Respondents gave 'Don't know' or 'Refused' responses.

Despite staff being the main concern for customers in terms of how Jobcentre Plus could be improved, it was also the category that the largest proportion (51 per cent) of customers mentioned when asked what the best thing about the service is. This suggests that the service received from staff is not consistent, but also that it is the thing that triggers the strongest reactions from customers. IS customers were most likely to mention staff as being the best thing about the service (58 per cent compared with 48 per cent). When mentioning staff at this question customers talked about a variety of characteristics, but the single characteristic that was mentioned by most respondents was that staff were helpful (25 per cent). Other things mentioned included 'Staff were friendly and easy to talk to' (17 per cent), 'Staff were sympathetic/sensitive' (five per cent), 'Staff were polite' (five per cent), 'Staff were knowledgeable' (three per cent), 'Staff treated me with respect' (three per cent) and 'Staff listen to queries/answer questions' (three per cent). In addition some respondents gave general comments saying that the staff were good, or praised particular teams or individuals. Some of the things customers said in relation to staff are mentioned below:

'My adviser is very helpful. They gave me all the information I need and went out of their way to book me on a training course.'

'My personal adviser is excellent, she is not at all judgemental and has excellent interpersonal skills.'

'The staff made me feel welcome, relaxed and comfortable so that I could talk to them easily. They were very sympathetic.'

The second most common thing mentioned as the best thing about the service was the help provided in finding employment or a training place. As might be expected JSA claimants were the most likely to mention this with around a quarter (23 per cent) spontaneously mentioning it. For example:

'They keep on top of you, they make sure you look for a job. If it wasn't for them I wouldn't have been pushed to look for a job.'

'The fact that they offer training and they put you in touch with other services to help with training and getting back into work.'

'The fact that you can go somewhere to find a vast amount of jobs around your area.'

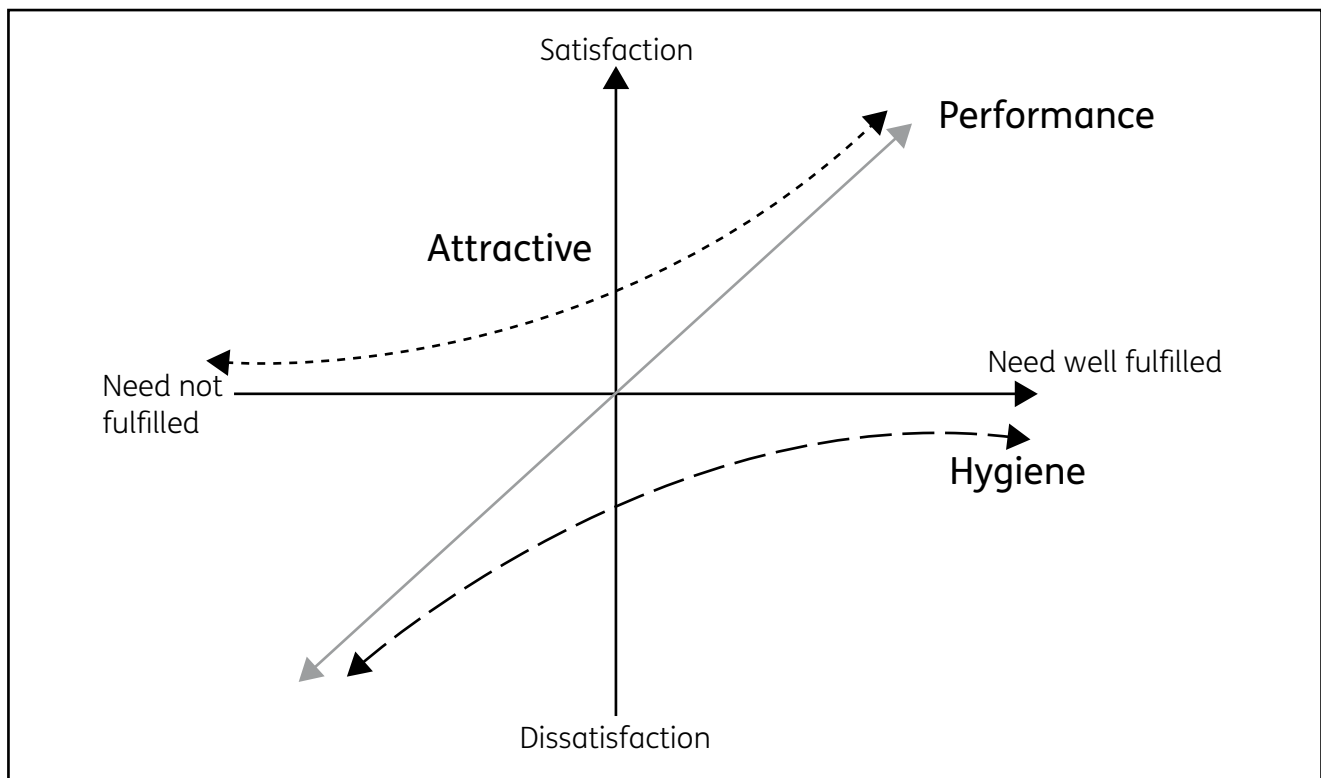
3 Understanding the drivers of satisfaction

In order to better understand what factors had the most impact on satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus, two logistic regression models were created. 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).

The first model looked at the factors which were associated with respondents being **very satisfied** with the service and the second model looked at the factors associated with respondents being **dissatisfied** with the service. Although factors discussed elsewhere in the report seem to have an effect on satisfaction, creating logistic regression models allows us to look at which factors continue to have an effect on satisfaction when controlling for other factors. As such these models allow us to really determine what the underlying reasons for dissatisfaction or disappointment are.

Creating models looking at the drivers of both satisfaction and dissatisfaction allows the drivers to be analysed using 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 affect customer satisfaction. The Kano model essentially splits the drivers into three distinct groups, the ‘hygiene’ factors, ‘performance’ factors, and ‘delight’ factors. An overview is shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 The Kano model



Hygiene 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 dashed line in Figure 3.1.

Performance factors are those that when delivered will increase satisfaction, and when delivered badly decrease satisfaction. These factors follow a pattern similar to the grey line in Figure 3.1.

Delight factors are those that customers do not necessarily expect, (so not having them would not lead to dissatisfaction), but when they are done or done well, they do increase customer satisfaction. This is represented by the dotted line in Figure 3.1.

The Kano model can be applied to Jobcentre Plus by using the two logistic regression models. Must-be factors are established by looking at factors that enter the dissatisfied model, but not the very satisfied model, as these are drivers of disappointment, but not satisfaction.

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

3.1 Overview

In total there were 15 service elements identified as being drivers of either satisfaction or dissatisfaction with Jobcentre Plus. Just over half of these were delight factors, service elements which could lead to higher satisfaction scores but whose absence did not cause dissatisfaction. In the main the delight factors related to how Jobcentre Plus communicates information to customers either during their contacts (being given clear timings, told next steps to take if dissatisfied with service) or more generally (how benefit payments are calculated, suggesting alternative jobs).

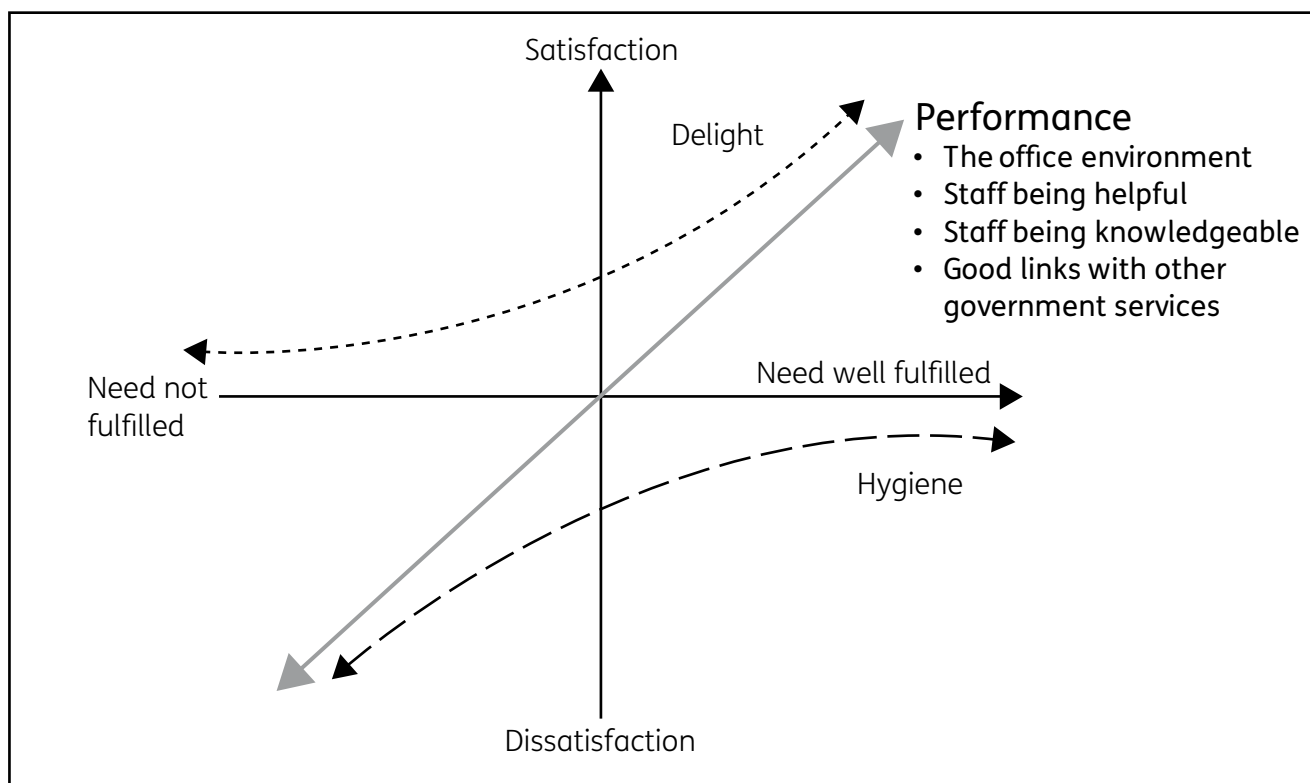
The analysis identified four performance factors which affected both satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the service. Two of these four factors related to how customers felt about Jobcentre Plus staff (helpful and knowledgeable) but the single most important factor was their perception of the office environment.

