



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions



# DWP Claimant Service and Experience Survey 2014/15

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February 2016

Research Report No 916

A report of research carried out by TNS-BMRB on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions

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First published February 2016.

ISBN 978 1 911003 20 5

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# Summary

The 2014/15 DWP Claimant Service and Experience Survey is designed to monitor claimants' satisfaction with the service offered by DWP and ensure that the claimant voice is heard when it comes to operational and policy development. The survey's key objectives are:

- to capture claimants' views and experiences of DWP's service delivery from claimants (or their representatives) who used the service in the three months leading up to the survey;
- to detect variations in the views and experiences of claimants in receipt of different benefits; and
- to use claimants' perspectives of the service to measure the Department's performance against the key elements in the Customer Charter: 'ease of access', 'getting it right', 'keeping you informed' and 'right treatment'.

This report combines the data collected throughout the course of one year, from summer 2014 to summer 2015, to present an annual view of claimants' perspectives. The survey was conducted using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI), and consisted of a total of 14,918 interviews.

Overall, 82 per cent of claimants who had contact with DWP in 2014/15 were satisfied with the service they received. As in previous years, customers in receipt of pension-related benefits reported the highest overall satisfaction scores of 95 per cent whilst claimants in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) had satisfaction levels closer to the average at 81 per cent. Satisfaction was slightly higher among UC claimants, at 84 per cent, and just over two thirds (68 per cent) of PIP claimants were satisfied.

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# Acknowledgements

This research was commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions. The research team at TNS BMRB would like to acknowledge the team at the Department for Work and Pensions who have led this research and overseen the production of this report; especially Mark Peck, Hannah Lockley, Kate Lager, and Stephanie Gale. The authors would also like to thank Dr Sarah Cheesbrough, Director and Head of Policy Research at TNS BMRB, who had overall responsibility for the project, and Michael Colborne who was responsible for the day to day management of the survey. Finally, our thanks go to all of the claimants and customers who gave up their time to take part in this study.

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# List of abbreviations

<b>AA</b>	Attendance Allowance
<b>CA</b>	Carer's Allowance
<b>CATI</b>	Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing
<b>DLA</b>	Disability Living Allowance
<b>DWP</b>	Department for Work and Pensions
<b>ESA</b>	Employment and Support Allowance
<b>GOR</b>	'Government Office Regions' or 'Regions'
<b>IS</b>	Income Support
<b>JSA</b>	Jobseeker's Allowance
<b>NBD</b>	National Benefit Database
<b>PC</b>	Pension Credit
<b>PIP</b>	Personal Independence Payment
<b>SP</b>	State Pension
<b>UC</b>	Universal Credit
<b>UJ</b>	Universal Jobmatch
<b>WCA</b>	Work Capability Assessment

# Executive summary

The 2014/15 Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Claimant Service and Experience Survey is designed to monitor claimants' satisfaction with the service offered by DWP and ensure that the claimant voice is heard when it comes to operational and policy development. A similar survey had previously been carried out annually, but was redesigned in 2014 to provide the Department with operationally strategic data at quarterly intervals. This report combines the data collected throughout the course of one year, from summer 2014 to summer 2015, to present an annual view of claimants' perspectives.

The survey's key objectives are:

- to capture claimants' views and experiences of DWP's service delivery from claimants (or their representatives) who used the service recently;
- to detect variations in the views and experiences of claimants in receipt of different benefits; and
- to use claimants' perspectives of the service to measure the Department's performance against the key elements in the Customer Charter: 'ease of access', 'getting it right', 'keeping you informed' and 'right treatment'.

## Satisfaction with DWP's service delivery

Overall, 82 per cent of claimants who had contact with DWP in 2014/15 were satisfied with the service they received, compared to 81 per cent in 2013. This difference is not statistically significant and reflects the fact that some benefit groups have maintained the same satisfaction levels as the year before, but also masks a number of changes:

- As in previous years, customers in receipt of pension-related benefits reported the highest satisfaction scores: 95 per cent for State Pension (SP) and 95 per cent for Pension Credit (PC). However the proportion of PC customers who were satisfied has risen over the last year. There has been no equivalent change amongst SP customers, though satisfaction levels have risen gradually over time, with more people expressing satisfaction in 2014/15 than in 2012.
- Satisfaction has become more widespread amongst claimants in receipt of disability-related benefits. Satisfaction levels for Attendance Allowance (AA) claimants have now recovered (89 per cent) following a sudden decline in 2013. The high proportion of satisfied claimants in receipt of Disability and Living Allowance (DLA) this year (87 per cent) is out of keeping with satisfaction levels recorded previously, and may partly be due to the changing composition of this group associated with the recent introduction of Personal Independence Payments (PIP). The satisfaction levels of claimants in receipt of Carer's Allowance (CA) have remained stable over the past year (92 per cent).
- The past year has seen satisfaction rise to 93 per cent amongst Income Support (IS) claimants, despite recent changes in lone parents' obligations which might be expected to colour their views of the service. The proportion of claimants on Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) who were satisfied with the service has not changed significantly over the

same period (81 per cent in 2014/15). By contrast, satisfaction levels amongst claimants in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) have risen from 78 per cent in 2013 to 81 per cent in 2014/15. This change may partly be linked to changes in the composition of the JSA claimant population as a result of the gradual roll-out of Universal Credit (UC).

- UC and PIP are new benefits. In 2014/15, UC claimants were more likely to be satisfied (84 per cent) than either JSA or ESA claimants (81 per cent each). Meanwhile, PIP claimants reported the lowest level of satisfaction out of all the benefit groups (68 per cent), though this was partially driven by the negative views of disallowed PIP claimants. If the answers of disallowed claimants are discounted, satisfaction amongst claimants awarded PIP (at 79 per cent) was broadly in line with overall levels of DWP claimant satisfaction, though markedly lower than amongst claimants awarded DLA (92 per cent).

## The experiences of PIP claimants

Experiences of the service they received during their selected transaction may help explain why a relatively lower proportion of PIP claimants expressed satisfaction with the service. It is important to note that PIP findings include disallowed as well as allowed cases, although unless stated otherwise there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups:

- **Ease of access:** Nearly seven in ten (69 per cent) of PIP claimants said they found it easy to access DWP during their transaction (compared to 75 per cent among all claimants). Over eight in ten (83 per cent) reported that the written correspondence they received contained no errors (compared to 91% among all claimants) and over six out of ten (61 per cent) reported their first telephone call to DWP to be answered (compared to 70% overall).
- **Getting it right:** More than two thirds (68 per cent) of PIP claimants perceived that they had received an adequate explanation about their payment, with answers among claimants who were awarded PIP closer to the average for all claimants of 80 per cent. A higher proportion (83 per cent) said that they had received an adequate explanation of the decisions reached regarding their benefit, closer to the average for all claimants of 87 per cent. Fewer than one in five PIP claimants (19 per cent) perceived that they had received incorrect or contradictory information, though this was higher than the average for all claimants (12 per cent). Just over two thirds of PIP claimants (69 per cent) said that DWP did what it said it would do (compared to an average of 87 per cent). Also, nearly eight in ten (77 per cent) believed that the staff they spoke to when they called DWP provided them with the correct information and the same proportion felt that staff were knowledgeable (compared to 91 per cent and 85 per cent overall).
- **Keeping you informed:** Nearly two thirds (64 per cent) of PIP claimants stated that they were provided with clear timings and 49 per cent said that they were provided with progress updates during their transaction (compared to 71 per cent and 66 percent respectively overall). They were more likely than those on other benefits to have underestimated the amount of contact that would be required for the transactions with 33 per cent saying that their transaction entailed a greater amount of contact than they had anticipated.
- **Right treatment:** Just over one in four PIP claimants reported some difficulties or problems in their dealings with DWP, compared to 12 per cent overall, although the base size of PIP claimants experiencing difficulties are too small to draw conclusions about the proportion who considered those problems to be resolved by the time of interview.

## **The experiences of UC claimants**

In many ways the experiences of UC claimants reflected those of JSA claimants:

- **Ease of access:** Around three-quarters of UC claimants (78 per cent) found it easy to get in contact with DWP throughout the process of their transaction. This was also true of 77 per cent of JSA claimants.
- **Getting it right:** In common with JSA claimants, approximately four in five UC claimants received clear explanations about their payment calculations (80 per cent); were given clear explanations about any decisions reached with regards to their benefit (83 per cent); and reported that DWP did what is said it would do during their transaction (84 per cent). Similar proportions of UC and JSA claimants felt that staff were knowledgeable or provided them with correct information. However, UC claimants were more likely than all other claimants on working-age benefits to say that they were given incorrect or contradictory information (16 per cent).
- **Keeping you informed:** UC and JSA claimants reported similar experiences with regards to being kept informed. Around four-fifths of UC claimants were told about next steps in their transaction (81 per cent); 72 per cent were given clear timings on what DWP would do; and 71 per cent were kept up to date with the progress of their transactions. However, JSA claimants were less inclined to seek progress updates (23 per cent, compared with 29 per cent of UC claimants) and fewer felt that their transactions required more contact than they originally anticipated (14 per cent, compared to 18 per cent of UC claimants).
- **Right treatment:** for the most part, UC, JSA and ESA claimants had similar perceptions of DWP staff's politeness, helpfulness and understanding of their personal circumstances, with around nine in ten reporting positive impressions. Problems or difficulties with DWP were reported by one in seven UC claimants (14 per cent) and a similar proportion of JSA claimants (12 per cent).

Despite these similarities, UC claimants gave more positive views of the employment services offered by DWP than claimants in receipt of JSA. They were more likely than JSA or ESA claimants to rate their local Jobcentre Plus office's job searching facilities positively (74 per cent), and more likely to be satisfied with the employment services provided by Jobcentre Plus (70 per cent). When it came to Universal Jobmatch, however, usage levels were similar amongst UC (82 per cent) and JSA claimants (83 per cent), and similar proportions of users from the two groups applied for vacancies found through this service.

## **Transactions where there were shortcomings in service delivery**

- Many of the experiences reported by claimants who appealed their eligibility for ESA suggest that the service fell short of 'getting it right' when handling the appeals process. Appeals were perceived to be lengthy, complex, and error-prone processes, involving staff who were not always equipped with the knowledge required to help claimants resolve their transaction. This transaction also let down claimants in terms of 'keeping you informed'. Claimants who appealed their eligibility for ESA were less likely than claimants who undertook other transactions to receive progress updates and more likely to feel that the process entailed unanticipated levels of contact. These findings may help explain why 43 per cent of those who undertook this transaction were satisfied with the way DWP handled it.

- Transactions involving ESA were also perceived as more complex than equivalent transactions involving other types of benefit. While over a third of those who applied for ESA found the process 'very' or 'fairly' complicated (35 per cent), this was less common amongst claimants making new claims for JSA (27 per cent) or IS (26 per cent). And whereas around a quarter of ESA claimants who reported a change in their circumstances described this process as complex (23 per cent), only 16 per cent of JSA claimants and 13 per cent of PC claimants who tried to do this said the same. Moreover, amongst claimants who applied for benefits, those who started an ESA claim were somewhat less likely to feel informed during the claim process than those starting claims for JSA or IS.
- On average, there was a fairly high degree of satisfaction with the process of making a new claim (83 per cent). However, out of all claimants who made a new claim, those who lodged an application for PIP were the least likely to be satisfied with the way DWP handled the process (70 per cent satisfaction).
- Relatively few claimants felt satisfied with the way DWP handled reports made to them about problems with benefits (63 per cent satisfaction). Claimants who undertook this transaction were less likely to report receiving progress updates and more likely to feel that the process demanded additional contact which they had not anticipated.

## Digital services

- Over four-fifths of JSA claimants (83 per cent) and UC claimants (82 per cent) made use of Universal Jobmatch, though usage amongst IS and ESA claimants was lower (as might be expected given that these benefit groups have different job-searching requirements).
- The SP Estimator was used by 17 per cent of SP customers; the service for requesting an SP statement was used by seven per cent of those in receipt of SP and extremely small numbers of customers in receipt of other pension-related benefits; while the PC Calculator was used by nine per cent of SP customers, seven per cent of PC customers and three per cent of AA claimants.
- Data on the ease of finding and using the services showed that the majority of users had no trouble in locating the webpages they needed, especially with regards to JSA Online and UC Online. Users found it easier to locate most of the benefit application digital services and Universal Jobmatch on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) than benefit calculation and estimation services. Universal Jobmatch users were the most likely to say that they experienced problems with the content or functionality of the site (35 per cent), followed by users of UC online (30 per cent). PC Calculator and SP users cited the fewest issues and therefore performed best on this indicator, with 10 per cent and nine per cent, respectively, of users stating that they had experienced problems.
- CA Online and JSA Online were the services most likely to be recommended by their users (recommended by over four-fifths) while the service least likely to be recommended by those who had experience in using it was UC Online (73 per cent).

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Research objectives

The 2014/15 Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Claimant Service and Experience Survey is designed to monitor claimants' satisfaction with the service offered by DWP and ensure that the claimant voice is heard when it comes to operational and policy development. Prior to 2014, information about claimants' perceptions of the service was collected once a year. This year the survey was redesigned in order to provide the Department with operationally strategic data at shorter, regular intervals. In the period spanning the summer of 2014 through to the summer of 2015, data was collected every quarter from a fresh sample of claimants who had contacted DWP within three months of their interview. The report combines the data collected throughout that period to present an annual view of claimants' perspectives.

The report presents findings which inform the survey's key objectives, namely:

- to capture claimants' views and experiences of DWP's service delivery from claimants (or their representativeness) who used the service recently;
- to detect variations in the views and experiences of claimants in receipt of different benefits; and
- to use claimants' perspectives of the service to measure the Department's performance against the key elements in the Customer Charter: 'ease of access', 'getting it right', 'keeping you informed' and 'right treatment'.

## 1.2 Sample

Each quarter the sample for the survey was drawn from records of benefit claimants held by DWP. The sample was formed of claimants who had made contact with the Pension Service or Disability and Carers Service during a three-month window which ended shortly before the start of fieldwork, together with claimants in receipt of working-age benefits during the same period. The sample included claimants on the largest benefits administered by DWP – Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Income Support (IS), Disability and Living Allowance (DLA), Attendance Allowance (AA), Carer's Allowance (CA), State Pension (SP), and Pension Credit (PC) – together with claimants in receipt of the newly introduced Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Universal Credit (UC).

At the start of the survey respondents were screened to confirm they had contacted DWP or used the services within the past three months. This means that the study is a survey of contacting claimants rather than a survey of anyone receiving a benefit from DWP. This approach is consistent with previous years and was designed to ensure that the survey collects information only from claimants (or authorised nominees) who have had recent first-hand experience of DWP services and can contribute an informed view of these.

The sample was designed to over-represent JSA and ESA claimants, with data on these two groups collected in sufficient numbers to allow robust analysis on a quarterly basis. While quarterly analysis was also possible for UC claimants, the remaining subgroups had insufficient numbers to permit analysis on a quarterly basis and therefore it is only by combining the data collected across fieldwork quarters that it becomes possible to analyse these benefit groups.



Weights were applied to the data collected in each quarter. A weight was required for each of the benefit groups in order to correct for any discrepancies between the composition of respondents in each group and the actual population of claimants in receipt of that benefit. A further weight was applied once data from the four quarters was combined, to take account of the fact that some of the groups were over-represented relative to their actual prevalence in the national population of contacting claimants. This weight served to rebalance the proportions of the ten benefit groups and make the sample reflect the actual distribution of each type of benefit group in the overall population of contacting claimants.

A fuller explanation of the sampling procedures used for this survey is presented in the technical appendix (Section A.2).

### 1.3 Questionnaire design

The questionnaire was designed to measure satisfaction with the service in a consistent way across all benefit groups. During most of the interview, claimants were asked to focus their answers on the service they experienced during a particular transaction which they carried out within the last three months, with additional information collected about their broader experiences of the service towards the end of the interview.

The transaction which formed the focus of the interview was selected from a list which was arranged in order of decreasing complexity: transactions which involved a sequence of steps or contacts and which held greater potential to yield information on multiple aspects of service delivery were higher on the list than more straightforward transactions. The full list of transactions can be found in the technical appendix (Section A.1). The list was read out by interviewers and claimants were asked to pick the first transaction which applied to them. This hierarchical approach was used to avoid giving undue weight to relatively simple transactions such as signing on, and ensure that sufficient interviews were conducted with claimants who had more involved dealings with DWP. The questionnaire used routing and modules to take respondents through the process of their transaction, ensuring interviews were understandable and logical from the claimant's perspective.

The design of the 2014 questionnaire mirrors the design used in 2013, with the structure remaining identical and many of the same questions remaining in use. However, the number of questions was reduced to achieve an average interview length of around 15 minutes.