There were just three hygiene factors identified in the analysis, two of which related directly to how customers felt their contacts had been handled (completing enquiries in a reasonable length of time and being told what would happen next in their enquiry). When these elements were missing customers were significantly more likely to be dissatisfied.

The following sections provide more detail on each of the performance, hygiene and delight factors including which groups in particular are affected by them.

3.2 Performance factors

The multivariate analysis identified four performance areas which drove higher levels of satisfaction when delivered well and higher levels of dissatisfaction when delivery was lacking and these are shown in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2 Performance factors

The most powerful of the four performance factors was how customers felt about the office environment¹². The next most powerful of the performance factors were the two staff measures – staff being helpful and staff being knowledgeable. The final factor was Jobcentre Plus having good links with other government services such as local authorities. It should be noted that the impact of this final factor was far more pronounced as a driver of dissatisfaction than satisfaction.

3.2.1 Office environment

Just under four in five customers (79 per cent) had visited a Jobcentre Plus office in the last six months and over half (56 per cent) rated all aspects of the environment as being good, very good or excellent. It is interesting to note that while there was some variation in the rating of the office environment by benefit type, there were no significant differences.

However, ratings of the office environment did differ significantly by other respondent characteristics. Two-thirds of customers who were previously in a professional or managerial role (67 per cent) rated at least one element of the office environment as being either fair or poor compared to just two-fifths of those who were in either sales and customer service occupations (41 per cent). Ratings of the office environment also varied by age. Around half of all customers aged 50 or older (51 per cent) rated at least one aspect of the office environment as being fair or poor compared to just two-fifths of 16-34 year olds (38 per cent).

¹² It should be noted that the measure used in this analysis was actually combined from five separate statements covering displaying information; providing a welcoming environment; providing appropriate privacy; providing a safe environment and providing help if required. This was done as a result of the high level of correlation between the statements.

3.2.2 Staff being helpful

Nearly nine in ten customers (88 per cent) who had interacted with Jobcentre Plus staff in the previous six months said that the staff were helpful. Customers who were contacting to check eligibility were less likely to say this (68 per cent) as were customers who were reporting a problem (76 per cent). However, there were no significant differences by the type of benefit customers were receiving.

3.2.3 Staff being knowledgeable

The proportion of customers who said that staff were knowledgeable was slightly lower than that for rating staff as being helpful, but it was still the overwhelming majority (86 per cent). Once again customers who were contacting to check eligibility were less likely to rate staff positively (75 per cent), as were those who were reporting a problem (69 per cent). IS claimants were significantly more likely to say that staff were knowledgeable when compared to those claiming the other three main Jobcentre Plus benefits (91 per cent compared to 84 per cent).

3.2.4 Links with other government services

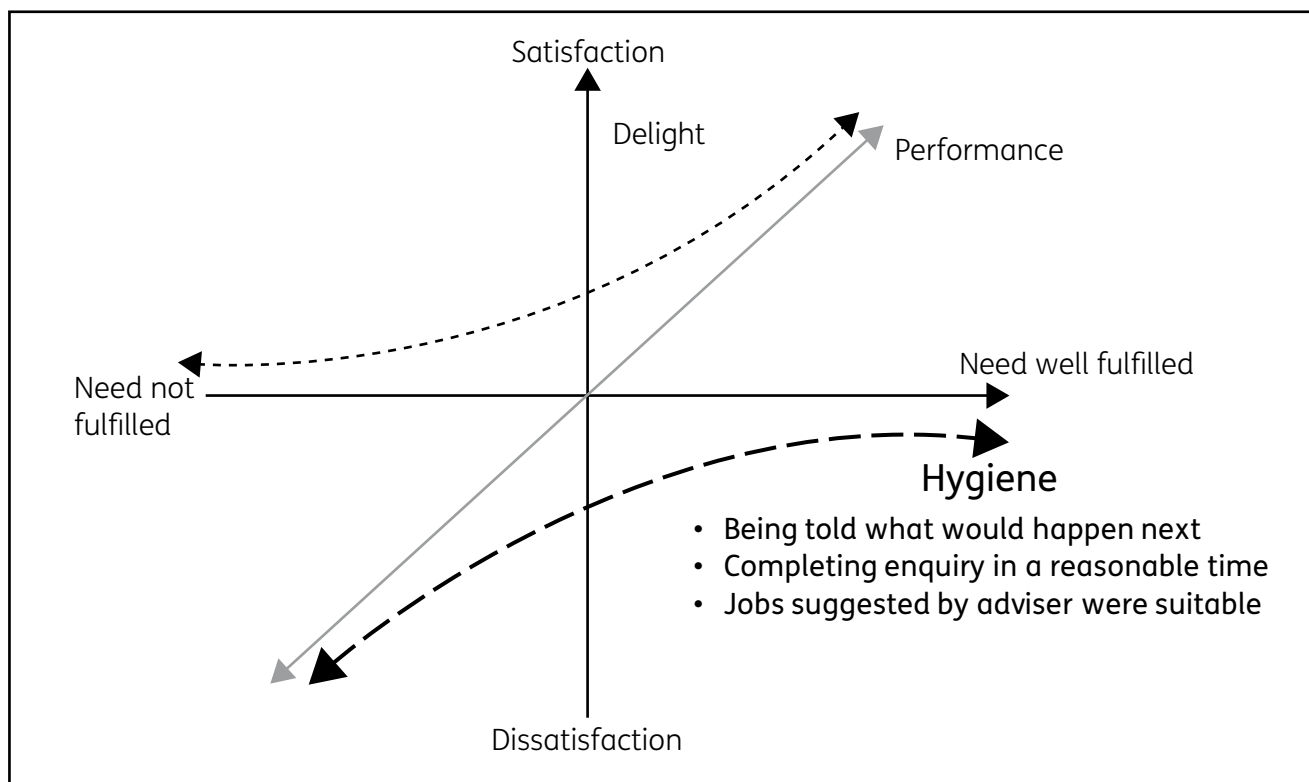
Some customers have contacts with other government services such as local authorities and respondents were asked whether they thought Jobcentre Plus had good links with these other types of government services. Around four in five customers who could answer the question said that they thought Jobcentre Plus did have good links with other government services. The fact that this area is a performance factor indicates that customers do appreciate joined-up government and that the service gets credit when customers perceive this to be the case rather than simply being viewed negatively if it does not happen.

Customers with higher qualifications were less likely to believe that Jobcentre Plus has good links with other government services. Just under two-thirds of customers with a degree (65 per cent) said that Jobcentre Plus had good links compared to around four in five customers who had A-levels or below (80 per cent).

3.3 Hygiene factors

Figure 3.3 shows the three service elements which the survey identified as hygiene factors. These are elements which do not drive higher levels of satisfaction with the service if delivered well, but which do contribute to dissatisfaction if they are missing or poorly delivered.

Although there were only three hygiene factors identified by the logistic regression, each of these elements did have a sizeable impact on dissatisfaction. Customers who said that their contact was not resolved in a reasonable amount of time were nearly four times more likely to be dissatisfied than those where it was and customers who felt that jobs suggested were not suitable were nearly three times more likely to be dissatisfied.

Figure 3.3 Hygiene factors

3.3.1 Completing enquiry in a reasonable time

Whether or not customers felt that the time taken to complete their enquiry was reasonable varied significantly by contact type. One in five customers who were making a new claim (19 per cent) said that their enquiry was not concluded in a reasonable length of time but this was significantly lower than customers reporting a problem (40 per cent) or those who were just checking eligibility (42 per cent). Within contact type there was also variation by benefit. Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) recipients were more than twice as likely to report that their new claims were not completed in a reasonable length of time (34 per cent compared to 15 per cent of Incapacity Benefit (IB) and Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) new claims).

3.3.2 Suggesting unsuitable jobs

Around two-thirds of respondents who were actively seeking work (64 per cent) said that their Jobcentre Plus adviser had suggested that they look for different types of work to the ones they were interested in and a quarter of these (25 per cent) said that the suggestions were not suitable for them.

Interestingly, while whether or not customers felt that suggestions were unsuitable did not vary by level of educational qualification, it did vary by previous occupation. Around a quarter of customers with a degree felt that suggested jobs were unsuitable for them (26 per cent) but this was very similar to the customers with no qualifications at all (29 per cent). In contrast to this, around two-fifths of customers who were previously in a professional or managerial role felt that suggested jobs were unsuitable (38 per cent) compared to just over one-fifth of those who were in a customer service or elementary role (21 per cent). In addition to this, ESA claimants were also more likely than JSA claimants to say that suggested roles were not suitable for them (34 per cent compared to 24 per cent).