It is important to note that claimants were asked to feed back upon their experiences with DWP services specifically, rather than other bodies that they may have interacted with during the process of their transaction, for instance private health providers. Having said this, when assessing satisfaction with a transaction retrospectively it may not always be possible to completely disentangle experiences with one particular service provider from others.

### 1.4 Fieldwork

All respondents were sent an advance letter two weeks before the start of fieldwork which explained the purpose of the study, reasons for their inclusion in the research and the form that the survey would take. Respondents were invited to call a freephone number if they wished to opt out of the survey or if they wanted to enquire about further details of the research before deciding whether to participate. All telephone interviews were conducted

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using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI), with fieldwork taking place in four separate periods:

Quarter 1: between 9 July and 10 August 2014.

Quarter 2: between 2 October and 5 November 2014.

Quarter 3: between 13 January and 16 February 2015.

Quarter 4: between 13 April and 10 May 2015.

In total, 14,918 interviews were carried out across the four quarters. Details of interviews and other outcomes achieved during fieldwork are presented in the technical appendix (Section A.4).

### 1.5 Structure of this report

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 presents the satisfaction scores for the overall population of claimants who have had contact with DWP; for groups of claimants on specific benefits; and for JSA and ESA claimants in the seven Jobcentre Plus regions. It also shows claimants' satisfaction levels with various transactions they had recently carried out.

Chapters 3 to 6 are structured around the service standards identified from the DWP customer charter.<sup>1</sup> They present the metrics used to assess DWP's performance in providing 'ease of access' (Chapter 3); 'getting it right' (Chapter 4); 'keeping you informed' (Chapter 5); and delivering the 'right treatment' in its service to claimants (Chapter 6). Within these chapters, results are mainly reported at the benefit level. Since claimants' perceptions of the service and information they received tends to be closely associated with the nature of the transaction they were undertaking, Appendix B and C also present findings for specific transactions.

The main transaction categories<sup>2</sup> reported here are:

- Making a new JSA claim.
- Making a new ESA claim.
- Making an new IS claim.
- Appealing a decision about eligibility for ESA.
- ESA claimants who underwent a re-assessment of their entitlement to ESA (following a change of benefit).
- JSA claimants who reported a change of circumstances.
- ESA claimants who reported a change of circumstances.
- PC customers who reported a change of circumstances.
- Reporting problems with a benefit.

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<sup>1</sup> For information on the DWP Customer Charter see: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/292673/customer-charter-dwp.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/292673/customer-charter-dwp.pdf) (link accessed in August 2015)

<sup>2</sup> Only transactions with sufficiently large base sizes to permit robust analysis are included in this report.

The last two chapters focus on two relatively new elements of DWP's service delivery. Chapter 7 presents the experiences of claimants in receipt of UC, which was introduced as a new benefit in 2013 and is gradually being rolled out nationally. Chapter 8 presents claimants' experiences of the online services which are being developed as part of DWP's 2012 Digital Strategy and are currently available through [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) – the government website.

The technical appendix at the end of the report offers additional information on the survey, including the questionnaire, sample design, fieldwork outcomes, and weighting procedures applied to the data.

## 1.6 Interpretation of data and analysis in this report

This report presents findings at the DWP level, which includes all claimants who made contact with DWP in the three months prior to interview, and at the benefit level. The benefit groups reported here are referred to throughout this report using the acronyms defined in Section 1.2 (a list can also be seen in the 'Abbreviations' section at the start of this report). Benefits administered through Jobcentre Plus are occasionally referred to as 'working-age benefits'; this is used as a convenient shorthand, and no assumptions should be made about the employment status of individuals in receipt of those benefits (some of whom may be in part-time or full-time employment). For convenience, PC and SP benefits are sometimes referred to as 'pension-related benefits', while DLA, PIP and AA are sometimes referred to as 'disability-related benefits'.

When interpreting the findings for this survey, several points should be borne in mind:

- since the survey's target population consists of contacting claimants, the findings in this report cannot be generalised to the entire claimant population, but only to the population who had recent contact with DWP;
- the survey is based on a sample of contacting claimants; the results are therefore estimates and – even after the data has been weighted – can be expected to differ somewhat from comparable results obtained by surveying the entire population. The sampling and weighting designs used for this survey enable us to say that a finding from the sampled population has a 95 per cent chance of matching, or lying very close to, the true value for the overall population of contacting claimants.

As part of the analysis process, findings for each benefit group were compared against each other. This report describes some of this variation and draws attention to differences which are statistically significant at the 95 per cent confidence level.<sup>3</sup> This means that if we repeated the survey 100 times using new samples, on 95 occasions we would expect the same difference to emerge from the findings. This gives us confidence to believe that the observed difference exists in the wider population and not just in our sample, though some degree of uncertainty still remains. This should be taken into consideration when drawing inferences about the findings.

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<sup>3</sup> Significant differences between sub-groups, or between a subgroup and the remainder of the population, were identified using two-tailed t-tests.

## DWP Claimant Service and Experience Survey 2014/15

In this report, wherever results are described as different this indicates a statistically significant difference (as defined above) which is generalizable beyond this survey. Unless stated otherwise, the reader may assume that all differences cited throughout the report are statistically significant at the 95 per cent confidence level. If a difference is not statistically significant, this will be highlighted.

Throughout the report percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number (figures are rounded up from .5, and rounded down below this). Percentages in the tables and charts do not always add to 100 per cent due to rounding, and/or because for some survey questions respondents could select more than one response option. In cases where a number of responses have been grouped together ('netted'), the proportion of respondents who gave a 'netted' response may not always equal the sum of the individual responses, again due to rounding.

The following conventions have been used in the tables:

- Zero per cent is indicated using '-'
- Figures above zero but below 0.5 of a percentage point are indicated using '\*\*'
- Square brackets [ ] are used to indicate base sizes of 50 or below. Findings based on such small base sizes should be treated with caution.

Full details on the methodological approach for survey can be found in the accompanying technical appendix.

## 2 Overall performance in 2014/15

### 2.1 Summary of chapter

The primary measure used to assess claimants' overall views of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP's) performance is a question asking how satisfied they were with the service they received, using a four-point scale running from very satisfied to very dissatisfied. This question was addressed to all claimants who have had contact with DWP in the three months prior to their interview, regardless of any specific transaction they undertook or the benefit they were claiming, and provides the opportunity to compare perspectives of the service from the viewpoint of different benefit groups. Since the same question has been asked over several years, it is possible to compare year-on-year data to gauge how performance has changed over time from the viewpoint of those who use the service.

The chapter begins by examining satisfaction levels for the overall contacting population and for individual benefit groups, and noting variations over time (Section 2.2) and in different Jobcentre Plus regions (Section 2.3). Overall, 82 per cent of claimants contacting DWP were satisfied with the service that they received in 2014. The equivalent figure for 2013 was 81 per cent; however, this difference observed between the two years is not statistically significant.

As in previous years, customers in receipt of pension-related benefits reported the highest overall satisfaction scores (95 per cent for State Pension (SP) and Pension Credit (PC)). Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claimants reported the lowest level of satisfaction (68 per cent), though this was partly driven by the negative views of those with disallowed claims. PIP claimants were also more likely than other claimants to give negative reports on specific elements of DWP's service delivery (see Section 3.3, 4.2, and 5.2).

The final section of this chapter (Section 2.4) reports on a separate question, which measures how satisfied claimants were with the way DWP dealt with a specific transaction they carried out within the last three months. On average, 81 per cent were satisfied with how DWP dealt with this. Satisfaction was highest for relatively simple transactions such as reporting a change of circumstances (85 per cent). In contrast, satisfaction levels were lowest amongst those who appealed a benefit decision (43 per cent).

### 2.2 Overall satisfaction with DWP's service

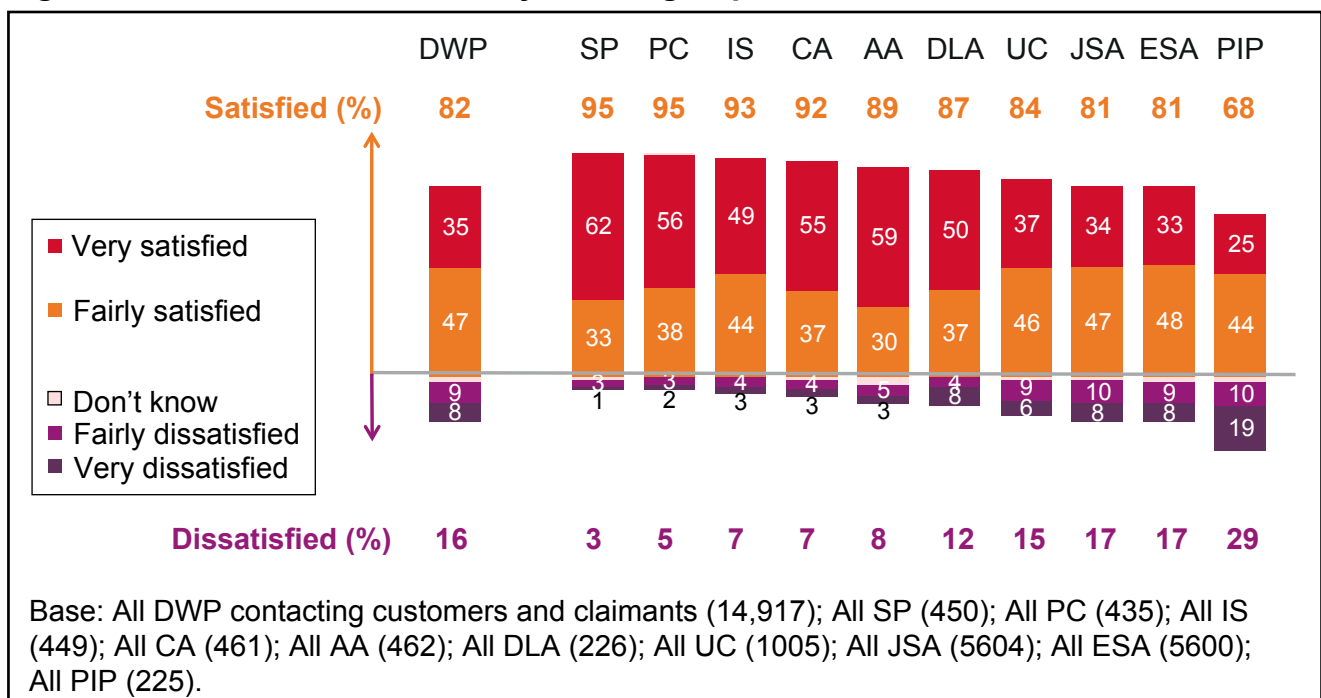
Approximately four in five (82 per cent) of the claimants who had contact with DWP in the three months prior to their interview were satisfied with its services, and fewer than one in five (16 per cent) were dissatisfied. Nearly half of all DWP claimants said they were 'fairly satisfied' (47 per cent), and just over a third (35 per cent) said they were 'very satisfied'. These figures are consistent with 2013, where 81 per cent of claimants indicated satisfaction with the service (the increase from 2013 to 2014 is not statistically significant).

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Almost all claimants whose dealings with DWP had gone better than they had anticipated were satisfied with the service (97 per cent, compared with 89 per cent of those whose dealings had gone as well as expected, and 32 per cent whose dealings had gone worse than expected). However, the relationship between claimants' expectations and levels of satisfaction was not always straightforward: two per cent of claimants who felt that the quality of their dealings had fallen below their expectations described themselves as being 'very satisfied' with the service, while three per cent of those whose dealings had exceeded their expectations still described themselves as dissatisfied.

Figure 2.1 shows satisfaction levels amongst all DWP claimants, and claimants in receipt of different benefits. Almost all SP customers (95 per cent) and PC customers (95 per cent) were satisfied with the service they received). Around nine in ten claimants in receipt of Income Support (IS) (93 per cent), Carer's Allowance (CA) (92 per cent), Attendance Allowance (AA) (89 per cent) and Disability Living Allowance (DLA) (87 per cent) expressed satisfaction with the service, as did 84 per cent of Universal Credit (UC) claimants. Approximately four fifths of claimants in receipt of JSA (81 per cent) or ESA (81 per cent) were satisfied. Sixty-eight per cent of PIP claimants were satisfied, with 19 per cent saying they were very dissatisfied with DWP's services.

**Figure 2.1 Overall satisfaction by benefit group**



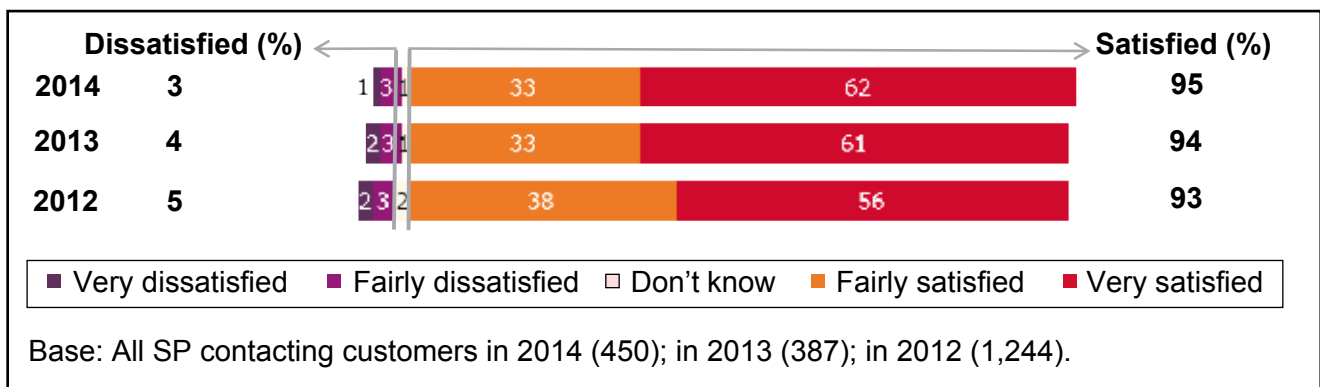
Notably, there was some variation in satisfaction levels within the PIP benefit group. PIP claimants whose claim was disallowed were twice as likely to say they were 'very dissatisfied' with DWP's services (25 per cent, compared with 12 per cent who lodged a successful claim). Only 59 per cent of those with a disallowed claim expressed satisfaction; if their views are discounted, 79 per cent of all remaining PIP claimants were satisfied with

the service they received. This suggests that satisfaction levels were comparable amongst claimants awarded PIP, and claimants in receipt of JSA or ESA (no statistically significant differences).<sup>4</sup>

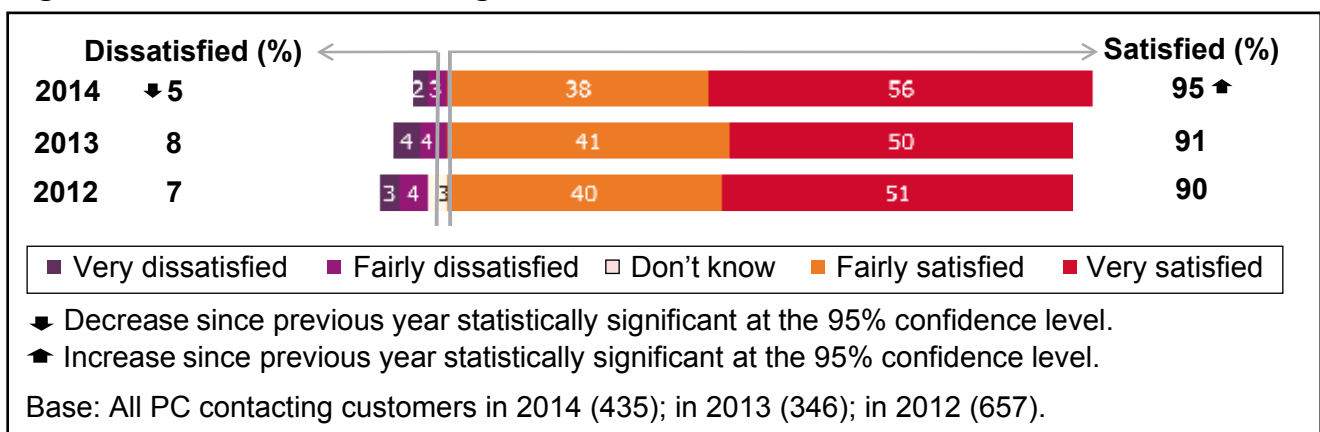
Figures 2.2 to 2.9 show the change in satisfaction levels over the last few years amongst claimants in receipt of eight of the benefits. Where data from 2011 is available, this is also shown. It should be noted that although the question has not changed over this period, the survey design and sample population have changed to some extent, and that some of the apparent differences in satisfaction levels over time may be due to this. Since PIP and UC were introduced relatively recently, there is no previous data for these two benefits.