3.3.3 Being told what will happen next

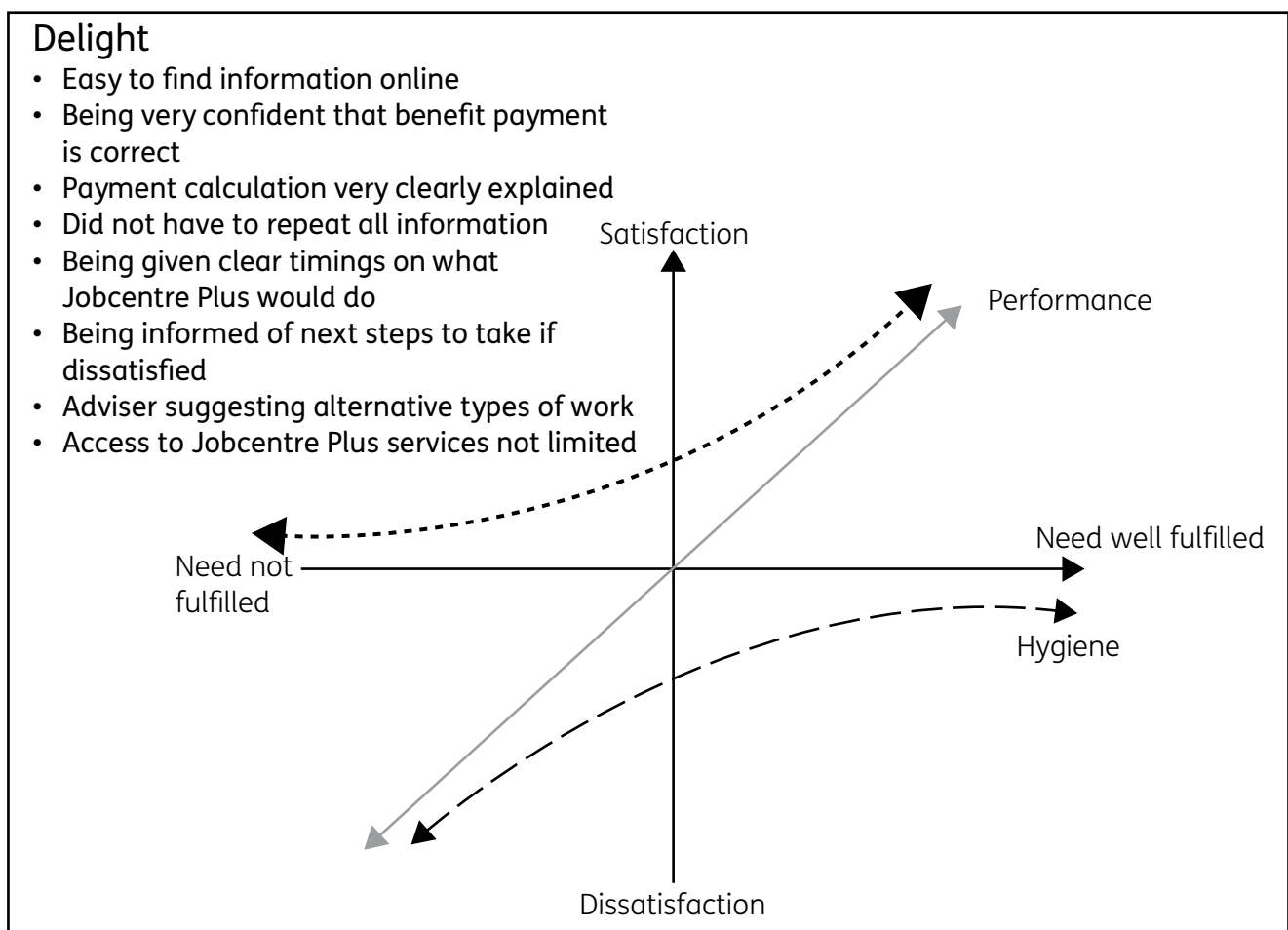
Just under four-fifths of respondents said that they were told what would happen next with their enquiry. This varied significantly by contact type with particular issues for respondents who were contacting to report a problem. Around three in ten of these respondents (28 per cent) said that they were not told what would happen next which was more than twice the proportion of new claimants who said that they were not told about next steps (13 per cent).

IB claimants were also significantly more likely to report that they were not told what would happen next. This seemed to be particularly driven by customers whose priority contact was a review meeting. One in three IB claimants (33 per cent) said that they were not told about next steps after their review meeting compared to around one in six Income Support (IS)/ESA/JSA claimants (16 per cent).

3.4 Delight factors

In total there were eight service elements that were identified as being delight factors and these are shown in Figure 3.4. These are service elements which increase the proportion of customers saying that they are very satisfied with the service but if they are not delivered do not result in a significant increase in dissatisfaction.

Figure 3.4 Delight factors



The most powerful delight factor in driving satisfaction was finding it very or fairly easy to find information on government websites although it should be noted that this was something that only a minority of respondents were asked about. Among the elements that were asked of all respondents the most powerful delight factors were being confident that their benefit payment was correct and feeling that the payment calculation was clearly explained.

3.4.1 Confidence in payment and understanding calculation

Just under nine in ten customers (87 per cent) said that they were either very or fairly confident that the amount they were paid by Jobcentre Plus was the correct amount. However, this did vary by benefit type and only three-quarters of ESA claimants said that they were very or fairly confident that the amount they were being paid was correct.

Around four in five customers said that the payment calculation (82 per cent) was very or fairly clearly explained. Once again ESA claimants were less likely to feel that the way the payment was calculated was clearly explained (72 per cent compared to 83 per cent of those receiving JSA/IS/IB). Interestingly, belief that the payment calculation was clearly explained actually increased as educational qualifications decreased. Only three-quarters of customers with a degree (76 per cent) felt that the calculation was clearly explained compared to 84 per cent of those with no qualifications at all.

3.4.2 Repeating information

Three-fifths of respondents telephoning Jobcentre Plus (58 per cent) reported that they had to be transferred to another person at some point over the course of their transaction. These customers were then asked how much information they had to repeat when they were speaking to a new person and around half (49 per cent) said they only had to repeat either basic information or nothing at all. It is quite significant that only having to repeat basic information is a 'delight' factor as these are claimants who have had an initial negative experience with their query not being dealt with by the first person they had spoken to. The fact that only having to repeat minimal information can still be identified as something that drives satisfaction shows the benefit that can be gained from managing transfers well and thereby exceeding customer expectations.

The amount of information respondents had to repeat differed quite significantly depending on whether they were transferred directly or called back by Jobcentre Plus at a later date. Respondents who were transferred directly were twice as likely to say that they had to repeat all information as those who were called back (57 per cent compared to 28 per cent). This indicates that there is possibly scope for improving the handover experience when direct transfers take place. Although this must be balanced against the potential extra time this could involve and any technical limitations that may be in place which would prevent warm transfers.

3.4.3 Clear timings

It is interesting to note that while being told what will happen next is a hygiene factor, being given clear timings qualifies as a delight factor. Overall, seven in ten customers whose contact required a direct action from Jobcentre Plus said they were given clear timings on what Jobcentre Plus would do.

Customers who were making a new claim were the most likely to say that they were given clear timings (76 per cent compared to 63 per cent for other contact types), but within this there were also variations depending on the benefit that was being claimed. JSA claimants were significantly more likely to say that they were given clear timings (81 per cent) than either IS or ESA claimants (70 per cent and 66 per cent respectively).

3.4.4 Informed of steps to take if dissatisfied

Over half of all customers (56 per cent) said that they were given adequate information about steps they could take if they were unhappy with how Jobcentre Plus had handled their contact but within this there was significant variation by contact type. Nearly two-thirds of new claimants (64 per cent) said they were given adequate information compared to just two-fifths of those enquiring about benefit eligibility (39 per cent).

3.4.5 Alternative kinds of work

Advisers suggesting jobs which the customer felt were not suitable was a key driver of dissatisfaction but the initial stage of suggesting different types of work than the ones they were interested in was a key driver of satisfaction. This does indicate that claimants appreciate advisers being proactive in helping jobsearch activities, albeit only when the customer feels that the adviser has a good understanding of what is appropriate.

In total just under two-thirds of customers who were actively seeking work (64 per cent) said that their adviser had suggested alternative types of work to that which they were initially interested in. This varied significantly by benefit type. Three-quarters of JSA claimants (74 per cent) had alternative types of work suggested to them compared to just two-fifths of IS claimants (41 per cent) and just over a third of ESA claimants (36 per cent).

3.4.6 Access to services not limited

Claimants who said that they had no problems in accessing Jobcentre Plus services were significantly more likely to be very satisfied with the service and as such this has been identified as a delight factor.

Just over four in five customers (81 per cent) said they had no problems in accessing Jobcentre Plus services but this did vary by customer characteristics. As might be expected, customers with long-term health problems or a disability were significantly less likely to say they had no problems in accessing services than those who did not have any health conditions (74 per cent compared to 85 per cent). Within this group the lowest proportion of customers reporting no problems was among those who were suffering from a sensory problem – only 48 per cent reported they had no problems in contacting Jobcentre Plus. In contrast to this it should be pointed out that claimants who did not speak English as their first language and claimants with young children, both groups for whom access could be problematic, reported the same levels of access as the Jobcentre Plus client base as a whole.

3.4.6 Finding information online

Only 15 per cent of the sample searched for information online as part of their transaction. Just under nine in ten customers who searched for information online (87 per cent) said that it was very or fairly easy to find the information they needed on government websites. Respondents who said it was easy to find information online were nearly eight times more likely to be very satisfied than others.

4 Contact with Jobcentre Plus

This chapter looks at the experiences customers had when making contact with Jobcentre Plus over the telephone, in person and online. It also looks at customers' perceptions of how well Jobcentre Plus is able to link up with other providers of government services such as local authorities.

Key findings

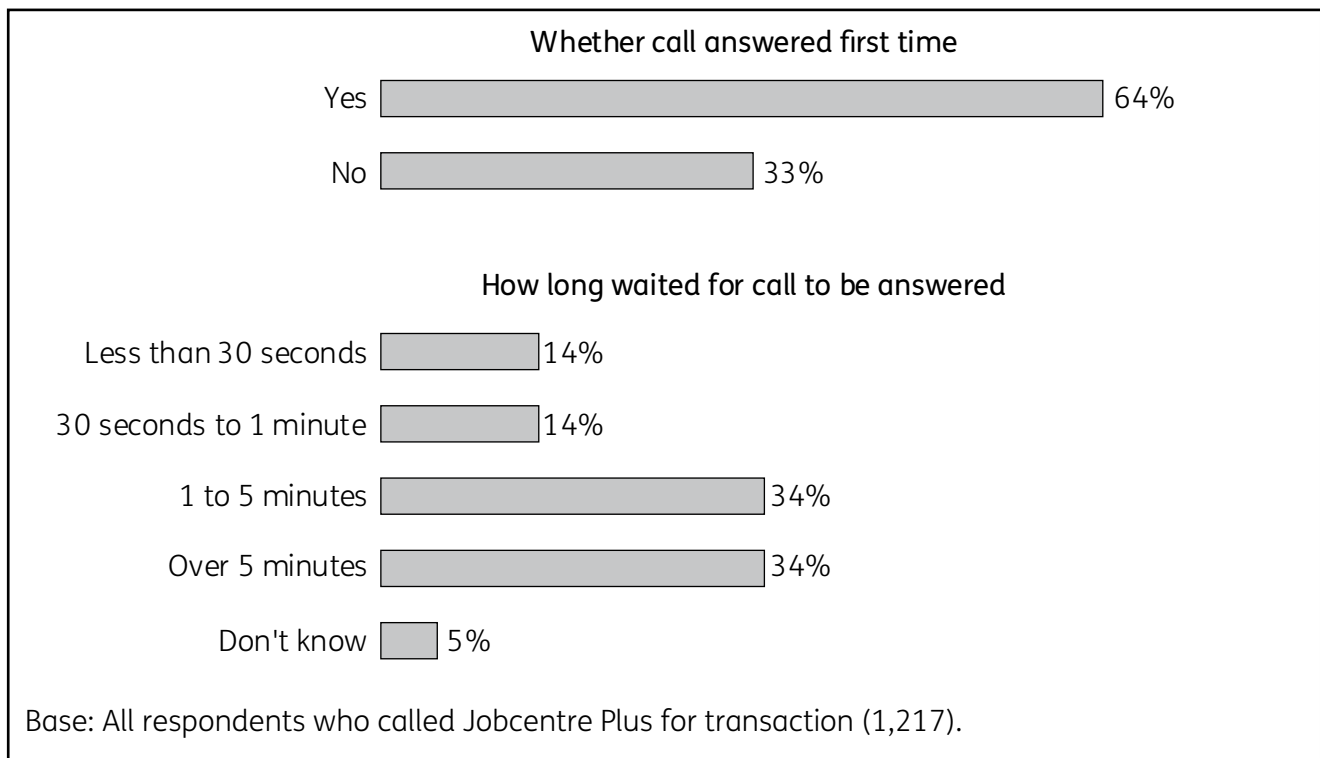
- There was no significant difference in satisfaction between a respondent whose call was answered within 30 seconds or within one minute.
 - When respondents reported that their call took one to five minutes to be answered satisfaction was lower, but it was still at the same level as the survey average.
 - It was only when respondents reported that they had to wait over five minutes that satisfaction was noticeably lower.
- Respondents who were transferred directly to another member of staff during their call were twice as likely to say they needed to repeat all of the information they had given than those who Jobcentre Plus arranged to call back.
- Respondents who felt that they were hurried or who were left with questions unresolved at the end of their call had significantly lower levels of satisfaction.
 - Respondents checking eligibility or reporting a problem were significantly more likely to experience either of these situations.
- Lack of privacy was the biggest concern for respondents when rating the conditions of Jobcentre Plus offices.
- Rating their Jobcentre Plus office positively for providing help when needed had a significant impact on respondents' overall satisfaction with the service.

4.1 Telephone contact

The customer's experience of trying to get through to Jobcentre Plus also has the potential to affect their views of the service in general. The survey asked respondents whether they were able to get through first time and how long they had to wait for their call to be answered. The results are shown in Figure 4.1.

If their call was not answered first time respondents were significantly less likely to be satisfied with the service overall (75 per cent compared to 92 per cent of those whose call was answered first time). There was some variation by transaction type with respondents making a new claim being slightly less likely to report that their calls were not answered first time (29 per cent compared to 36 per cent of other transaction types), but within this there was no significant variation by the type of benefit respondents were applying for.

Satisfaction did not vary between respondents who said their calls were answered within 30 seconds and those who said it was between 30 seconds and one minute (97 per cent and 96 per cent respectively). Satisfaction was slightly lower for those respondents who said they waited between one and five minutes for their call to be answered (87 per cent), but this is still in line with the average for the survey as a whole (88 per cent). Only respondents who said they had to wait over five minutes had markedly lower levels of satisfaction (77 per cent).

Figure 4.1 Experience of call answering

This indicates that efforts to answer calls within 30 seconds may not be necessary to impact on customer satisfaction, as there is no significant difference from respondents whose call was answered within a minute. Beyond this it also appears that having to wait for up to five minutes does not necessarily have a long-term detriment to the respondent's opinion of the service as their satisfaction levels are at the average point for all respondents. This is not to say that at the time respondents would have felt positively about waiting for two, three or four minutes for their call to be answered, but that when asked their overall opinion of Jobcentre Plus, it does not seem to have a negative effect.

This is also reflected in the extent to which respondents felt that the time taken to answer their call was reasonable. As might be expected, nearly all respondents whose call was answered within 30 seconds (99 per cent) felt that this was a reasonable length of time, but this was matched by those whose call was answered within one minute (97 per cent). The proportion of respondents who felt the wait was reasonable was lower when they had to wait for one to five minutes – but at 85 per cent this was only by a relatively small amount. Perhaps the most surprising finding is the proportion of respondents who had to wait for over five minutes who felt that this was reasonable. While the majority did not feel that it was reasonable, a significant minority felt that it was (41 per cent).

All of this seems to indicate that call waiting times are not necessarily the highest priority for respondents and certainly that answering calls within 30 seconds rather than a minute makes very little difference.

4.1.1 Transferals

When making telephone contact with any service organisation, be it private or public sector, the customer generally hopes to be able to resolve their specific transaction or enquiry with the first person they speak to. Of course this is not always possible and sometimes the first member of staff needs to either transfer or direct the customer to another part of the organisation, or indeed to arrange to call them back at a later date.

Two-fifths of respondents telephoning Jobcentre Plus reported that they never had to be transferred and that all calls were resolved with the first person they spoke to. Looking at the different transaction types, respondents whose transaction was a change of circumstance were most likely to have this experience (65 per cent), while those who were reporting a problem were the least likely. Instead, these respondents were more likely to be transferred directly to someone else (42 per cent), or to be told that Jobcentre Plus would call them back (26 per cent). This is not necessarily a problem and may reflect the fact that Jobcentre Plus was taking the respondent's problem seriously in passing the enquiry to someone who could resolve the issue.

To emphasise this fact, the difference in satisfaction between those respondents who were not transferred, and those who were told Jobcentre Plus would call them back, while being statistically significant, was still only a relatively small percentage (92 per cent compared to 86 per cent). In contrast to this, respondents who were either told to call someone else or told to call back another time had much lower levels of satisfaction (67 per cent and 76 per cent respectively). Fortunately, very few respondents actually experienced either of these two transferral processes (four per cent and two per cent respectively).

As important as how the customer is transferred can be what happens when they speak to a subsequent person. Table 4.1 shows how much information respondents who were transferred had to repeat when they spoke to a subsequent contact.

Table 4.1 Amount of information repeated

	%
All information	48
Just basic details	28
No information repeated	21
Don't know	3

Base: All who spoke to subsequent person (685).

There was very little difference in terms of overall satisfaction between respondents who had to repeat no information and those who just repeated basic details (92 per cent and 90 per cent respectively), but respondents who had to repeat all information had markedly lower satisfaction (73 per cent).

The amount of information respondents had to repeat differed depending on whether they were transferred directly or called back by Jobcentre Plus at a later date. Respondents who were transferred directly were twice as likely to say that they had to repeat all information as those who were called back (57 per cent compared to 28 per cent). This indicates that there is possibly scope for improving the handover experience when direct transfers take place. Although this must be balanced against the potential extra time this could involve and any technical limitations that may be in place which would prevent warm transfers.

4.1.2 Experience during call

In addition to asking about the process of making contact with Jobcentre Plus over the telephone, the survey also looked at the respondents' experiences when speaking to a member of staff. In particular, the survey asked whether respondents felt that they had been given enough time to explain themselves, whether the call was too scripted and whether the call had answered all their questions. The results are shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Experience of telephone call

	Given enough time to explain yourself %	Call was too scripted %	Answered all the questions you had %
Yes	90	26	84
No	9	69	13
Don't know	1	5	3

Base: All with telephone contact (1,366).

Respondents who felt that the call was rushed were significantly less likely to be satisfied than those respondents who did not (57 per cent compared to 90 per cent). An almost identical pattern is also present

for respondents who felt that the call did not answer all the questions they had (58 per cent compared to

92 per cent). In contrast to this, respondents who felt that the call was scripted did have lower levels of satisfaction than those who did not, but not to the same degree (78 per cent compared to 90 per cent).

Analysing these call experiences by contact it is clear that there are particular types for which respondents are more likely to report a lack of time or unresolved questions – specifically respondents who were checking eligibility or reporting a problem. These respondents were more than three times as likely to say that they had unresolved questions (30 per cent compared to nine per cent), and four times as likely to say they were not given enough time to explain themselves (21 per cent compared to five per cent).

4.2 Face-to-face contact

The Jobcentre Plus service standards state that staff will always try and see customers on time when they have an appointment, or book an appointment as soon as possible if one is needed.

The majority of respondents (92 per cent) who had an appointment for their most recent meeting said it happened at the appointed time, but this did vary by interview type. Respondents having a New Jobseeker Interview (NJI) were slightly less likely than those having a Work Focused Interview (WFI) to say that it happened at the appointed time (87 per cent compared with 94 per cent).

Unsurprisingly satisfaction was higher for respondents whose appointment had happened at the appointed time (91 per cent compared with 81 per cent). Interestingly, respondents who did not have an appointment at all had similar satisfaction levels to those whose appointment had not happened at the arranged time (82 per cent compared to 90 per cent of those who did). This suggests that respondents appreciate it when appointments are made in advance and give the service credit for this.

4.2.1 Office conditions

Respondents rating office conditions positively were much more likely to be satisfied overall with the services Jobcentre Plus provides, the difference being significant for all conditions asked about in the survey; displaying relevant information in the office, providing a pleasant and welcoming environment, providing appropriate privacy, providing a safe environment, providing help if needed. The most pronounced difference was for providing help if needed where there was a difference of 34 percentage points in satisfaction levels between those rating the service well or poorly (96 per

cent of rating this excellent, very good or good were satisfied compared with 62 per cent of those rating it fair or poor). While providing appropriate privacy was rated most poorly by respondents of all office conditions, this had the smallest impact on overall satisfaction. However, the difference was still significant with a difference of 22 percentage points between those rating the condition well or poorly (96 per cent compared with 74 per cent).

4.3 Online contact

Just under nine in ten respondents who visited a government website (89 per cent) said it was easy to find the relevant page(s). However, while the overwhelming majority of respondents said that finding the relevant pages on the website was easy, this did not mean that they necessarily found all the information they needed.

Only three in five respondents (60 per cent) said that they managed to find all the information they were looking for and even among those who found the relevant pages the proportion was still only two-thirds (67 per cent). Respondents who did not find all the information they were looking for were asked what they had been unable to locate. It is perhaps telling that the largest single response from respondents at this point was 'don't know' (30 per cent). This may indicate that the failure for a number of respondents relates more to a general problem in understanding the system they have to interact with rather than the information that the website holds. Some of the specific information gaps that respondents did identify were: how to get in contact with Jobcentre Plus (13 per cent); information on finding work/vacancies (12 per cent); what they were entitled to claim (12 per cent) and information about benefits in general (eight per cent).