As Figures 2.2 and 2.3 make clear, customers on pension-related benefits have consistently maintained high levels of satisfaction between 2012 and 2014. The proportion of PC customers who were satisfied has risen over the last year. While there has been no equivalent change from one year to the next amongst SP customers, there has been a gradual rise in satisfaction levels over time, with more people expressing satisfaction in 2014 than in 2012.

**Figure 2.2 Satisfaction amongst SP customers**



**Figure 2.3 Satisfaction amongst PC customers**

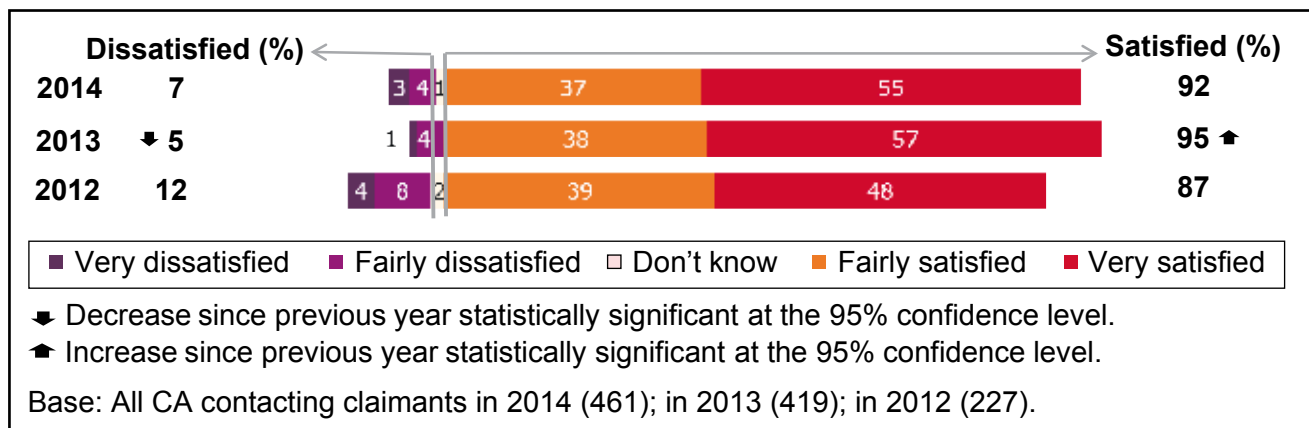


<sup>4</sup> The DLA benefit group also included some claimants whose claim was disallowed. Only 78 per cent of disallowed DLA claimants were satisfied with the service they received. If their views are discounted, 92 per cent of all remaining DLA claimants expressed satisfaction, far more than their PIP counterparts with awarded claims (79 per cent).

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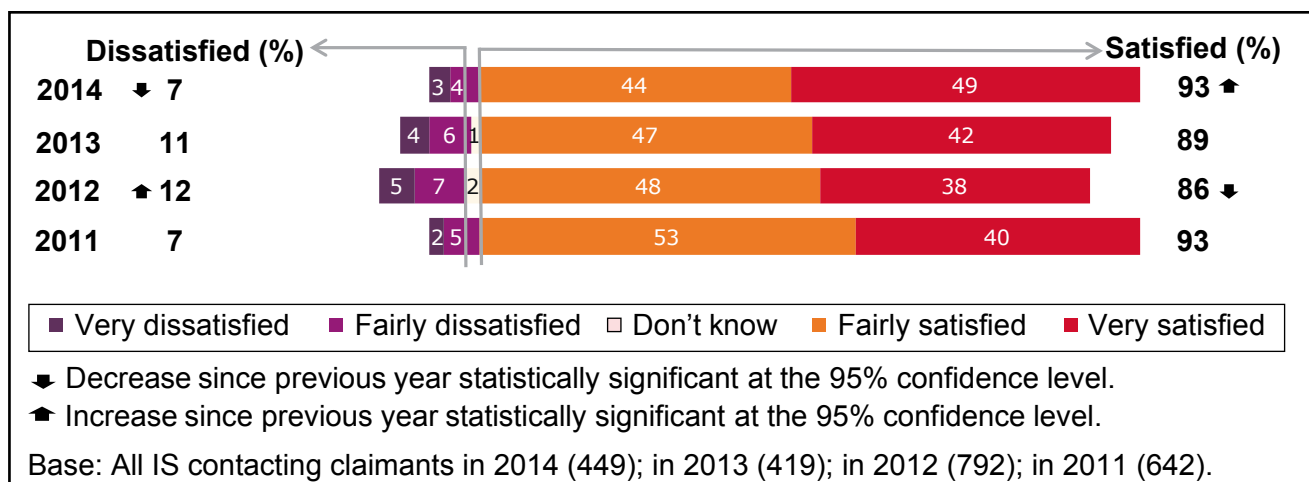
Following the increase in satisfaction levels in 2013 amongst CA claimants (rising from 87 per cent in 2012 to 95 per cent), satisfaction has remained stable over the past year (Figure 2.4).

**Figure 2.4 Satisfaction amongst CA claimants**



Satisfaction levels have risen between 2013 and 2014 amongst IS claimants (Figure 2.5), with the proportion who currently report satisfaction reaching the level previously seen in 2011 (93 per cent), and the proportion who feel 'very satisfied' with the service the highest on record. This is despite the changes that came into force in 2014 in IS claimants' obligation to engage in job searching when their youngest child reaches the age of three to four, which might be expected to colour perceptions of the service.

**Figure 2.5 Satisfaction amongst IS claimants**



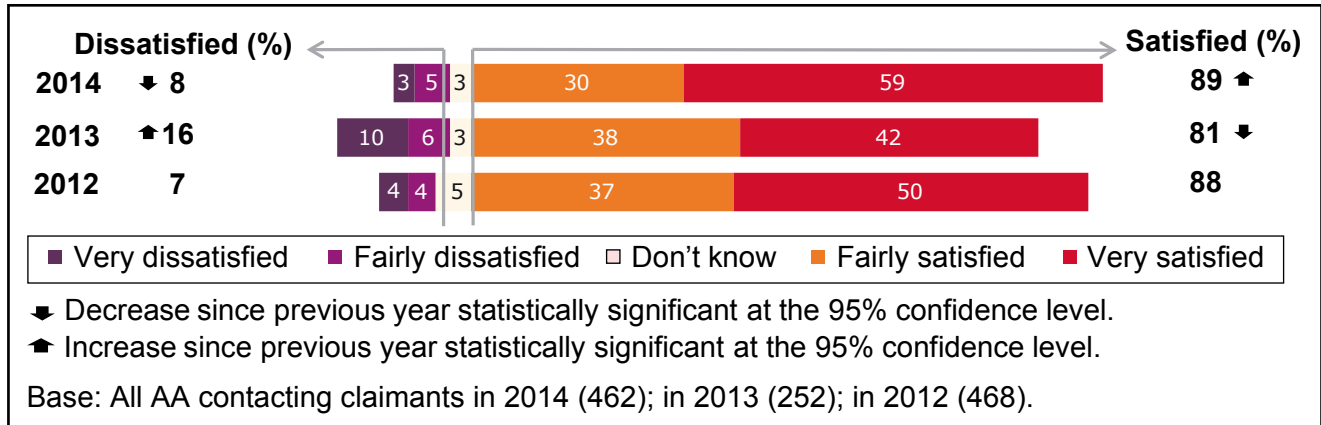
Satisfaction levels rose in 2014 compared to 2013 amongst both AA claimants (Figure 2.6) and DLA claimants (Figure 2.7). The level of satisfaction recorded amongst AA claimants has recovered following a sudden decline in 2013. By contrast, the level of satisfaction amongst DLA claimants is out of keeping with levels recorded in the last two years. This may partly be explained by the changing composition of this group, associated with the introduction of PIP in 2013. In the past, the DLA group consisted of a mix of claimants on indefinite and fixed awards<sup>5</sup>, and this group's satisfaction score represented the experiences and perceptions of

<sup>5</sup> DLA is awarded to claimants for either a fixed period (fixed award) of time or without time scale (indefinite award) dependent on their circumstances.



both types of claimant. The gradual transfer of existing DLA claimants with fixed awards onto PIP during 2014 and 2015 means that the current DLA group contains disproportionately more individuals with indefinite awards than was previously the case, with additional weight placed on the views of claimants on indefinite awards.

**Figure 2.6 Satisfaction amongst AA claimants**



**Figure 2.7 Satisfaction amongst DLA claimants**

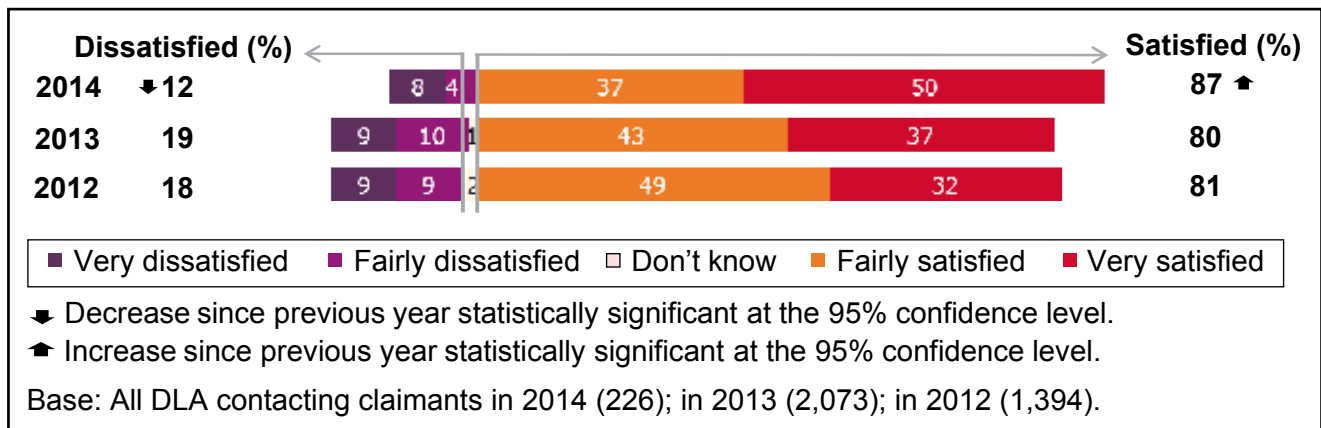


Figure 2.8 shows changes in satisfaction levels amongst JSA claimants. Following a decline in satisfaction between 2012 (84 per cent) and 2013 (78 per cent), the last year has seen an increase in the proportion reporting satisfaction with the service (81 per cent). It should be noted that the composition of the JSA claimant population has been gradually changing as a result of the gradual roll-out of UC, and now includes fewer single claimants than it did previously. Changes in satisfaction levels may partly be linked to these changes in composition.

Figure 2.8 Satisfaction amongst JSA claimants

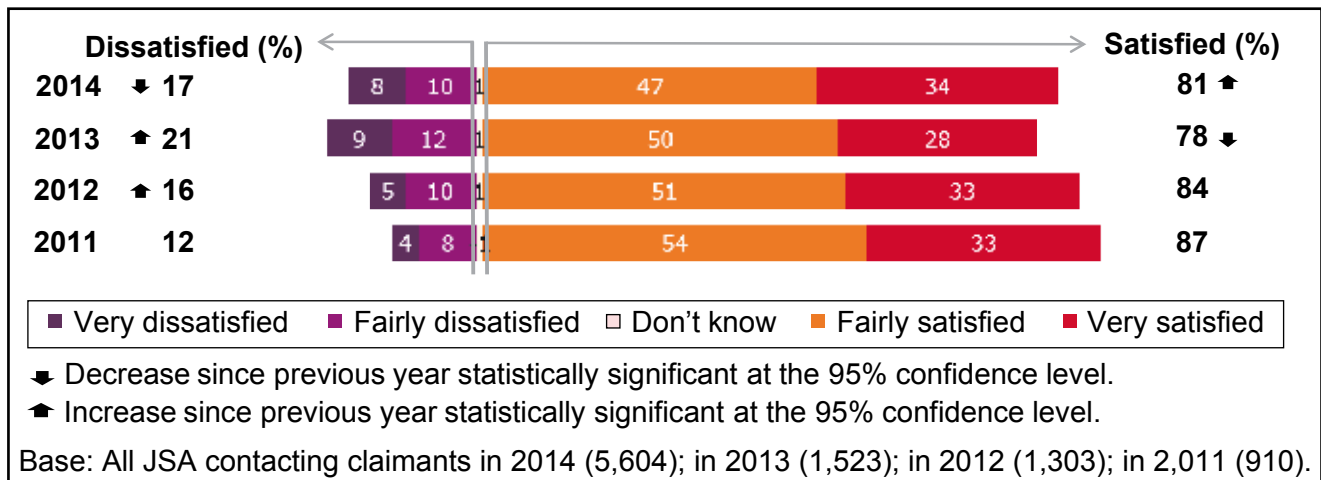
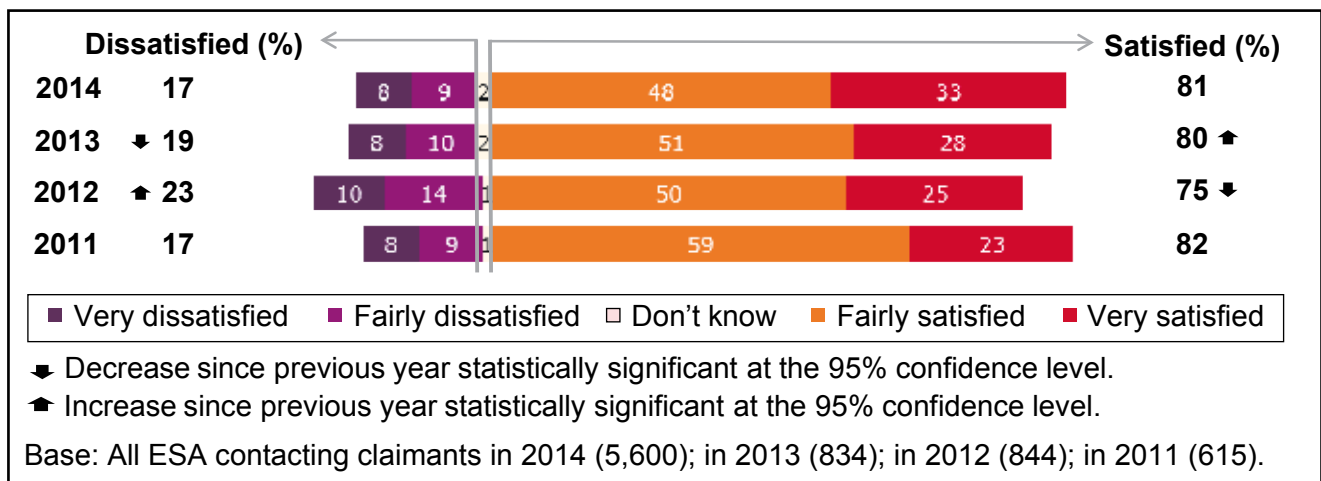


Figure 2.9 shows levels of satisfaction amongst ESA claimants between 2011 and 2014. There have been no significant changes in the past year.

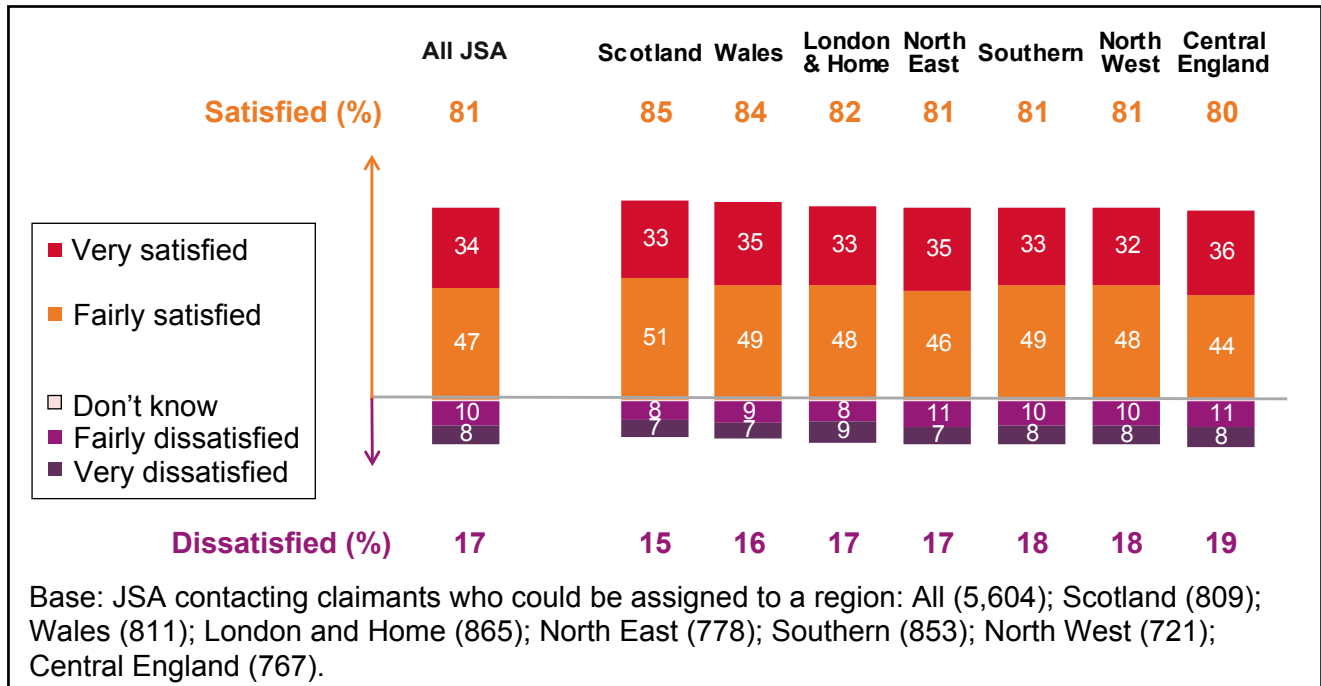
Figure 2.9 Satisfaction amongst ESA claimants



## 2.3 Regional satisfaction with service

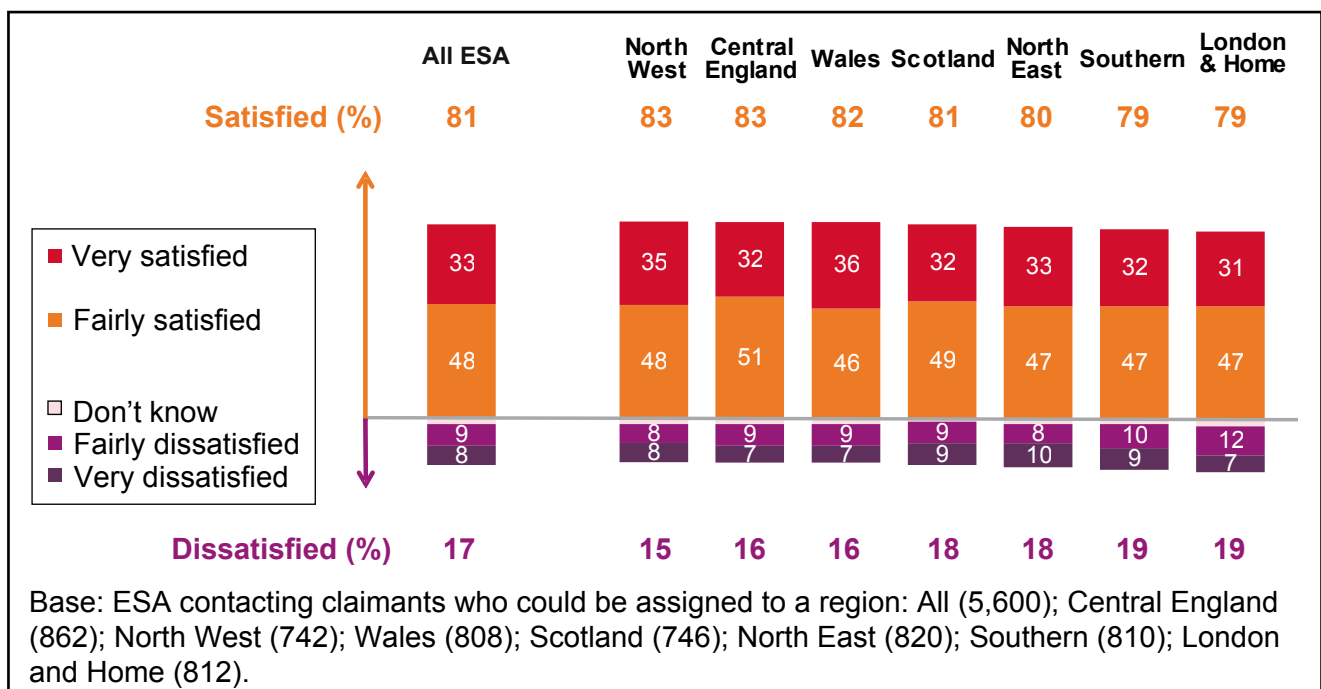
Interviews were conducted with sufficient numbers of JSA and ESA claimants to permit regional analysis of satisfaction levels. Figure 2.10 shows satisfaction with DWP's services amongst JSA claimants living in the seven Jobcentre Plus regions. Satisfaction was highest amongst those in Scotland (85 per cent), and lowest amongst claimants in Central England.

Figure 2.10 Satisfaction amongst JSA claimants by Jobcentre Plus region



While JSA claimants using services in the North West were less satisfied than JSA claimants in some of the other Jobcentre Plus regions, ESA claimants using DWP services in the North West expressed relatively high levels of satisfaction (Figure 2.11), and were in fact more satisfied (83 per cent) than their counterparts living in Southern England or London and the Home Counties (79 per cent each).

Figure 2.11 Satisfaction amongst ESA claimants by Jobcentre Plus region



## 2.4 Satisfaction with transaction

Claimants were asked a separate question to gauge their satisfaction with the way DWP handled a particular transaction they had undertaken in the last three months. More than eight in ten claimants (81 per cent) were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘fairly satisfied’ with the way that DWP handled this transaction. This level of satisfaction applied to almost all the most common transactions reported on during the survey, namely: reporting a change of circumstances; making a new claim; having eligibility reassessed after a change of benefit; and receiving the outcome of a Work Capability Assessment (Figure 2.12). However, only around three-fifths (63 per cent) of claimants who reported problems with their benefit were satisfied with the way this was handled, and less than half (43 per cent) of those whose transaction involved appealing DWP’s decision regarding their eligibility for a benefit expressed satisfaction with the way the process was handled.

Figure 2.12 Satisfaction with transactions

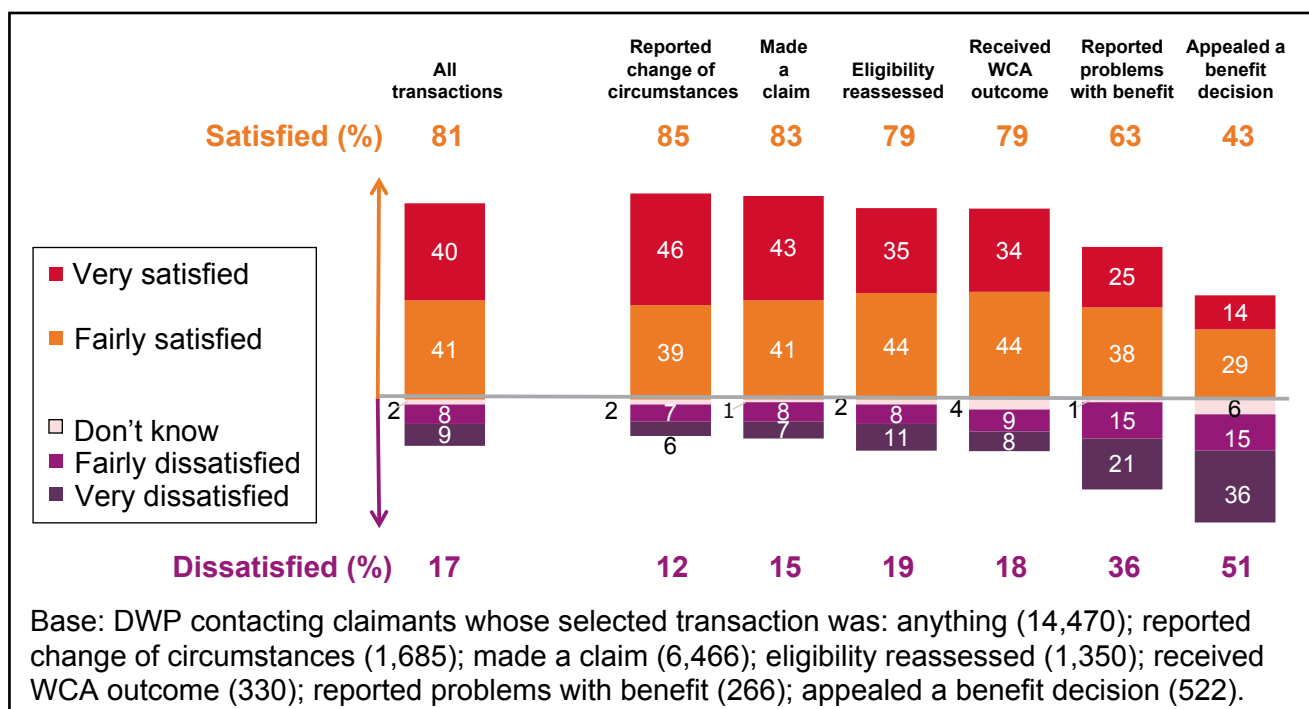


Table 2.1 shows claimants’ satisfaction with the process of making a claim for different types of benefit. Results show that there was almost universal satisfaction with the process of applying for pension-related benefits, while over nine in ten claimants were satisfied with the process of applying for CA, AA or DLA. DWP’s handling of applications for most other benefits was considered satisfactory by between eight and nine in ten claimants. Seven in ten claimants who applied for PIP were satisfied with the way this process was handled.

**Table 2.1 Satisfaction with making a claim for various benefits**

	Benefit claimed for:									
	SP %	PC %	CA %	AA %	DLA %	UC %	IS %	ESA %	JSA %	PIP %
Very satisfied	74	67	67	73	63	41	46	41	40	43
Fairly satisfied	22	29	26	20	28	48	40	42	41	26
Fairly dissatisfied	1	3	3	3	4	5	8	8	9	12
Very dissatisfied	2	1	3	3	5	5	4	7	9	17
Don't know	1	*	1	1	*	-	1	1	1	2
<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Dissatisfied</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>29</b>
<i>Bases</i>	<i>268</i>	<i>161</i>	<i>288</i>	<i>256</i>	<i>170</i>	<i>241</i>	<i>383</i>	<i>2,249</i>	<i>2,069</i>	<i>110</i>

Tables 2.2 shows levels of satisfaction with a selection of other transactions, reported by claimants in individual benefit groups. Only transactions with large base sizes are shown. Further details regarding these transactions are presented in Appendix B and C of this report.

**Table 2.2 Satisfaction with other transactions, by benefit group**

	Reported change of circumstances				Eligibility reassessed	Appealed a benefit decision
	PC %	UC %	JSA %	ESA %	ESA %	ESA %
Very satisfied	69	45	42	43	35	14
Fairly satisfied	25	44	43	40	44	32
Fairly dissatisfied	3	4	7	7	8	15
Very dissatisfied	3	5	5	8	11	33
Don't know	-	1	2	2	2	6
<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Dissatisfied</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>48</b>
<i>Bases</i>	<i>105</i>	<i>157</i>	<i>779</i>	<i>386</i>	<i>837</i>	<i>211</i>

## 3 Ease of Access

### 3.1 Summary of chapter

This chapter explores claimants' experiences of accessing Department for Work and Pensions (DWP's) services. It starts by looking across the entire population of claimants who had contact with DWP in the three months prior to their interview, and sets out the proportions who used various channels of communication (Section 3.2), and whether the channel was used for initial or follow-up contact when carrying out specific transactions with DWP (Section 3.3). It also explores whether claimants found it easy to make, receive and maintain communication with DWP during their dealings (Section 3.4), and sets out the channels that they would prefer to use if they were to carry out their transaction again (Section 3.5).

- When looking at the overall claimant population, the channel used most often for contact with DWP was the telephone. This was also true across the majority of benefit groups. However, face-to-face contact was most often used by Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and Universal Credit (UC) claimants (whose Claimant Commitments oblige them to visit their local Jobcentre Plus office on a regular basis), closely followed by online contact. Meanwhile, postal correspondence was heavily used in the transactions described by Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA) claimants.
- The majority of all claimants said they would prefer to use the telephone over alternative channels if they were to carry out their transaction again; this was true across all benefit groups.
- On average, three quarters of claimants found it easy to get in contact with DWP throughout their transactions. Sixty-nine per cent of ESA and PIP claimants found it easy to get in touch with DWP, suggesting that poor health may act as a barrier to access for some claimants.

The second half of the chapter focuses on specific channels used during claimants' transactions. Results describe how channels are utilised and (where relevant) claimants' perceptions of these channels are also discussed:

- Telephone contact (Section 3.6): the vast majority of claimants who communicated with DWP over the telephone made calls to DWP rather than receiving them, and three-quarters of claimants were able to get through the first time they rang. The average number of calls made during a transaction ranged from 1.6 (for AA claimants) to 2.6 (for JSA and ESA claimants).
- Face-to-face contact (Section 3.7): meetings in person were common amongst claimants in receipt of working-age benefits. Three-quarters were arranged by appointment, though the prevalence of appointments varied from 66 per cent amongst ESA claimants to 91 per cent amongst UC claimants. Over three in five claimants who visited their local Jobcentre Plus office gave a positive rating of the job-searching facilities provided, and a similar proportion were satisfied with the service offered to help them find employment.

- Written contact (Section 3.8): three-quarters of claimants whose transactions involved written contact reported that this was initiated by DWP. While postal correspondence often served as an initial means of contact in claimants' transactions, email and text messages were almost always used as follow-ups. Almost all claimants felt that the written correspondence they received was easy to understand (94 per cent for post and email, and 98 per cent for texts). Nine in ten claimants also believed that the information they were given was correct, though 83 per cent of PIP claimants believed that the correspondence they received was error-free.

## 3.2 Types of channels used in last three months

The survey recorded whether claimants had telephone or online contact<sup>6</sup> with DWP in the three months prior to their interview, whether as part of their selected transaction or for any other dealings. It also recorded any face-to-face contact that claimants in receipt of working-age benefits had with Jobcentre Plus staff over the same period. The proportions who used these channels are shown in Table 3.1. It should be noted that the results for telephone contact include both calls made to, and calls received from, DWP.

**Table 3.1 Telephone, online and face-to-face contact in last three months**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Telephone	68	82	61	48	56	57	73	68	42	70
Gov.uk	36	16	48	17	34	84	43	36	86	29
In person	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	88	67	46	93	n/a
<i>Bases</i>	<i>478</i>	<i>408</i>	<i>465</i>	<i>384</i>	<i>277</i>	<i>997</i>	<i>554</i>	<i>5,412</i>	<i>5,695</i>	<i>248</i>

Although most claimant groups used the telephone over other means of contact, JSA and UC claimants were more likely to use DWP's online services (86 per cent and 84 per cent respectively). Pension Credit (PC) customers and PIP claimants were more likely than other claimants to rely on telephone communication.<sup>7</sup>

Face-to-face transactions were more common amongst JSA and UC claimants (93 per cent and 88 per cent respectively) than claimants in receipt of Income Support (IS) or ESA, reflecting differences in job-searching requirements between these groups. The small minorities of JSA and UC claimants who had not had any contact in person over the past three months mainly consisted of those who had stopped a claim during the past three months (52 per cent), stopped their claim longer than three months ago (21 per cent), or lodged claims very recently and had presumably not yet had the chance to visit a Jobcentre Plus office (21 per cent).

<sup>6</sup> Online contact includes all visits to [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk), either to search for information or to use one of DWP's digital services (Universal Jobmatch, JSA Online, UC Online, SP Online, CA Online, SP Estimator, SP statement, or the PC calculator). Additional detail about the use of these services is presented in Chapter 8.

<sup>7</sup> Findings may be related to differences in service delivery models.

### 3.3 Types of channels used as part of transaction

Claimants reported all the channels they used during the course of their selected transaction. Although information is available for all claimants who participated in the survey (Table 3.2), when reading these results it should be borne in mind that the questionnaire was designed so that survey respondents were disproportionately more likely to describe complex transactions (such as making claims or appeals), than they were to report on common but simple transactions (such as searching the gov.uk website or making appointments). The results in Table 3.2 should therefore not be taken as representative of all channel usage made by claimants in receipt of these benefits.