All respondents who attempted to go online to make an application/update details as part of their contact were asked how far they made it through the process and whether there were any difficulties. In particular it measured how many respondents fully completed the online process, how many submitted details but did not complete and how many did not even reach the stage of submitting details.

The majority of respondents (80 per cent) did fully complete the online process for their transaction. It should be noted that the number of respondents who reported an online interaction beyond searching for information as part of their transaction was relatively limited (seven per cent). As a result of this the sub-group analysis that can be conducted on the questions in this section is also necessarily limited. However, the data does indicate that respondents who were making a new claim had the highest completion rates with 90 per cent having reached the end of the process online.

4.4 Linking with Government services

Some Jobcentre Plus customers can have contacts with other government services such as local authorities and other Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) bodies such as the Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCCS). Respondents were asked whether they thought Jobcentre Plus had good links with these other government services and the results are shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Whether Jobcentre Plus has good links with government services

	%
Yes	57
No	16
Don't know	27

Base: All respondents (2,803).

The first thing to note is that just over a quarter of respondents (27 per cent) said that they did not know whether Jobcentre Plus had good links with other government services. This may reflect the fact that these respondents have not had transactions which would require contact with other government departments. If these respondents are excluded we see that just under four in five respondents feel that Jobcentre Plus does have good links (78 per cent), with the balance feeling that they do not (22 per cent).

Respondents who felt that Jobcentre Plus did have good links with other government services had significantly higher levels of overall satisfaction than both those who did not (95 per cent compared to 68 per cent) and those who did not know (95 per cent compared to 86 per cent). This latter finding indicates that customers do appreciate joined up government and that the service gets credit when customers perceive this to be the case rather than simply being viewed negatively if it does not happen.

5 Volume of contacts

The higher the number of contacts a transaction requires before it is resolved, the greater the cost to Jobcentre Plus in terms of resources and to customers in terms of their time. To provide some context, on an average day Jobcentre Plus will:

- process around 19,000 new benefit claims;
- conduct 88,000 adviser interviews;
- receive an average of around 230,000 calls via their contact centres;
- receive around 890,000 jobsearches for vacancies using the Directgov website.

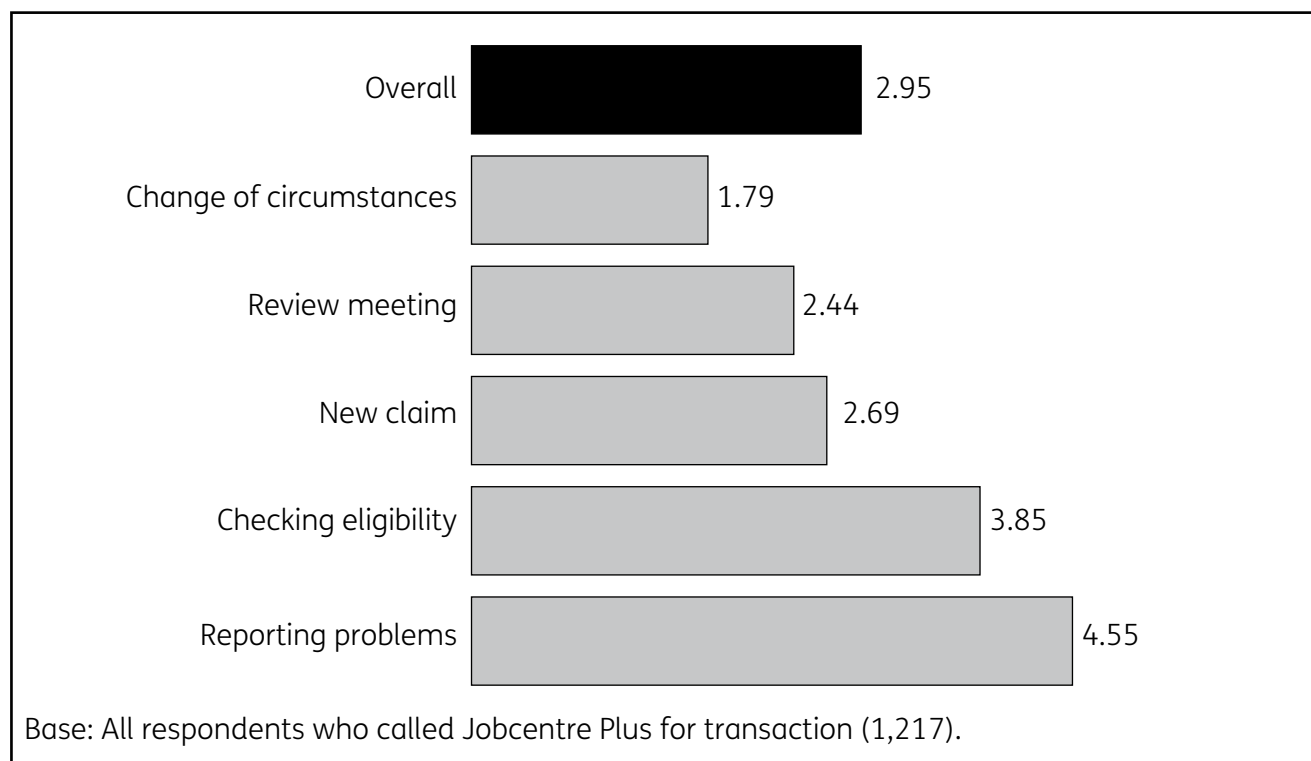
This chapter identifies what elements of the customer journey impact on higher or lower contact volumes as well as identifying in which situations contact volumes impact on overall satisfaction levels.

Key findings

- Respondents checking eligibility or reporting a problem had significantly higher call volumes than those making other transactions.
- On average, new Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claims involved nearly 1.2 extra calls than new Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claims.
- Respondents who felt that they were hurried or who were left with questions unresolved at the end of their call had significantly higher numbers of calls.
 - Respondents checking eligibility or reporting a problem were significantly more likely to experience either of these situations.
- Respondents reporting problems required just over two extra face-to-face meetings than other respondents on average.
 - The majority had also contacted Jobcentre Plus by telephone, with an average of 5.68 calls.
- Data indicates that satisfaction was lower when respondents had made more than three face-to-face contacts to report problems, check eligibility or report a change of circumstances.
 - Number of face-to-face contacts did not impact on satisfaction for respondents discussing job opportunities, making a new claim or having an interview or review meeting.

5.1 Telephone contact

All respondents were asked how many times they had to call Jobcentre Plus in the course of their transaction. The average number of calls made was 2.95 but, as Figure 5.1 shows, this varied significantly by enquiry type.

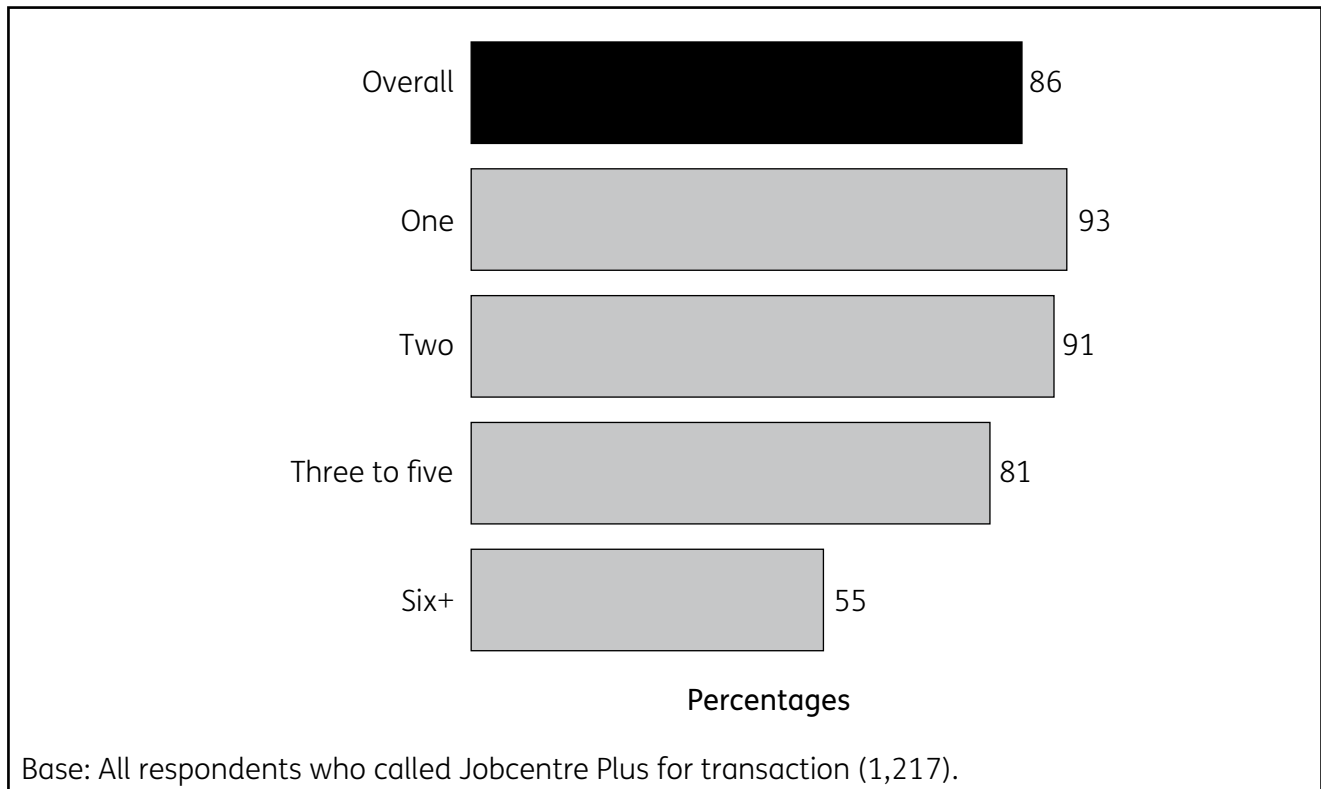
Figure 5.1 Average number of calls, by transaction type

A customer who starts a new claim by telephone, has the option of completing the information gather process during one telephone call, or, once the initial gather has been completed, to request a call back. Therefore, a figure in the region of two contacts per customer is reasonable.