**Table 3.2 Channels used during transaction**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Telephone	68	82	59	46	55	40	69	62	27	69
Gov.uk	28	8	38	10	21	26	20	16	36	21
In person	4	9	9	17	11	61	41	22	67	14
Post	30	37	38	50	63	14	19	36	9	50
Email	1	-	1	1	1	2	1	1	3	1
Text	-	-	1	-	1	1	4	2	6	3
<i>Bases</i>	<i>487</i>	<i>398</i>	<i>465</i>	<i>379</i>	<i>284</i>	<i>999</i>	<i>547</i>	<i>5,426</i>	<i>5,687</i>	<i>246</i>

Almost all types of claimant were more likely to use the telephone than any other channel for their selected transaction. However, DLA and AA claimants were more likely to use postal correspondence rather than the telephone (63 per cent and 50 per cent respectively). All benefit groups made some use of the gov.uk website, though this was least common amongst PC customers and AA claimants (eight per cent and ten per cent respectively). Since claimants on working-age benefits could access Jobcentre Plus offices, they were more likely than other claimants to use face-to-face channels. Email and text were the channels that were least commonly used by all benefit groups.

### 3.4 Ease of getting in contact during transaction

When asked about the overall ease of getting in contact throughout their transaction, three-quarters of claimants (75 per cent) indicated they felt it was 'very' or 'fairly' easy. Views varied across benefit groups (Table 3.3), with 91 per cent of SP and 85 per cent of PC customers likely to find contact easy and 69 per cent each of ESA and PIP claimants likely to find contact easy. This pattern suggests that advanced age is less of a barrier to accessing DWP's services than poor health.



**Table 3.3 Ease of getting in contact during transaction**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very easy	51	47	46	41	36	38	35	27	35	27
Fairly easy	39	38	38	38	42	41	45	41	42	41
Fairly difficult	4	9	6	6	10	11	10	13	12	12
Very difficult	3	3	5	2	6	8	8	13	9	15
Don't know	3	3	5	12	6	3	2	5	2	4
<b>Easy</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Difficult</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>27</b>
<i>Bases</i>	<i>454</i>	<i>395</i>	<i>447</i>	<i>374</i>	<i>275</i>	<i>973</i>	<i>535</i>	<i>5,178</i>	<i>5,614</i>	<i>225</i>

Looking across the entire claimant population, 70 per cent of claimants who had physical or mental health conditions or illnesses expected to last for 12 months or more found access easy, compared with 79 per cent of claimants who had no such conditions or illnesses.

Claimants who searched the gov.uk website during their transaction or used it to make an application for a benefit indicated how easy or difficult they found it to locate the relevant pages. Around nine in ten found it easy to navigate the website to find what they were searching for (Table 3.4).

**Table 3.4 Ease of finding relevant pages on gov.uk during transaction**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very easy	36	[45]	61	[44]	[47]	51	48	35	46	[36]
Fairly easy	51	[48]	34	[37]	[34]	39	42	50	44	[48]
Fairly difficult	7	[3]	5	[10]	[14]	4	5	8	7	[9]
Very difficult	4	[4]	-	[5]	5	5	5	6	3	[7]
Don't know	2	-	-	[4]	-	*	1	1	1	-
<b>Easy</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>[93]</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>[82]</b>	<b>[81]</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>[84]</b>
<b>Difficult</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>[7]</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>[15]</b>	<b>[19]</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>[16]</b>
<i>Bases</i>	<i>107</i>	<i>[27]</i>	<i>109</i>	<i>[28]</i>	<i>[44]</i>	<i>220</i>	<i>80</i>	<i>586</i>	<i>1,679</i>	<i>[44]</i>

Since the ease of locating web-pages contributed to the perceived complexity of any benefit claims undertaken by claimants, the findings relating to individual transactions are reported as part of 'getting it right' in Appendix B. The ease of locating individual digital services on gov.uk is reported separately in Chapter 8 (see Section 8.4).

### 3.5 Preferred channel for carrying out transaction

Almost three-fifths of claimants (58 per cent) said they would prefer to use the telephone over alternative channels if they were to carry out their transaction again.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the telephone was the preferred channel of contact across all individual benefit groups (Table 3.5). It is worth noting that almost everyone (94 per cent) who said they would prefer to use a telephone in the future did, in fact, use the telephone at some point during their selected transaction, though this was true of proportionately fewer JSA claimants (85 per cent).

**Table 3.5 Preferred channel for carrying out transaction**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Telephone	72	77	64	61	47	66	66	62	37	[71]
Online	12	2	13	7	13	6	9	6	24	[4]
In person	4	10	6	10	10	13	12	15	24	[12]
Post	8	9	12	20	23	7	7	12	5	[10]
Email	4	1	2	1	7	7	1	2	6	[-]
Text	-	-	-	1	-	1	2	1	2	[-]
Other way	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	*	*	[-]
Don't know	-	1	1	-	-	1	1	1	1	[3]
<i>Bases</i>	<i>125</i>	<i>130</i>	<i>112</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>104</i>	<i>138</i>	<i>1,466</i>	<i>675</i>	<i>[48]</i>

Although online access was chosen as a preferred channel by substantial minorities of claimants in most benefit groups, only around one in twenty UC claimants (six per cent) cited online access as their channel of choice if they were to repeat their selected recent transaction (further information on different transactions at Annex A.1). This may reflect the nature of UC's rollout, which meant digital channels were less available for particular transactions in the early stages of a claim and may have impacted responses. Table 3.1 shows that 84% of UC claimants made use of DWP's online services more generally.

### 3.6 A focus on telephone contact

Table 3.6 shows the proportions within each benefit group who used the telephone during their transaction, separating out those who used it as the first means of contact and those who used it at a later stage.

<sup>8</sup> This question was not asked of claimants whose selected transaction was signing on or carrying out a regular review meeting at Jobcentre Plus, as there is no scope for offering claimants alternative means of carrying these out. It was also not asked of anyone whose selected transaction was visiting the website [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

**Table 3.6 Telephone use (with regards to transaction)**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Initial	84	83	69	80	56	63	90	80	51	71
Additional	16	17	31	20	44	37	10	20	49	29
<i>Bases</i>	<i>330</i>	<i>327</i>	<i>264</i>	<i>160</i>	<i>153</i>	<i>404</i>	<i>378</i>	<i>3,381</i>	<i>1,545</i>	<i>168</i>

Across all benefit groups, those who used the telephone were more likely to use it for initial contact than at a later stage in their transaction. IS and ESA claimants, as well as pensioner customers (in receipt of SP, PC and AA) were particularly likely to use the telephone as a first point of contact. By contrast, UC, JSA and DLA claimants were more likely than other groups to have telephone contact at a later stage in their transaction.

The vast majority of those who used the telephone did so to make a call to DWP, rather than to receive one. Seven in ten claimants who called DWP (70 per cent) were able to get through the first time they phoned (Table 3.7), though claimants on PIP and working-age benefits were less likely than other claimants to achieve contact with their first call.

**Table 3.7 Able to get through to DWP with first call (with regards to transaction)**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	82	81	90	95	89	68	74	67	65	[61]
No	12	16	9	5	9	31	21	31	32	[31]
Don't know	6	3	1	-	2	1	5	3	3	[7]
<i>Bases</i>	<i>113</i>	<i>123</i>	<i>85</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>104</i>	<i>122</i>	<i>1,216</i>	<i>378</i>	<i>[46]</i>

Caution: small bases.

Table 3.8 shows the number of calls made to DWP by claimants during their transaction, split by benefit group. While the majority of claimants needed to make no more than two calls during their transaction, the mean number of calls placed by claimants ranged from 1.6 (for AA claimants) to 2.6 (for ESA and JSA claimants). PIP claimants made the highest number of calls (mean of 4.7 calls), but this finding should be treated with caution in view of the small base size for this group. The mean number of calls associated with each benefit group may be linked to the complexity of the transactions they undertook (with complex or multi-step transactions more likely to be reported by some benefit groups rather than others).

**Table 3.8 Number of calls made to DWP (with regards to transaction)**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
One	53	42	49	66	55	41	55	44	47	[35]
Two	26	30	34	18	16	20	19	21	21	[13]
Three	12	11	11	12	20	18	13	16	13	[12]
Four	3	10	4	3	5	7	4	8	8	[13]
Five or more	5	7	3	1	5	11	9	11	11	[26]
<b>Mean</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>[4.7]</b>
<i>Bases</i>	<i>110</i>	<i>117</i>	<i>80</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>1,167</i>	<i>365</i>	<i>[45]</i>

Caution: small bases. Note: 'Don't know' responses removed from the bases.

### 3.7 A focus on face-to-face contact

While it was common for claimants on working-age benefits to visit a Jobcentre Plus office and have face-to-face contact with DWP staff, only very small numbers of claimants in receipt of disability, carers or pension-related benefits had contact with DWP in person during their transaction. Where face-to-face contact took place as part of a transaction, it was more likely to occur at the outset rather than later on (Table 3.9). Claimants in receipt of IS or ESA were less likely than those on JSA or UC to have face-to-face contact from the outset.

**Table 3.9 Face-to-face contact (with regards to transaction)**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Initial	[82]	[63]	[58]	63	[55]	76	50	65	77	[41]
Additional	[18]	[37]	[42]	37	[45]	24	50	34	23	[59]
<i>Bases</i>	<i>[16]</i>	<i>[34]</i>	<i>[44]</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>[33]</i>	<i>610</i>	<i>221</i>	<i>1,216</i>	<i>3,812</i>	<i>[38]</i>

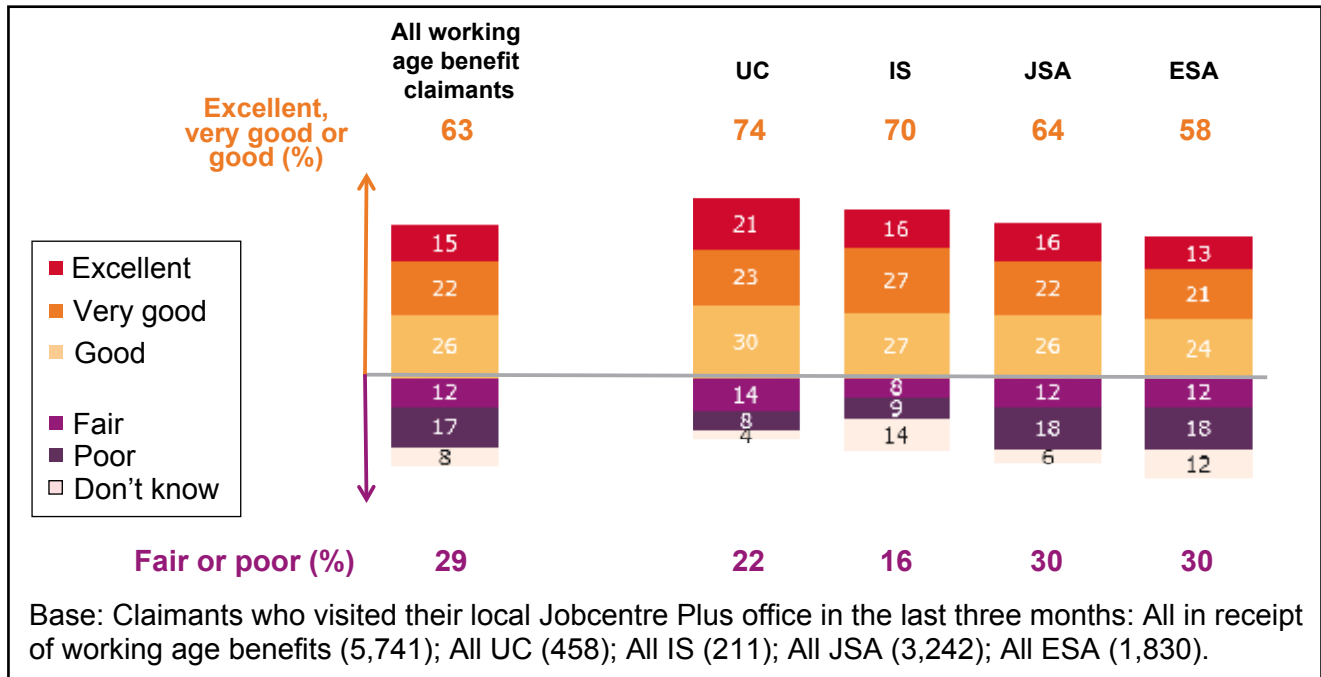
Caution: small bases.

The remainder of this section focuses exclusively on claimants in receipt of working-age benefits, as base sizes for claimants in other benefit groups are too small to analyse.

Almost three-quarters of claimants on working-age benefits who had face-to-face contact as part of their transaction had an appointment for their most recent meeting with DWP (73 per cent). Around four in five JSA claimants (80 per cent) and IS claimants (83 per cent) had an appointment for a specific time, though the prevalence of appointments ranged from 54 per cent amongst ESA claimants to 90 per cent amongst UC claimants. On average, meetings happened on time in around nine in ten cases (87 per cent for JSA claimants; 88 per cent for ESA and UC claimants; and 89 per cent for IS claimants).

Claimants who visited their local Jobcentre Plus office, either regarding their selected transaction or for other reasons, had the opportunity to rate the facilities available 'to search for jobs, such as a room with a computer you can use'. Over three in five claimants (63 per cent) thought these facilities were either 'excellent', 'very good' or 'good'. Figure 3.1 shows the ratings given by each benefit group.

Figure 3.1 Ratings of Jobcentre Plus job searching facilities

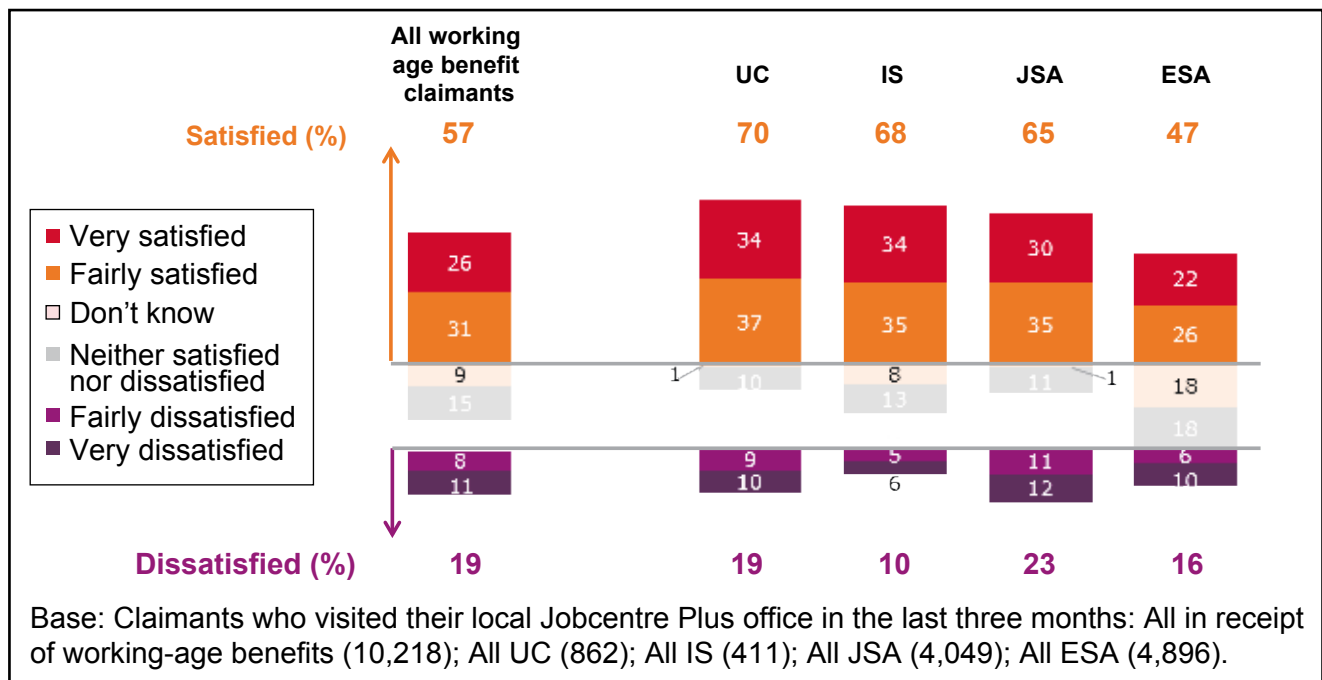


UC and IS claimants were more likely than JSA claimants to rate the facilities positively (74 per cent, 70 per cent and 64 per cent, respectively), while JSA claimants were, in turn, more likely to give a positive rating than ESA claimants (58 per cent). Most notably, over a fifth of UC claimants described the facilities as 'excellent' (21 per cent). It should also be noted that substantial minorities of IS and ESA claimants had no opinion (14 per cent and 12 per cent respectively providing a 'don't know' response), possibly because these groups are less likely to be required to actively search for employment and may therefore not be familiar with these facilities.

Almost three in five claimants in receipt of working-age benefits (57 per cent) were satisfied with the service offered by Jobcentre Plus to help them find employment, while approximately one in five (19 per cent) were dissatisfied (Figure 3.2).