However, both reporting problems and checking eligibility generated significantly more calls than the other transaction types. It may be expected that a transaction where a customer is reporting a problem would generate a higher number of contacts than other types, but it is less clear why this should be the case for customers who are checking eligibility. In these instances the transaction is about the service fulfilling an information need for the customer and, as such, should not necessitate a significant number of calls. Customer service agents on the telephone would attempt to answer the customer's query based on their knowledge on the first contact, or will offer the customer a call back where this is not possible. Therefore, again a figure in the region of two contacts would be expected for this transaction. Unfortunately further analysis by benefit type is not possible due to the range of benefits these respondents were enquiring about, and the resultant small base sizes.

While it may not be possible to look at call volumes for eligibility enquiries by benefit type, it is possible to conduct this analysis for new claims. On average new claims for ESA took nearly 1.2 extra calls than new claims for JSA (3.54 calls compared to 2.38 calls). It may be that this is a result of additional complexity in the ESA process, but if the process can be revised along the lines of the JSA application process, overall call volumes could be reduced significantly.

As mentioned above, high call volumes are not just problematic for Jobcentre Plus in terms of resource cost, they also impact on the customer in terms of the loss of their time. Figure 5.2 shows overall satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus by the number of calls that respondents had to make in the course of their transaction.

Figure 5.2 Satisfaction, by number of telephone calls

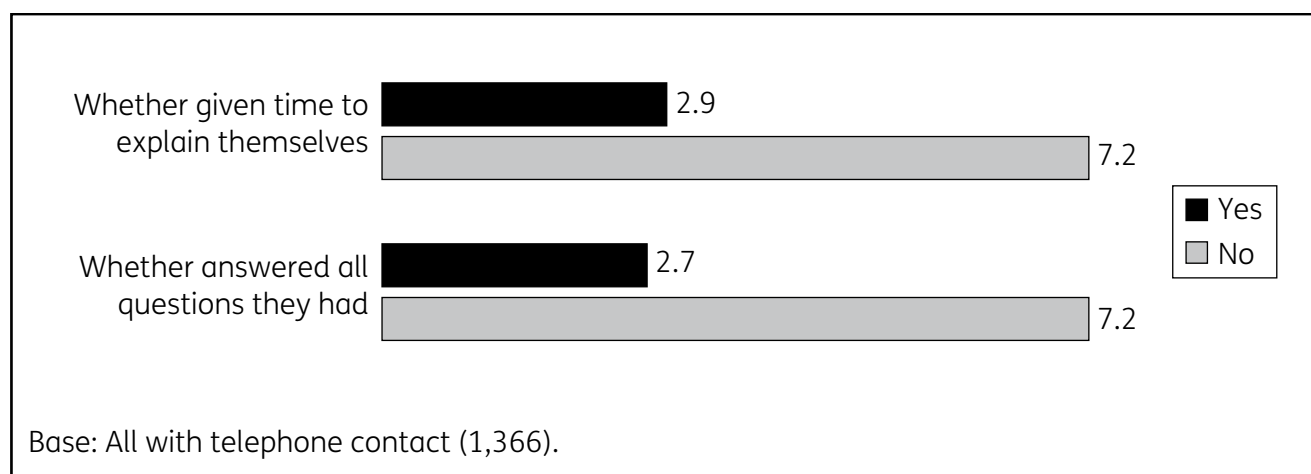
Satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus decreases as the number of calls for a transaction increases, but the most dramatic shift happens when respondents report making over five calls. Only 55 per cent of these respondents say they are satisfied overall with Jobcentre Plus compared to 89 per cent of those who made five calls or fewer.

5.1.1 Experience during call

The impact on customer satisfaction of customers feeling hurried or not having all their questions answered is clear, but in addition to this these experiences are also associated with higher contact volumes. Figure 5.3 compares the average number of calls respondents made by their experience when speaking to Jobcentre Plus.

As Figure 5.3 shows the impact of the customer experience during the telephone call on volumes can be quite significant. Respondents who were not given time to explain themselves, or who did not have all of their questions answered, made nearly two and a half times as many calls during their transaction. Although only a minority of respondents experienced these situations (see Table 4.2), lowering these proportions further could help to reduce call volumes.

Taking extra time at the end of a customer contact to ensure that they have no more issues they want to discuss, and that they are clear about next steps, would lead to fewer situations where customers feel hurried or have unanswered questions. If this raises a problem with resourcing, which is the main reason telephone contact centres try to keep call times as low as possible, then it could be that these steps are focused on customers contacting about benefit eligibility or to report problems.

Figure 5.3 Average number of calls, by respondent experience

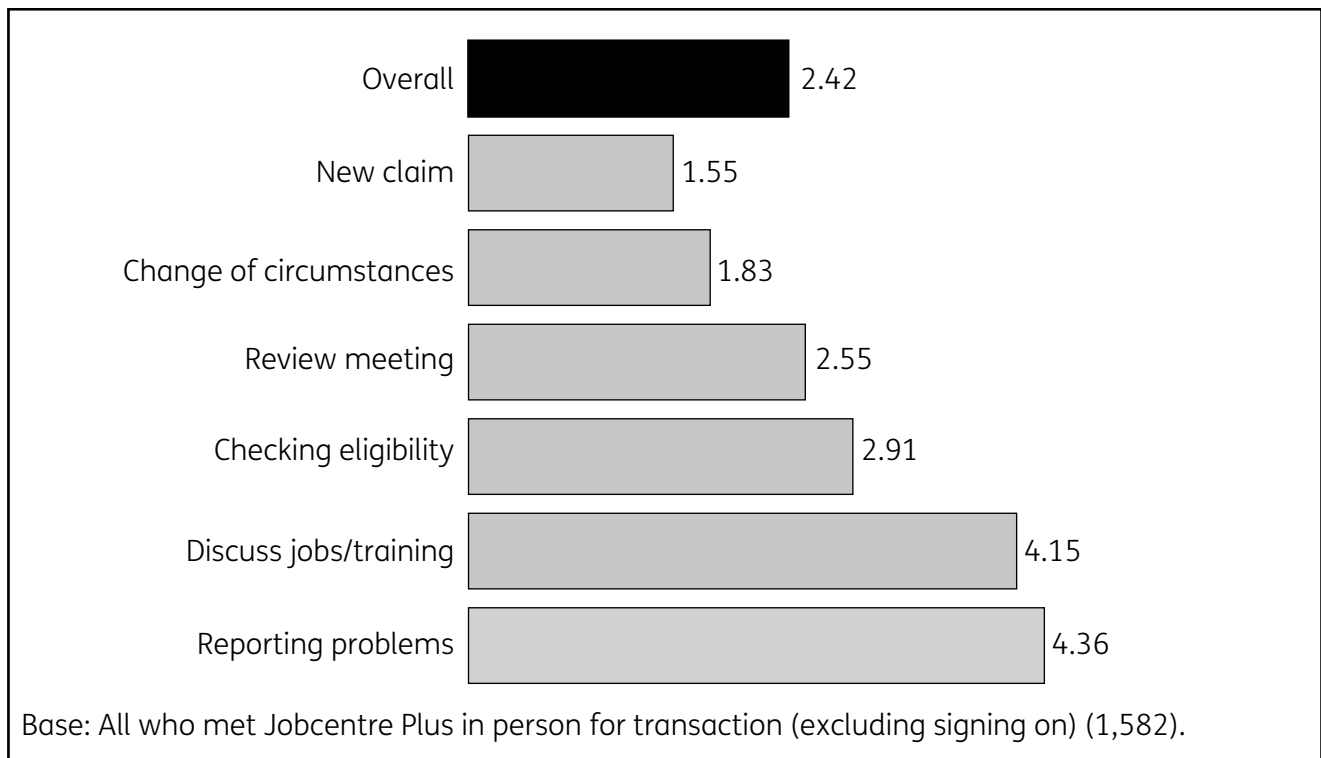
5.2 Face-to-face contact

All respondents who said that their contact with Jobcentre Plus involved a face-to-face meeting, were asked how many times they met someone in person. The average number of meetings required before the transaction was resolved was 2.42 but as the number of telephone calls required varied significantly by type of transaction, so did the number of face-to-face meetings, as shown in Figure 5.4¹³.

Both discussing jobs and training opportunities and reporting problems generated significantly more contacts than other transaction types. The jobs and training discussions in this context would not include formal review meetings or interviews, and are likely to be informal discussions or requests for help with members of staff in a Jobcentre Plus office. Therefore, the fact that these discussions involve higher number of contacts may not necessarily be a negative thing if it is beneficial to the customer and they are clear on their responsibilities as a result of the discussions.

On the other hand, an average of 4.36 face-to-face meetings in the last six months to resolve problems with benefits is more concerning, especially since the majority of respondents reporting problems face-to-face, also did so on the telephone (80 per cent). Respondents who had reported problems both face-to-face and on the telephone made on average 5.68 telephone calls, which is significantly more than the average number of telephone calls made by respondents using both channels for other types of transactions (2.79). This suggests that respondents contacting Jobcentre Plus to report problems are in general using multiple contact channels to resolve them, and may resort to visiting a Jobcentre Plus office in person due to a lack of success over the telephone.

¹³ FNR meetings were excluded from this analysis.

Figure 5.4 Average number of meetings, by transaction type

As with telephone contact, respondents' overall satisfaction levels decrease as the number of face-to-face meetings for a transaction increases, however, it does not seem to have such a dramatic effect as with telephone contact. In fact satisfaction is in line with the average for respondents having up to nine face-to-face meetings and satisfaction only really decreases significantly for those respondents who had ten or more meetings for their transaction (71 per cent were satisfied compared with 89 per cent who had less than ten face-to-face meetings).

Face-to-face contact differs to telephone contact since to some extent customers may welcome additional contact in person, for example if it is helping them with their jobsearch. This is illustrated by the fact that satisfaction did not decrease as number of meetings increased for all contact types. The differences in satisfaction levels by number of face-to-face meetings are actually being driven by respondents checking eligibility, reporting problems and reporting a change in circumstances. These respondents were significantly less likely to say they were satisfied if they had made three or more face-to-face contacts (64 per cent compared with 77 per cent making less than three contacts). Amongst respondents making a new claim, having an interview or a review meeting, or discussing job opportunities, the number of face-to-face meetings did not seem to have an impact on satisfaction levels.