UC claimants were the most likely to express satisfaction with this aspect of the service (70 per cent). While ESA claimants were the least likely to be satisfied (47 per cent), a relatively high proportion held a neutral view. This may be explained by the fact that many in this group would not be expected to actively search for employment. JSA claimants were the group most likely to express dissatisfaction (23 per cent), but even amongst this group there was variation, with levels of dissatisfaction higher than average for those in paid employment at the time of the interview (27 per cent), and particularly those who had found their job by themselves (32 per cent) and may have felt that they did not require or benefit from the assistance of Jobcentre Plus.

**Figure 3.2 Satisfaction with service provided by Jobcentre Plus to help find employment**



### 3.8 A focus on written contact

While only small numbers of claimants used email (two per cent) or text (three per cent), a quarter of claimants exchanged postal correspondence with DWP as part of their transaction. Table 3.10 splits out cases where post was used at the outset of the selected transaction, and cases where it was used subsequently.

**Table 3.10 Postal contact (with regards to transaction)**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Initial	51	55	57	72	81	55	30	64	49	57
Additional	49	45	43	28	19	45	70	36	51	43
Bases	144	142	177	197	177	138	99	1,999	530	123

For AA, DLA, PIP and ESA claimants whose selected transaction involved postal correspondence, it was more common for post to serve as a first means of contact rather than as a follow-up. By contrast, post was more likely to be used at a subsequent stage of the transactions undertaken by IS claimants.

Where email communication was used, this was mostly as a follow-up (87 per cent) rather than for making initial contact (13 per cent). The same was true of text use (94 per cent as follow-up, and six per cent for initial contact).

Most of the claimants who used any type of written communication as part of their transaction said that they received a message or letter from DWP (76 per cent). Around one in seven said that they wrote to DWP (15 per cent), and a similar proportion said they sent them a form (13 per cent). AA, DLA, PIP and Carer's Allowance (CA) claimants were the most likely to send forms (33 per cent, 27 per cent, 24 per cent and 22 per cent, respectively).<sup>9</sup>

Over nine in ten (94 per cent) of the claimants who received written correspondence from DWP by email or post reported that everything was written 'in plain language that was easy to understand'. There was no variation across benefit groups in this respect. On average, 91 per cent of claimants believed that what was written was correct; however, PIP claimants were the least likely to believe that written correspondence was error-free (83 per cent).

Almost everyone who received texts from DWP as part of their transaction reported that the messages were easy to understand (98 per cent) and that text messages were a helpful way to stay updated (96 per cent).

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<sup>9</sup> Note that a paper form is part of the application process for these benefits.

# 4 Getting it right

## 4.1 Summary of chapter

This chapter explores the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP's) performance in delivering the right service to claimants. Measures of 'getting it right' cover claimants' views on various aspects of the service: whether DWP provided clear explanations and error-free information during their transactions; whether DWP delivered on its undertakings; and whether the staff handled all interactions with claimants (whether on the phone or in person) in a knowledgeable manner.

The findings are summarised below, and may be used to help gauge whether DWP succeeded in 'getting it right' for individual benefit groups:

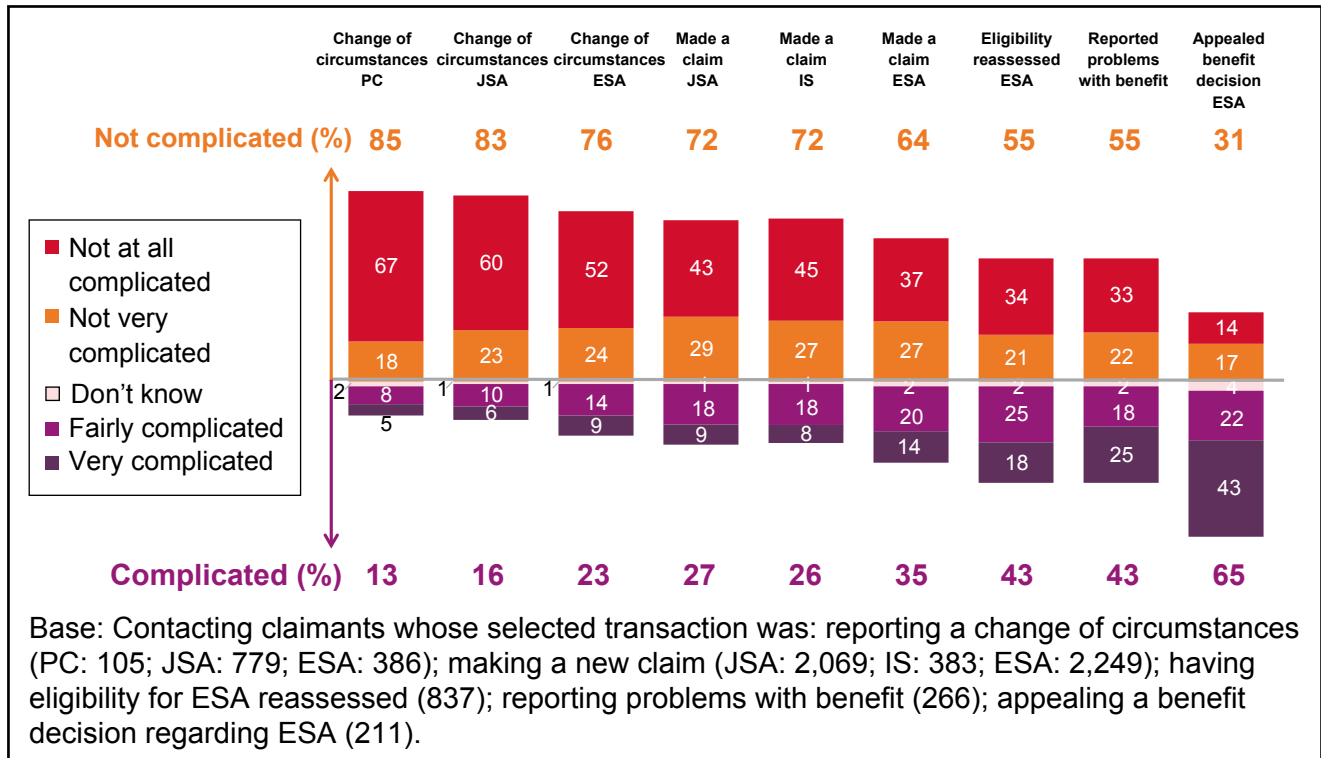
- While the majority of claimants felt that they received a clear explanation of their payment calculation (80 per cent) or the decision reached by DWP regarding their eligibility or appeal (87 per cent), PIP claimants were less likely than the rest to feel they received an adequate explanation (68 per cent and 83 per cent, respectively).
- On average, only 12 per cent of claimants reported receiving incorrect or contradictory information from DWP during their transaction, and over four-fifths believed that the staff they interacted with were knowledgeable. Close to nine in ten claimants believed they were provided with correct information by the staff they encountered on the phone or in person.
- Nineteen per cent of PIP claimants said they received information that was incorrect or contradictory, and this group were less likely than most other claimants to describe staff as knowledgeable or to believe they provided them with correct information (either on the phone or face-to-face).
- In cases where transactions required action from DWP, nine in ten claimants (87 per cent) said that DWP did what it said it would do. Sixty-nine per cent of PIP claimants said that DWP carried out what it had undertaken.

Viewing the data through the prism of individual transactions helps to add detail and context to some of these findings. It is easier to appreciate whether DWP 'got it right' using supplementary information on what the outcome of the transaction was; perceptions about the length and complexity of the process involved in reaching that outcome, and perceived levels of knowledge of the staff with whom claimants interacted; and any problems experienced along the way, whether to do with payments, incorrect information or the provision of inadequate explanations.

To demonstrate the variation between transactions, Figure 4.1 illustrates how differently nine types of transaction were perceived to be in terms of their complexity. Whereas the process of reporting a change of circumstances was felt to be relatively straightforward, only 31 per cent of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants who appealed a decision about their eligibility felt that the process associated with this was 'not at all' or 'not very' complicated. It is worth noting that complexity of transaction may refer to both the claimant experience, and/or the nature of the requirements for a particular transaction. For instance, where transactions are, by nature, lengthier or involve multiple steps or points of contact, claimants may have described these transactions as complicated.



Figure 4.1 Complexity of selected transactions



The outcomes of nine transactions undertaken by claimants are presented in Appendix B<sup>10</sup>: The most notable findings were as follows:

- According to measures for 'getting it right', the most problematic of the transactions was appealing a decision about eligibility for ESA: this was perceived to be a lengthy, complex, and error-prone process, involving staff who were not always equipped with the knowledge required to help claimants resolve their transaction.
- Transactions involving ESA were also perceived as more complex than equivalent transactions involving other types of benefit. While over a third of those who applied for ESA found the process 'very' or 'fairly' complicated (35 per cent), this was less common amongst claimants making new claims for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) (27 per cent) or Income Support (IS) (26 per cent). And whereas around a quarter of ESA claimants who reported a change in their circumstances described this process as complex (23 per cent), only 16 per cent of JSA claimants and 13 per cent of Pension Credit (PC) claimants who tried to do this said the same.

<sup>10</sup> Only transactions with sufficiently large base sizes to permit robust analysis have been included in this chapter. It should be noted that some transactions were ongoing at the time of the interview, and would therefore not yet have reached an outcome from which to judge whether DWP 'got it right'.

## 4.2 Measures for ‘getting it right’ for individual benefit groups

Claimants were asked how clearly they felt calculations of their benefit(s) had been explained to them. While 80 per cent felt that they had been clearly explained, there were variations by benefit (Table 4.1), with Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claimants the most likely to feel that the calculation wasn’t explained at all (17 per cent). PIP claimants whose claim was disallowed were twice as likely (34 per cent) as those whose claim was awarded (16 per cent) to say they received an inadequate explanation or no explanation at all.

**Table 4.1 How clearly payment calculations were explained**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very clearly	60	51	59	58	56	45	52	43	43	39
Fairly clearly	29	35	27	24	27	35	38	36	37	29
Not clearly	4	5	6	4	7	11	5	10	8	8
Not explained at all	4	6	5	8	7	8	4	9	11	17
Don’t know	3	2	4	6	3	1	2	2	2	7
<b>Clearly</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>68</b>
<i>Bases</i>	<i>487</i>	<i>398</i>	<i>465</i>	<i>379</i>	<i>284</i>	<i>999</i>	<i>547</i>	<i>5,426</i>	<i>5,687</i>	<i>246</i>

Almost nine in ten claimants who received a decision from DWP about their benefit, eligibility or appeal felt that the decision had been clearly explained to them (87 per cent). A full breakdown by benefit (Table 4.2) shows that PIP claimants were the most likely to report that they had not received any explanation at all (eight per cent).

**Table 4.2 How clearly decisions were explained**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very clearly	70	66	72	67	61	50	63	51	53	44
Fairly clearly	22	29	22	26	26	33	28	34	32	38
Not clearly	2	3	3	3	6	8	4	6	7	6
Not explained at all	4	2	2	*	3	6	2	6	6	8
Don’t know	2	-	1	4	4	3	2	3	1	3
<b>Clearly</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>83</b>
<i>Bases</i>	<i>335</i>	<i>227</i>	<i>302</i>	<i>264</i>	<i>206</i>	<i>315</i>	<i>396</i>	<i>2,914</i>	<i>2,149</i>	<i>117</i>

One in eight claimants (12 per cent) reported receiving incorrect or contradictory information from DWP in the three months running up to their interview (Table 4.3). Customers in receipt of pension-related benefits, Attendance Allowance (AA) or Carer’s Allowance (CA) were the least likely to say this. By contrast, almost a fifth of PIP claimants (19 per cent) reported that this was the case.

**Table 4.3 Whether given any incorrect or contradictory information**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	3	5	5	4	14	16	9	12	13	19
No	95	93	94	94	85	83	90	86	86	77
Don't know	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	3
<i>Bases</i>	<i>487</i>	<i>398</i>	<i>465</i>	<i>379</i>	<i>284</i>	<i>999</i>	<i>547</i>	<i>5,426</i>	<i>5,687</i>	<i>246</i>

Claimants were asked whether the staff they interacted with during their selected transaction provided them with correct information. Almost nine in ten claimants believed they did. The proportions who felt that staff gave them correct information when meeting them in person, when calling them, or when receiving calls from them, are shown split by benefit group in Tables 4.4 to 4.6. PIP claimants were less likely than other claimants to say they were provided with correct information through any channel.

**Table 4.4 Whether staff encountered in person provided correct information**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	[95]	[91]	[91]	100	[92]	89	92	85	87	[82]
No	[5]	-	[4]	-	[4]	6	5	10	8	[10]
Sometimes	-	-	[3]	-	[4]	5	2	4	4	[8]
Don't know	-	[9]	[2]	-	-	1	*	1	1	-
<i>Bases</i>	<i>[16]</i>	<i>[31]</i>	<i>[44]</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>[25]</i>	<i>578</i>	<i>197</i>	<i>1,003</i>	<i>3,205</i>	<i>[34]</i>

Caution: small base sizes.

**Table 4.5 Whether staff on calls made to DWP provided correct information**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	94	91	93	88	86	85	91	85	85	77
No	4	4	4	6	6	11	5	10	9	18
Sometimes	1	4	1	5	6	3	4	4	5	3
Don't know	*	1	1	1	2	1	*	1	1	1
<i>Bases</i>	<i>297</i>	<i>291</i>	<i>216</i>	<i>122</i>	<i>111</i>	<i>285</i>	<i>334</i>	<i>2,767</i>	<i>941</i>	<i>123</i>

**Table 4.6 Whether staff on calls received from DWP provided correct information**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	[87]	90	[100]	[100]	[87]	85	96	89	88	[81]
No	[5]	4	-	[-]	[9]	8	4	6	8	[16]
Sometimes	[6]	3	-	[-]	[-]	6	-	4	3	[-]
Don't know	[2]	4	-	[-]	[5]	1	-	1	1	[3]
<i>Bases</i>	<i>[40]</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>[46]</i>	<i>[29]</i>	<i>[20]</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>582</i>	<i>359</i>	<i>[31]</i>

Caution: small base sizes.

## DWP Claimant Service and Experience Survey 2014/15

Where claimants' transactions with DWP required action from the Department, they were asked whether or not DWP did what they said that they would do. Eighty-seven per cent of claimants agreed that they did. Twenty-six per cent of PIP claimants reported that action was not taken when they were told it would. There were a number of differences based on benefit group (Table 4.7).

**Table 4.7 Whether DWP did what they said they would do**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	97	90	93	88	89	84	92	85	87	69
No	2	7	6	8	9	14	7	12	11	26
Don't know	1	3	1	5	3	2	1	2	2	5
<i>Bases</i>	<i>356</i>	<i>286</i>	<i>384</i>	<i>324</i>	<i>216</i>	<i>512</i>	<i>429</i>	<i>3,258</i>	<i>3,090</i>	<i>163</i>

Claimants were asked whether the staff they encountered as part of their transaction were knowledgeable. The proportions who felt that staff were knowledgeable when meeting them in person, when calling them, or when receiving calls from them, are shown split by benefit group in Tables 4.8 to 4.10. Over four-fifths of claimants who had face-to-face contact with staff felt that they had been knowledgeable (85 per cent) and similar proportions of those who had telephone interactions reported the same.

**Table 4.8 Whether staff encountered in person were knowledgeable**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	[88]	[96]	[91]	100	[78]	87	91	86	84	[79]
No	[5]	-	[2]	-	[13]	8	6	9	9	[17]
Sometimes	-	-	[5]	-	[8]	4	3	4	7	[4]
Don't know	[7]	[4]	[2]	-	-	1	-	1	1	-
<i>Bases</i>	<i>[16]</i>	<i>[31]</i>	<i>[44]</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>[27]</i>	<i>582</i>	<i>196</i>	<i>1,001</i>	<i>3,208</i>	<i>[37]</i>

Caution: small base sizes.

**Table 4.9 Whether staff on calls made to DWP were knowledgeable**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	95	94	91	88	87	83	92	85	84	77
No	2	2	2	4	8	12	5	9	10	17
Sometimes	2	3	5	6	4	5	3	5	5	3
Don't know	*	1	2	1	1	-	1	1	1	2
<i>Bases</i>	<i>301</i>	<i>292</i>	<i>217</i>	<i>119</i>	<i>111</i>	<i>285</i>	<i>334</i>	<i>2,764</i>	<i>943</i>	<i>127</i>

**Table 4.10 Whether staff on calls received from DWP were knowledgeable**

	<b>SP</b>	<b>PC</b>	<b>CA</b>	<b>AA</b>	<b>DLA</b>	<b>UC</b>	<b>IS</b>	<b>ESA</b>	<b>JSA</b>	<b>PIP</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	[87]	91	[94]	[94]	[92]	89	92	88	86	[73]
No	[8]	4	[2]	-	[5]	4	1	6	10	[27]
Sometimes	[5]	5	[4]	[3]	[3]	8	7	4	3	-
Don't know	-	-	-	[3]	-	-	-	1	1	-
<i>Bases</i>	<i>[40]</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>[45]</i>	<i>[32]</i>	<i>[22]</i>	<i>78</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>588</i>	<i>355</i>	<i>[31]</i>

Caution: small base sizes.