This would suggest that while reducing the number of face-to-face meetings customers have with Jobcentre Plus staff would be beneficial in terms of freeing up resources, this should be carefully focused on particular customer transactions rather than at an overall level.

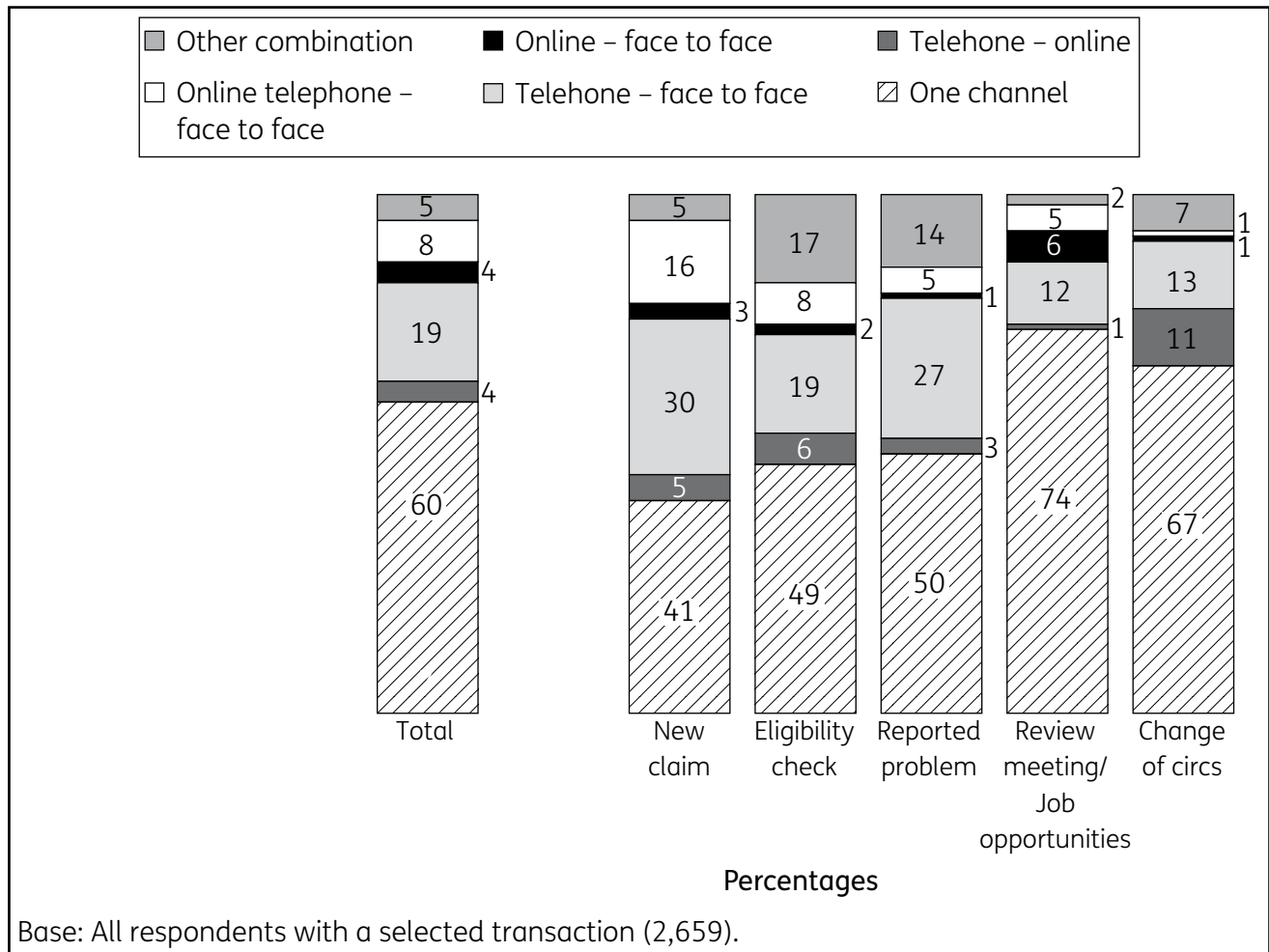
5.3 Multiple contact channels

Respondents experiences of using individual contact channels has been explored in previous sections, however, many respondents used more than one contact channel to get in touch with Jobcentre Plus throughout the course of their transaction.

Two out of five respondents used more than one contact channel over the course of their

transaction. The most common combination of channels was telephone and face-to-face (19 per cent) followed by telephone, face-to-face and online (eight per cent). However, as Figure 5.5 shows, this varied significantly by transaction type.

Figure 5.5 Multiple contact channels used, by transaction

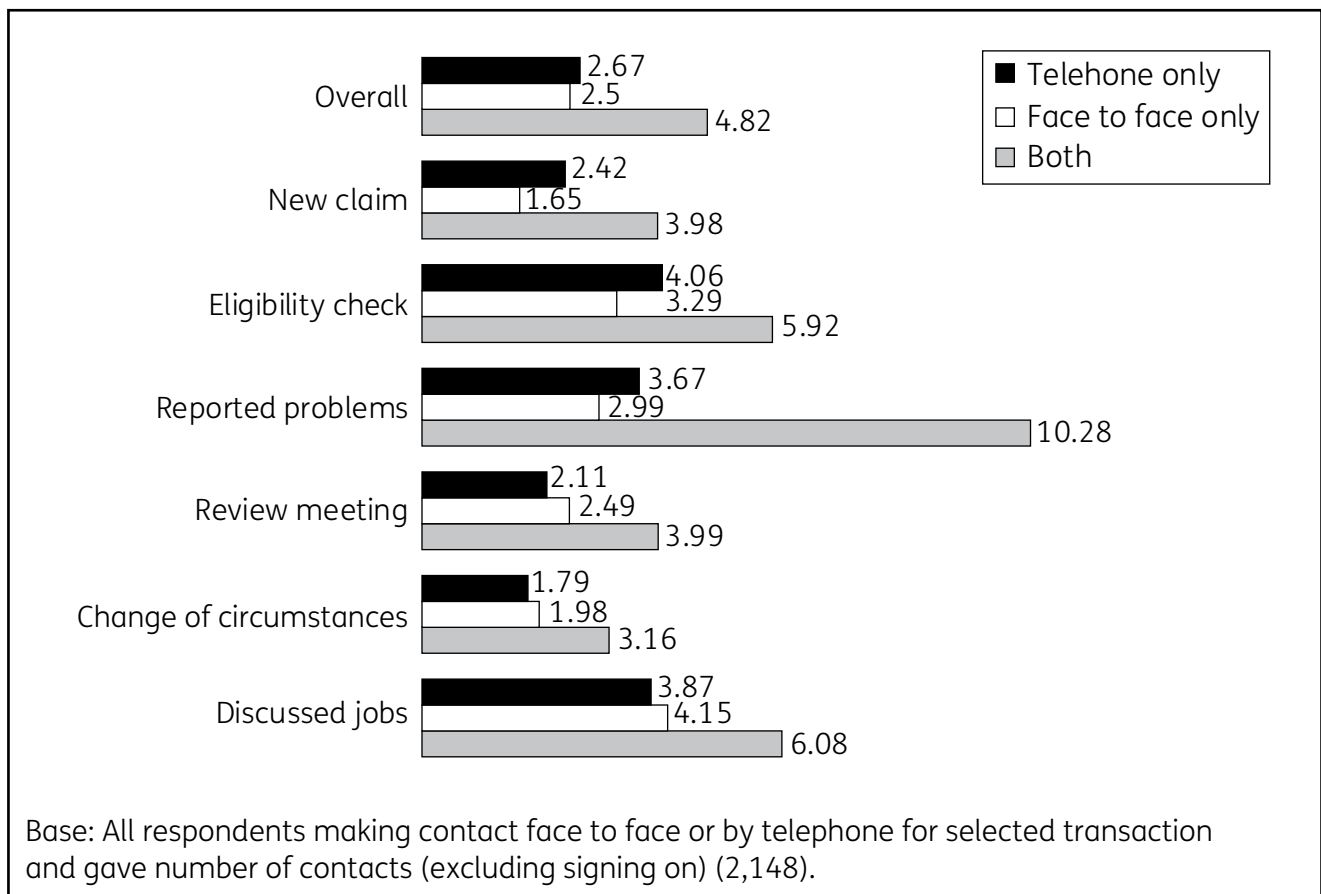


As might be expected, respondents making a new claim were the most likely to have used multiple channels over the course of their transaction but this reflects the intended process for a new claim, since customers are required to attend a New Jobseeker Interview (NJI) in person in addition to providing additional information over the telephone (if this was the method used for first contact). However, the finding that half (50 per cent) of respondents reporting problems, and half (51 per cent) of those checking eligibility, required the use of more than one contact channel is perhaps less expected. Respondents whose most recent transaction was a review meeting/discussing job opportunities were the most likely to report that they only used one contact channel (74 per cent).

If the number of telephone and face-to-face contacts respondents made are combined together, respondents required on average a total of 3.28 contacts to resolve their enquiry. Breaking this down by transaction, the findings are similar to those found when looking at telephone and face-to-face contacts individually, i.e. eligibility check and reporting problems are the most problematic transactions in terms of number of contacts (an average number of 4.42 and 6.19 contacts in total were required respectively).

Potential issues with reporting problems are further emphasised by looking at the number of contacts required for a transaction for respondents using multiple contact channels as opposed to those using just one. As Figure 5.6 shows respondents who reported problems both on the telephone and face-to-face required, on average, around seven more contacts to resolve a problem than those only reporting the problem over the phone or face-to-face.

Figure 5.6 Average number of contacts, by transaction type



5.4 Confidence in payment and understanding calculation

The level of confidence a customer has in the amount of benefit they receive, impacts significantly on call volumes. Respondents who reported that they were not confident that their payment was correct, or said they did not know made on average twice as many calls as those who were confident (5.2 compared to 2.5). A similar impact can be observed when looking at those respondents who felt they had received a clear explanation of how their benefit payment was calculated. Respondents who felt they had not received a clear explanation made on average 4.5 calls compared with 2.5 on average for customers who had received a clear explanation. This suggests that simply ensuring that all customers are clear and understand their benefit calculation at the end of a contact would reduce call volumes.

6 Next steps communication

One key element of contact that had a strong impact on both satisfaction and contact volumes was next steps communication. Respondents were asked how Jobcentre Plus had communicated with them during their transaction in terms of:

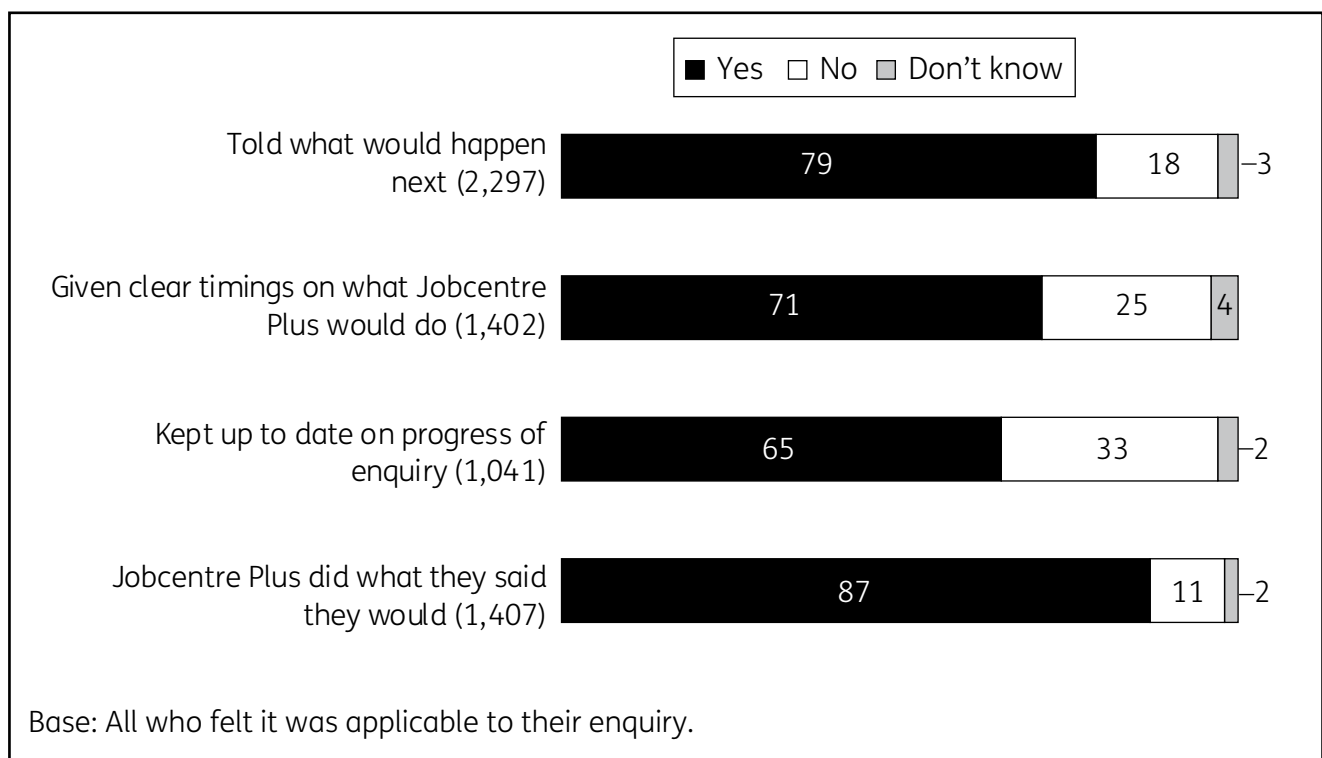
- being told what would happen next with their enquiry;
- being given clear timings;
- being kept up to date with the progress of their enquiry;
- Jobcentre Plus doing what they said they would.

Key findings

- Nearly nine out of ten respondents said that Jobcentre Plus did what they said they would but where the service is failing respondents are significantly less satisfied.
- Telephone call volumes for transactions are twice as high when respondents are not told what will happen next or kept up to date with progress and are nearly three times as high when they are not given clear timings.
- Respondents reporting a problem were the least likely to be told what would happen next or to be given progress updates.

Not all of these elements applied to all respondents for all transactions but the results for those which were applicable are shown in Figure 6.1.

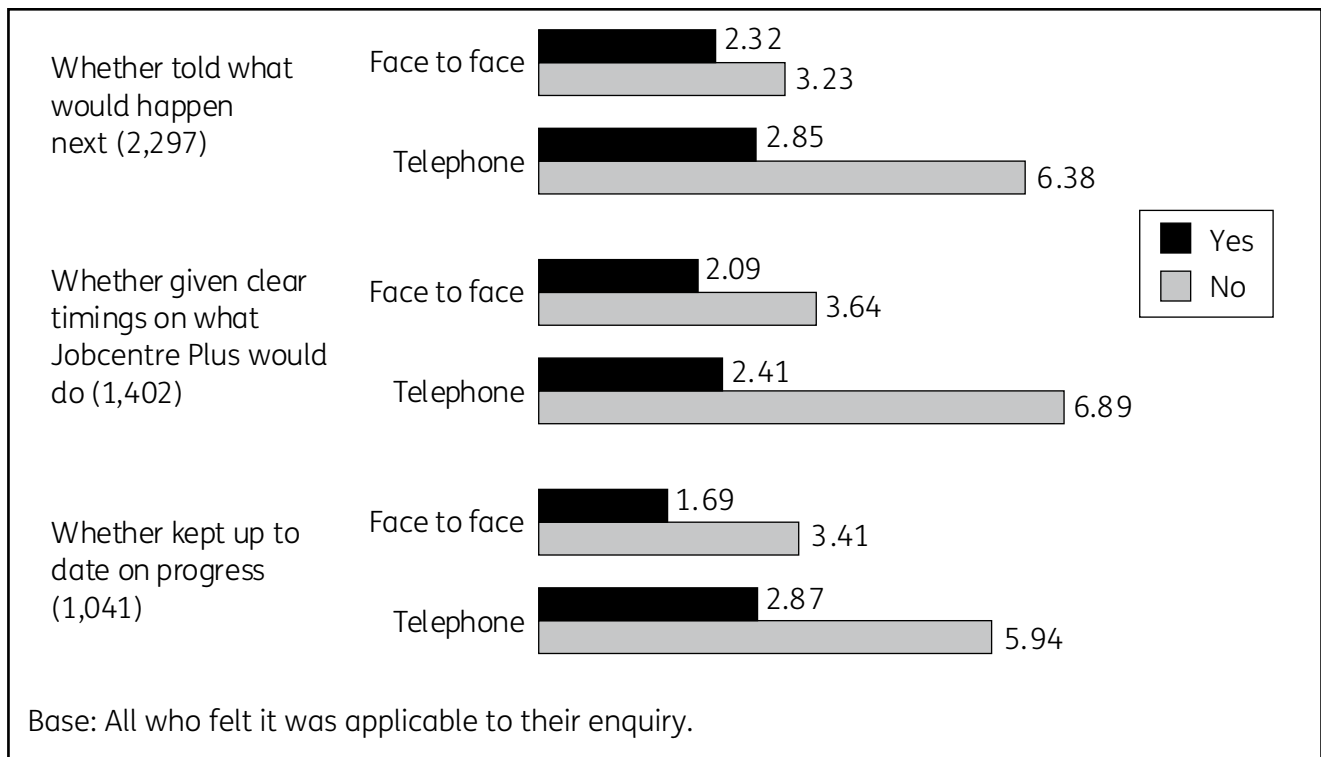
Figure 6.1 Next steps communication



Nearly nine out of ten respondents (87 per cent) said that Jobcentre Plus had done what it said it would when it communicated with them about their transaction. This was higher than for the other communication elements but in some ways it could be seen as being the most disappointing as in customer service terms it is the most fundamental of the four elements. This is emphasised by the significant impact that Jobcentre Plus not doing what they said they would had on satisfaction with the service. Respondents who felt this was the case were half as satisfied as respondents who said that the service did do what they said they would (46 per cent compared to 93 per cent). As might be expected, satisfaction scores were also lower where Jobcentre Plus had not communicated well on the other three elements, but it was not of the same magnitude.

While failing to deliver what the service had said it would had a profound impact on satisfaction with the service, failure to communicate on the other three elements (next steps, timings and progress updates) had a significant impact on call volumes. Figure 6.2 compares the average number of telephone calls and face-to-face visits when Jobcentre Plus does manage to communicate each of these elements and when it does not.

Figure 6.2 Next steps communication and call volumes



For each of the three elements both face-to-face and telephone call volumes were higher when Jobcentre Plus did not communicate clearly with the respondent about next steps. However, it was particularly marked for telephone contact. Respondents made twice as many calls when Jobcentre Plus did not keep them up to date with the progress of their enquiry (5.94 compared to 2.87) and made nearly three times as many calls when Jobcentre Plus did not give them clear timings (6.89 compared to 2.41). As highlighted in previous sections, higher call volumes lead to lower levels of satisfaction but are also intrinsically wasteful for Jobcentre Plus as an organisation.

6.1 Transaction type

Looking at next steps communication and transaction type it is clear that there are particular issues for respondents who are contacting to report a problem. These respondents were significantly more likely to say that Jobcentre Plus did not tell them what would happen next (29 per cent compared to 19 per cent) and that Jobcentre Plus did not keep them up to date with the progress of their enquiry (57 per cent compared to 30 per cent). Given these differences it is clear that there is particular scope for improving the information about what will be happening next with their enquiry for customers who are contacting to report a problem.

On a more positive note, respondents who were initiating a new claim were the most likely to report that they were: told what would happen next (84 per cent), given clear timings (76 per cent) and kept up to date with progress (71 per cent).

In 2010 a feasibility study into the future of the Jobcentre Plus Customer Survey recommended several changes to the research including a move to more regular surveys and changes to the structure of the questionnaire (for further detail, see DWP Report No. 681 *Feasibility study for the future Jobcentre Plus Customer Satisfaction Survey*). The main objective of the new survey is to monitor satisfaction with the service by identifying particular elements which lead to higher and lower levels of satisfaction. The survey also helps to identify elements of the service that generate unnecessary contacts and leads to inefficiencies in delivery. This report presents the findings from the first year of the new survey.

Fieldwork took place between the 19 January and the 30 March and in total 2,803 telephone interviews were completed, providing nationally representative feedback from Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Employment Support Allowance and Incapacity Benefit claimants.

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