# 5 Keeping you informed

## 5.1 Summary of chapter

This chapter presents data to help assess the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP's) performance with regards to keeping claimants informed during their transactions. Measures of 'keeping you informed' cover claimants' views on whether they were told about next steps and given clear timings; and whether they were kept up to date or felt they needed to initiate additional contact to seek information or progress updates.

- Seventy-seven per cent of claimants were told what they should expect to happen next in their transaction, and 71 per cent were given clear timings about what DWP would do. There was variation across benefits with regards to both aspects of the service. It should be noted that the need to provide information on timings and next steps depends partly upon the complexity of the transaction, and that multi-step transactions were more likely to be reported by some benefit groups than others.
- On average, over two thirds of claimants were given progress updates during their transaction. This was true of 49 per cent of PIP claimants. This may partly explain the lower levels of satisfaction with DWP's service amongst these claimants.
- A quarter of claimants (26 per cent) felt the need to initiate further contact with DWP during their transaction in order to get a progress update. Most of this chasing activity was conducted by phone (placing an additional – and, arguably, avoidable – burden on DWP's telephony system) though it was common for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and Universal Credit (UC) claimants to do this in person at their local Jobcentre Plus office.
- Fifteen per cent reported that their transaction entailed more contact than they expected, with PIP claimants twice as likely as the rest to report this (33 per cent). The five most common reasons for the unanticipated contact were attributed to the provision of unclear or incorrect information, lack of responsiveness or updates, and omission of payments. Disproportionately more PIP claimants said that additional contact was prompted by not having received a reply from DWP.

Being kept informed is particularly important for lengthy or multi-step transactions, so it is important to explore how well DWP performed in this respect within the context of individual transactions. Appendix C focuses on the nine transactions with the largest base sizes, presenting information on how effectively claimants were kept informed. Most notably:

- Claimants who appealed their eligibility for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or reported problems with their benefit were less likely than claimants who undertook other transactions to receive progress updates and more likely to feel that the process entailed unanticipated levels of contact.
- Amongst claimants who applied for benefit, those who started an ESA claim were somewhat less likely to feel informed during the claim process than those starting claims for JSA or Income Support (IS).

## 5.2 Keeping informed measures for each benefit

Approximately three quarters of claimants who had undertaken transactions which involved multiple stages reported that they had been informed by DWP of what would happen next (77 per cent). Attendance Allowance (AA) and ESA claimants were slightly less likely than anyone else to be given information about next steps (69 per cent and 74 per cent respectively) (Table 5.1).

**Table 5.1 Whether was told what would happen next in transaction**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	83	81	78	69	81	81	85	74	79	79
No	13	15	18	23	14	17	13	21	18	17
Sometimes	-	1	1	*	2	1	*	1	1	1
Don't know	4	4	4	7	4	2	2	3	3	2
<i>Bases</i>	<i>407</i>	<i>353</i>	<i>412</i>	<i>347</i>	<i>259</i>	<i>904</i>	<i>528</i>	<i>4,805</i>	<i>4,706</i>	<i>197</i>

Around seven in ten claimants whose selected transaction required action from DWP said they were given clear timings on what DWP would do (71 per cent). There was considerable variation between benefit groups (Table 5.2), with State Pension (SP) customers much more likely to be given clear timings (85 per cent) than Disability Living Allowance (DLA), AA, ESA and PIP claimants (68 per cent; 67 per cent; 66 per cent; and 64 per cent, respectively).

**Table 5.2 Whether was given clear timings about transaction**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	85	73	74	67	68	72	80	66	76	64
No	13	24	21	27	29	26	18	29	21	34
Don't know	3	3	4	6	3	3	2	5	3	2
<i>Bases</i>	<i>366</i>	<i>350</i>	<i>416</i>	<i>340</i>	<i>262</i>	<i>520</i>	<i>468</i>	<i>4,305</i>	<i>3,218</i>	<i>200</i>

Two thirds of claimants whose selected transaction involved some sort of process (rather than one-off action) reported that DWP had kept them up to date with progress (68 per cent). AA and ESA claimants were less likely to report being kept up to date (64 per cent each). Forty-nine per cent of PIP claimants said that they were provided with this information (Table 5.3).

**Table 5.3 Whether was kept up to date with progress during transaction**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	71	73	73	64	69	71	73	64	70	49
No	23	26	25	33	30	28	26	34	28	49
Don't know	6	1	2	3	1	1	1	2	2	2
<i>Bases</i>	<i>307</i>	<i>259</i>	<i>359</i>	<i>288</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>740</i>	<i>464</i>	<i>3,685</i>	<i>3,933</i>	<i>156</i>

## DWP Claimant Service and Experience Survey 2014/15

Texts are used by DWP as a means of keeping claimants updated. As indicated in Chapter 3, only three per cent of claimants received a text from DWP as part of their transaction. Text use was highest amongst JSA claimants (six per cent), IS claimants (four per cent) and PIP claimants (three per cent). No AA claimants or customers in receipt of SP or Pension Credit (PC) received texts from DWP. Most of those who received texts said they were easy to understand and that they were a helpful way to stay updated (98 per cent and 96 per cent, respectively, across all benefit groups).

A quarter of claimants felt the need to initiate further contact with DWP during their transaction in order to get an update on progress (26 per cent). Despite the fact that a substantial minority of AA claimants had not been kept up to date, as shown in Table 5.4 they were the least likely to chase DWP for an update (nine per cent).

**Table 5.4 Whether contacted DWP to get an update on progress of transaction**

	SP %	PC %	CA %	AA %	DLA %	UC %	IS %	ESA %	JSA %	PIP %
Yes	12	22	17	9	24	29	29	32	23	42
No	87	77	81	89	76	71	69	66	76	57
Don't know	1	1	1	2	*	*	2	2	1	1
<i>Bases</i>	<i>371</i>	<i>342</i>	<i>406</i>	<i>340</i>	<i>262</i>	<i>564</i>	<i>464</i>	<i>4,336</i>	<i>3,554</i>	<i>197</i>

Table 5.5 shows the channel used by claimants who got in touch with DWP to get an update on progress. Claimants were most likely to telephone (84 per cent) placing additional – and, arguably, avoidable – burden on DWP's telephony system. Around a fifth got in touch in person (18 per cent) though face-to-face contact was more widespread amongst JSA and UC claimants since they were able to access Jobcentre Plus offices (38 per cent and 31 per cent respectively).

**Table 5.5 Channel used by claimants who got in touch with DWP to get an update on progress**

	SP %	PC %	CA %	AA %	DLA %	UC %	IS %	ESA %	JSA %	PIP %
Telephone	[94]	95	94	[90]	98	79	86	91	67	98
Post	[10]	6	5	[4]	5	4	6	6	3	5
In person	[3]	1	-	[2]	3	31	12	11	38	-
Email	-	-	-	[7]	-	6	1	1	5	-
Text	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	1	1	-
Other	[2]	-	-	-	-	1	-	*	1	-
Don't know	-	-	3	-	-	1	-	*	*	-
<i>Bases</i>	<i>[45]</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>[31]</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>160</i>	<i>137</i>	<i>1,347</i>	<i>778</i>	<i>80</i>

Caution: small base sizes.



Around half of all claimants said they had the amount of contact they expected to have with DWP with regards to their transaction (51 per cent), but 15 per cent said that they had more contact than expected and 26 per cent less contact than they expected. As indicated in Table 5.6, PIP claimants were the most likely to say that their transactions had required more contact with DWP than they had anticipated (33 per cent).

**Table 5.6 Amount of contact with DWP during transaction, relative to expectation**

	SP %	PC %	CA %	AA %	DLA %	UC %	IS %	ESA %	JSA %	PIP %
More than expected	8	14	9	3	15	18	13	18	14	33
As often as expected	56	52	51	47	44	54	52	47	55	38
Less than expected	30	25	32	32	31	23	28	26	24	21
Don't know	7	8	8	17	10	5	7	10	7	8
<i>Bases</i>	<i>454</i>	<i>395</i>	<i>447</i>	<i>374</i>	<i>275</i>	<i>973</i>	<i>535</i>	<i>5,178</i>	<i>5,614</i>	<i>225</i>

Claimants who reported contacting DWP more than they expected were asked why this had been the case. The five most common responses overall had to do with unclear information, lack of responsiveness, lack of updates, omission of payments, and incorrect information. These are broken down by benefit group in Table 5.7.

**Table 5.7 Top five reasons for more contact than expected during transaction**

	SP %	PC %	CA %	AA %	DLA %	UC %	IS %	ESA %	JSA %	PIP %
Something was unclear or confusing	[12]	20	[23]	[23]	[20]	18	17	21	15	12
Didn't receive a reply	[13]	8	[19]	[20]	[12]	9	16	17	13	39
Anxious to get update or confirmation	[14]	4	[20]	[8]	[21]	8	12	14	9	17
Not received payment	[8]	5	[20]	-	[15]	8	8	14	8	6
Something else incorrect [non-payment]	[9]	9	[14]	[11]	[5]	12	16	12	8	9
<i>Bases</i>	<i>[34]</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>[39]</i>	<i>[12]</i>	<i>[42]</i>	<i>163</i>	<i>73</i>	<i>912</i>	<i>769</i>	<i>70</i>

## **DWP Claimant Service and Experience Survey 2014/15**

Around one in five (18 per cent) explained that they made additional contact due to unclear or confusing information, with AA and Carer's Allowance (CA) claimants the most likely to say this. Around one in seven (15 per cent) said that they did not receive a reply from DWP. Thirty-nine per cent of PIP claimants did not receive a reply from DWP, however steps are being taken to address this issue, for instance the original five-day call back expectation has been replaced with a quicker process. DLA claimants were more likely (21 per cent) than average (12 per cent) to say they needed confirmation or an update, while CA claimants were more than twice as likely as the average (20 per cent versus 11 per cent) to say the additional contact was related to the non-receipt of a benefit payment.

# 6 Right Treatment

## 6.1 Summary of chapter

This chapter looks at various ‘softer’ aspects of the service delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to assess whether claimants felt they were receiving the ‘right treatment’. Measures of this element of the service cover claimants’ views of staff attitudes towards them: their politeness, helpfulness, and evidence of understanding of the claimants’ personal circumstances. A further measure is DWP’s willingness and promptness to resolve any problems that might arise during their dealings with claimants.

The chapter begins by presenting what claimants in different benefit groups thought of staff attitudes (Sections 6.2 to 6.4). As perceptions might be expected to differ depending on whether interactions took place in person or over the phone – and differ further depending on whether calls were initiated by claimants or by DWP – the results are divided according to the channel of contact:

- Income Support (IS) claimants had more positive impressions of staff they met face-to-face than claimants on other working-age benefits. Staff encountered in person were almost universally seen as polite, but somewhat less frequently described as helpful or believed to understand the claimant’s circumstances.
- State Pension (SP) and Pension Credit (PC) customers had a more positive impression of staff who answered their calls than claimants in other groups, with almost all of them describing staff as polite, and over nine in ten finding them helpful and understanding. Claimants in receipt of disability-related and working-age benefits were less likely to rate staff attitudes highly based on their experiences of making calls, with Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claimants in particular standing out as less likely than the rest to say that staff were helpful or understanding of their personal circumstances.
- When it came to calls received by claimants, there were almost no differences in perceptions between groups in receipt of different working-age benefits, suggesting that DWP manages to deliver a consistent service in its outgoing calls. Base sizes for the remaining benefit groups are too small to permit equivalent analysis.

The last part of the chapter reports the proportion of claimants who encountered problems as part of their selected transaction, and the proportions whose problems were resolved (see Section 6.5). Results point to PIP claimants having more problems than other claimants, and proportionately more unresolved issues at the time of their interview. Taken together with findings on their perceptions of how staff treated them, these findings may partly explain why PIP claimants expressed a relatively low level of satisfaction with DWP’s services in 2014.

## 6.2 Experience of staff in face-to-face encounters

While most claimants in receipt of working age benefits had frequent encounters in person with staff at their local Jobcentre Plus office, only small numbers of claimants in other benefit groups had any face-to-face contact with DWP representatives. The analysis that follows therefore focuses only on Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Universal Credit (UC) and IS claimants.

## DWP Claimant Service and Experience Survey 2014/15

Tables 6.1 to 6.3 show claimants' impressions of the staff they encountered. In general, IS claimants had more positive impressions than claimants on other working-age benefits. Staff were almost universally seen as polite, but were less frequently described as helpful or believed to understand the claimant's circumstances.

The majority of IS claimants (97 per cent) thought that staff were polite, and while proportions were smaller amongst other groups, approximately nine in ten were still willing to describe staff members in this way (Table 6.1).

**Table 6.1 Whether staff encountered in person were polite**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	[100]	[96]	[96]	97	[100]	91	97	92	90	[97]
No	-	-	[2]	1	-	4	2	4	4	-
Sometimes	-	-	-	1	-	5	2	4	6	[3]
Don't know	-	[4]	[2]	-	-	-	-	1	*	-
<i>Bases</i>	<i>[15]</i>	<i>[31]</i>	<i>[44]</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>[27]</i>	<i>585</i>	<i>197</i>	<i>1,012</i>	<i>3,230</i>	<i>[38]</i>

'Not applicable' responses removed from the bases. Caution: small base sizes.

Fewer claimants found the staff helpful, ranging from 94 per cent of IS claimants to 83 per cent of JSA claimants (Table 6.2).

**Table 6.2 Whether staff encountered in person helpful**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	[100]	[96]	[89]	97	[94]	86	94	85	83	[85]
No	-	-	[5]	3	[3]	7	4	11	10	[13]
Sometimes	-	-	[5]	-	[4]	6	2	4	7	[2]
Don't know	-	[4]	[2]	-	-	1	-	1	*	-
<i>Bases</i>	<i>[16]</i>	<i>[31]</i>	<i>[44]</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>[28]</i>	<i>584</i>	<i>197</i>	<i>1,010</i>	<i>3,219</i>	<i>[38]</i>

'Not applicable' responses removed from the bases. Caution: small base sizes.

Claimants on IS and UC were more likely to believe that staff had an understanding of their circumstances than either JSA or ESA claimants (Table 6.3). Notably, only 83 per cent of JSA claimants thought this, whereas more UC claimants (87 per cent) said the same, despite the fact that the two groups were likely to share quite similar personal circumstances.

**Table 6.3 Whether staff encountered in person understood my particular circumstances**

	SP %	PC %	CA %	AA %	DLA %	UC %	IS %	ESA %	JSA %	PIP %
Yes	[93]	[91]	[91]	99	[78]	87	91	81	83	[79]
No	-	[5]	[4]	1	[11]	10	7	15	13	[20]
Sometimes	[7]	-	[3]	-	[12]	3	1	3	4	[2]
Don't know	-	[4]	[2]	-	-	*	*	1	1	-
<i>Bases</i>	<i>[16]</i>	<i>[31]</i>	<i>[44]</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>[27]</i>	<i>581</i>	<i>197</i>	<i>1,001</i>	<i>3,209</i>	<i>[37]</i>

'Not applicable' responses removed from the bases. Caution: small base sizes.

## 6.3 Experience of staff when making calls to DWP

Claimants were much more likely to place a call to DWP as part of their selected transaction, and robust data is available for all benefit groups about their impression of staff members they spoke to on the phone when making those calls. In general, SP and PC customers had a more positive impression of staff than claimants in other groups: almost all of them thought staff were polite (99 per cent and 97 per cent, respectively), and over nine in ten found them helpful (96 per cent and 93 per cent, respectively) and understanding (97 per cent and 92 per cent, respectively), with SP customers slightly more likely to feel this way than their counterparts in receipt of PC.

Just over nine in ten claimants in receipt of JSA, ESA and PIP thought staff were polite; this impression was more widespread amongst Disability Living Allowance (DLA), IS, Attendance Allowance (AA) and Carer's Allowance (CA) claimants, and almost universal amongst SP and PC customers (Table 6.4).

**Table 6.4 Whether staff on calls made to DWP were polite**

	SP %	PC %	CA %	AA %	DLA %	UC %	IS %	ESA %	JSA %	PIP %
Yes	99	97	96	96	96	94	96	92	92	92
No	1	*	2	3	3	2	2	4	5	6
Sometimes	-	3	2	1	1	4	2	3	3	2
Don't know	*	-	-	-	1	*	-	*	*	-
<i>Bases</i>	<i>303</i>	<i>295</i>	<i>219</i>	<i>123</i>	<i>113</i>	<i>289</i>	<i>334</i>	<i>2,787</i>	<i>955</i>	<i>127</i>

'Not applicable' responses removed from the bases.

While well over nine in ten PC and SP customers found staff helpful when placing a call to DWP, fewer than nine in ten claimants in receipt of disability-related and working-age benefits thought the same (Table 6.5). Amongst the latter, IS claimants were the most likely to describe staff members as helpful (92 per cent). Eighty-three per cent of DLA and 78 per cent of PIP claimants said that staff were helpful.

**Table 6.5 Whether staff on calls made to DWP were helpful**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	96	93	94	88	83	86	92	86	85	78
No	3	4	3	7	13	10	4	8	9	16
Sometimes	1	2	3	5	4	4	4	5	6	7
Don't know	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	*	*	-
<i>Bases</i>	<i>302</i>	<i>295</i>	<i>219</i>	<i>123</i>	<i>112</i>	<i>289</i>	<i>334</i>	<i>2,785</i>	<i>954</i>	<i>127</i>

'Not applicable' responses removed from the bases.

A similar pattern was apparent with regards to staff's understanding of claimants' circumstances: SP and PC customers were the most likely to feel understood, while those on disability-related and working-age benefits were less likely (Table 6.6). Only three-quarters of PIP claimants (75 per cent) felt that their circumstances were understood.

**Table 6.6 Whether staff on calls made to DWP understood my particular circumstances**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	97	92	88	86	84	86	89	83	84	75
No	2	5	7	11	12	10	7	13	12	20
Sometimes	1	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	4
Don't know	*	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>Bases</i>	<i>300</i>	<i>293</i>	<i>218</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>108</i>	<i>289</i>	<i>334</i>	<i>2,770</i>	<i>945</i>	<i>125</i>

'Not applicable' responses removed from the bases.

## 6.4 Experience of staff when receiving calls from DWP

Relatively small proportions of claimants in receipt of CA, pension-related or disability-related benefits received calls from DWP during their transaction. In order to gauge claimants' impressions of staff members who placed calls to them, it is therefore necessary to focus just on those in receipt of working-age benefits where bases sizes are sufficiently large to permit analysis of the data.

The perceptions of claimants tended to be consistent across benefit groups in terms of politeness, helpfulness and understanding (Table 6.7 to 6.9), suggesting that DWP manages to deliver a consistent service in its outgoing calls.

**Table 6.7 Whether staff on calls received from DWP were polite**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	[97]	98	[97]	[100]	[95]	93	96	95	91	[94]
No	-	-	-	-	[5]	3	1	3	5	[6]
Sometimes	[3]	2	[3]	-	-	4	3	2	4	-
Don't know	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	*	*	-
<i>Bases</i>	<i>[40]</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>[47]</i>	<i>[32]</i>	<i>[22]</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>591</i>	<i>362</i>	<i>[31]</i>

'Not applicable' responses removed from the bases. Caution: small base sizes.

**Table 6.8 Whether staff on calls received from DWP were helpful**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	[89]	94	[96]	[95]	[91]	91	88	89	86	[71]
No	[8]	2	[4]	[5]	[9]	6	7	7	9	[22]
Sometimes	[3]	4	-	-	-	3	5	3	4	[7]
Don't know	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
<i>Bases</i>	<i>[40]</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>[46]</i>	<i>[32]</i>	<i>[22]</i>	<i>78</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>585</i>	<i>356</i>	<i>[31]</i>

'Not applicable' responses removed from the bases. Caution: small base sizes.

**Table 6.9 Whether staff on calls received from DWP understood my particular circumstances**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	[91]	89	[96]	[93]	[83]	84	88	86	81	[65]
No	[4]	4	[4]	[5]	[17]	9	4	12	14	[28]
Sometimes	[5]	6	-	-	-	7	3	2	2	[3]
Don't know	-	2	-	[3]	-	-	5	1	2	[5]
<i>Bases</i>	<i>[39]</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>[47]</i>	<i>[32]</i>	<i>[22]</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>584</i>	<i>352</i>	<i>[31]</i>

'Not applicable' responses removed from the bases. Caution: small base sizes.

## 6.5 Claimant problems

Around one in eight claimants (12 per cent) experienced difficulties or problems when dealing with DWP as part of their selected transaction. Twenty-six per cent of PIP claimants say they had experienced problems (Table 6.10), which may have partly contributed to their relatively low level of satisfaction. Notably, the likelihood of reporting problems was high amongst all PIP claimants who initiated a new claim, regardless of whether the claim was awarded (26 per cent) or disallowed (28 per cent), with no significant difference observed between the two groups.

**Table 6.10 Whether had any difficulties or problems when dealing with DWP**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	5	8	8	4	12	14	7	15	12	26
No	95	92	92	95	86	85	92	85	88	73
Don't know	-	*	*	*	2	*	*	1	*	1
<i>Bases</i>	<i>487</i>	<i>398</i>	<i>465</i>	<i>379</i>	<i>284</i>	<i>999</i>	<i>547</i>	<i>5,420</i>	<i>5,686</i>	<i>246</i>

Nearly half (46 per cent) of all those who experienced problems indicated that these had been resolved, while a further five per cent said that they were partly resolved, and 50 per cent that they had not been resolved at all (Table 6.11). Unresolved issues were reported by 68 per cent of PIP claimants, though this finding should be treated with caution given the small base size for this group.

**Table 6.11 Whether difficulties or problems were resolved**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	[56]	[42]	[40]	[56]	[40]	45	[52]	50	42	29
No	[44]	[58]	[55]	[37]	[53]	48	[44]	46	53	68
Partly	-	-	5	[7]	[8]	7	[4]	4	5	2
<i>Bases</i>	<i>[24]</i>	<i>[29]</i>	<i>[34]</i>	<i>[13]</i>	<i>[35]</i>	<i>137</i>	<i>[44]</i>	<i>775</i>	<i>653</i>	<i>57</i>

Caution: small base sizes.



# 7 A focus on Universal Credit

## 7.1 Chapter summary

This chapter brings together key findings from the rest of this report on Universal Credit (UC) claimants' experiences of the service delivered by Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). UC was newly introduced in April 2013, and is currently in the process of being rolled out nationally. It will eventually replace six means-tested benefits and tax credits.<sup>11</sup> At this stage of implementation, UC is being awarded to individuals (mostly single and without dependents) who are newly unemployed and who would previously have made a new Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claim.

Given its similarities to JSA, the chapter draws comparisons between UC and JSA claimants, and also highlights some differences with claimants in receipt of other working-age benefits. It is important to bear in mind that direct comparisons are limited owing to differences between the groups (most notably the fact that due to the nature of UC's rollout, UC has high volumes of new claims and claimants are much more likely to be young, male, and living in the North West).

The chapter begins (Section 7.2) by reporting UC claimants' satisfaction with the service (84 per cent), and then presents their experiences with regards to DWP's service standards (Sections 7.3 to 7.6):

- **Ease of access:** UC claimants who had contact with DWP in the past three months were more likely to do so in person (88 per cent) or via the website [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) (84 per cent). As with JSA claimants, around three-quarters (78 per cent) found it easy to get in contact with DWP throughout the process of their transaction. However, the majority of UC claimants (66 per cent) would recommend telephone contact if they were to carry out their transaction again, and despite all claimants having access to the internet, only six per cent would have preferred to use the website over other channels.
- **Getting it right:** UC claimants shared similar experiences to JSA and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants when it came to receiving the right service. Around four in five UC claimants received clear explanations about their payment calculations (80 per cent) and decisions regarding their benefit (83 per cent); similar proportions felt that staff were knowledgeable or provided them with correct information; and just over four-fifths reported that DWP did what is said it would do during their transaction (84 per cent). However UC claimants were more likely than all other claimants on working-age benefits to say that they were given incorrect or contradictory information (16 per cent).
- **Keeping you informed:** UC and JSA claimants reported similar experiences with regards to being kept informed. Around four-fifths of UC claimants were told about next steps in their transaction (81 per cent); 72 per cent were given clear timings on what DWP would do; and 71 per cent were kept up to date with the progress of their transactions. However, JSA claimants were less inclined to seek progress updates (23 per cent, compared with 29 per cent of UC claimants) and fewer felt that their transactions required more contact than they originally anticipated (14 per cent, compared to 18 per cent of UC claimants).

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<sup>11</sup> These are: Jobseeker's Allowance, Housing Benefit, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, Employment and Support Allowance and Income Support.

- Right treatment: for the most part, UC, JSA and ESA claimants had similar perceptions of DWP staff’s politeness, helpfulness and understanding of their personal circumstances, with around nine in ten expressing positive impressions. Problems or difficulties with DWP were reported by one in seven UC claimants (14 per cent) and a similar proportion of JSA claimants (12 per cent).

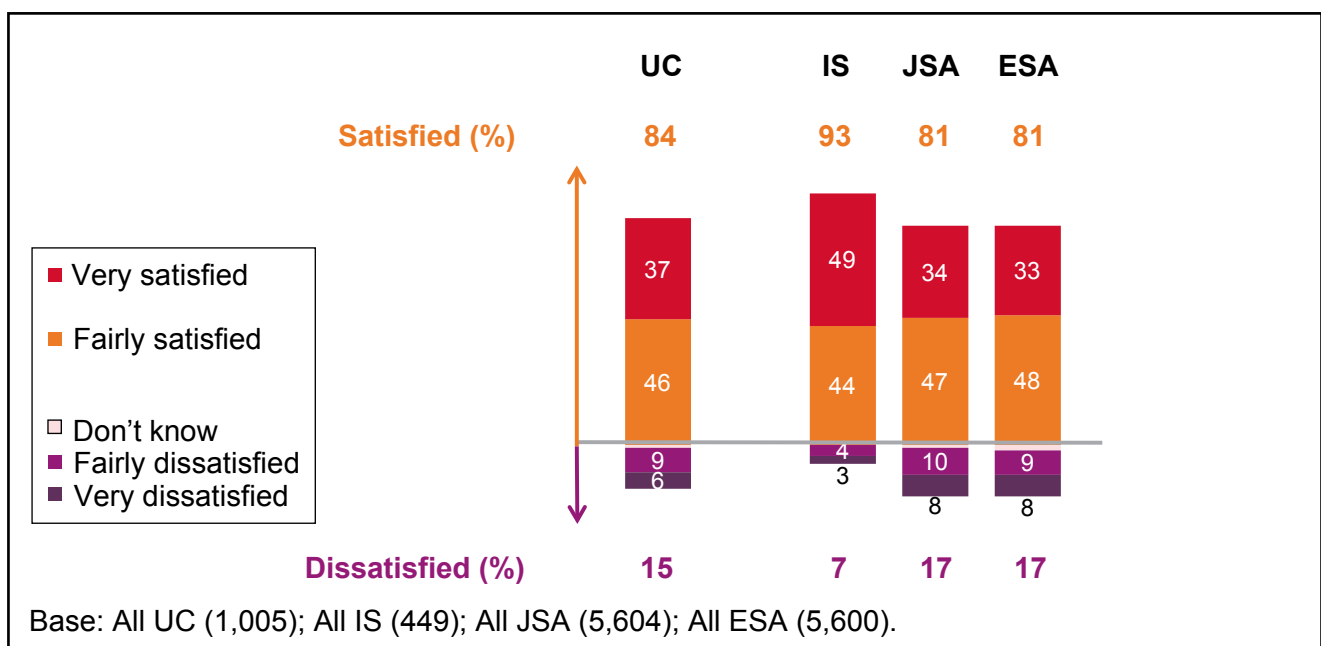
Section 7.8 presents claimants’ experiences of UC Online. Around nine in ten UC Online users found it easy to navigate to the relevant webpage (88 per cent). Difficulties in using the service were more common (reported by 30 per cent of users) than difficulties associated with JSA Online (reported by 15 per cent of users), though over seven in ten users said they were likely to recommend the service to family and friends if they needed it (73 per cent).

The final section (Section 7.9) explores UC claimants’ views on services offered to help them find employment. UC claimants were more likely than JSA or ESA claimants to rate their local Jobcentre Plus office’s job searching facilities positively (74 per cent), though only 53 per cent reported making use of the internet facilities there. Over four-fifths (82 per cent) made use of Universal Jobmatch – though there are indications that take-up of this service is gradually on the rise – and four-fifths of those claimants (81 per cent) applied for a job they found through this service. Overall, 70 per cent of UC claimants were satisfied with the employment services provided by Jobcentre Plus, with satisfaction levels higher amongst this group than amongst JSA (65 per cent) or ESA claimants (47 per cent).

## 7.2 Satisfaction with DWP service

Over four-fifths of UC claimants (84 per cent) were satisfied with the service delivered by DWP (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2). As shown in Figure 7.1, UC claimants were less likely to express satisfaction than Income Support (IS) claimants (93 per cent), but more likely than either JSA or ESA claimants (81 per cent each).

**Figure 7.1 Overall satisfaction amongst claimants in receipt of working-age benefits**



## 7.3 Ease of access

UC claimants who were in touch with DWP in the three months prior to the survey were more likely to have made or received contact in person (88 per cent) or via the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website (84 per cent) than the telephone (57 per cent). Their channel usage differed slightly from that of JSA claimants: the website was used by roughly similar proportions of UC and JSA claimants (84 per cent and 86 per cent, respectively), but telephone contact was more common amongst UC claimants (57 per cent, compared with 42 per cent of JSA claimants) and face-to-face contact was less common (88 per cent compared with 93 per cent of JSA claimants). This may be related to differences in service delivery models.

When compared with IS and ESA claimants, proportionally more UC claimants used the website and face-to-face contact, but fewer used telephone contact (Table 7.1).

**Table 7.1 Telephone, online and face-to-face contact in last three months**

	UC	IS	ESA	JSA
	%	%	%	%
In person	88	67	46	93
Gov.uk	84	43	36	86
Telephone	57	73	68	42
<i>Bases</i>	997	554	5,412	5,695

Further insight into channel usage can be derived from claimants' descriptions of the particular transaction which formed the focus of their interview:

- Face-to-face contact was once again the most commonly used channel (61 per cent). This was followed by telephone (40 per cent); the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website (26 per cent); and postal correspondence (14 per cent). Very small proportions used email (two per cent) or text communication (one per cent) (see Chapter 3, Section 3.3).
- Although the telephone was the second most commonly used channel, it was the channel that most UC claimants (66 per cent) would recommend if they were to carry out their transaction again (see Chapter 3, Section 3.5). IS and ESA claimants were likewise most likely to recommend telephone contact (66 per cent and 62 per cent, respectively). By contrast, JSA claimants showed only a slight preference for telephone (37 per cent) over online access (24 per cent) or face-to-face communication (24 per cent).
- Around three-quarters of UC claimants (78 per cent) found it easy to get in contact with DWP throughout the process of their transaction (see Chapter 3, Section 3.4). They were as likely as JSA claimants (77 per cent) and IS claimants (80 per cent) to report that access was easy, but more likely to feel this way than ESA claimants (69 per cent).
- Telephone communication: the majority of UC claimants who made or received a telephone call during their dealings with DWP did so at the outset of their transaction (63 per cent) rather than later on (37 per cent). This suggests a different pattern of usage to JSA claimants, who were almost as likely to make use of the telephone at the start of their transaction (51 per cent) as at a later stage (49 per cent). However, in other respects the telephone experiences of UC and JSA claimants were similar: they had a similar likelihood of getting through the first time they rang (68 per cent and 65 per cent, respectively) and made a similar number of calls on average during their transaction (mean of 2.5 and 2.6 calls, respectively). (See Chapter 3, Section 3.6).

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- Face-to-face communication: UC claimants who met staff in person were most likely to do so when beginning their transaction (76 per cent), rather than later on (24 per cent). This was also the case with JSA claimants (77 per cent initial contact, and 23 per cent follow-up contact), though it was less common for JSA claimants to have an appointment for their meeting (80 per cent, compared with 90 per cent of UC claimants) (see Chapter 3, Section 3.7).
- Written communication: UC and JSA claimants had very similar experiences of postal correspondence. Both groups were as likely to use this channel at the start of their transaction as later on, and similar proportions from the two groups felt that the written correspondence they received was written 'in plain language that was easy to understand' (see Chapter 3, Section 3.8).
- Use of www.gov.uk: the UC claimant group had universal internet access (see Chapter 8, Section 8.1), with UC claimants more likely to be able to access the internet from home (84 per cent) than all other groups in receipt of working-age benefits (76 per cent JSA; 71 per cent IS; and 65 per cent ESA). UC claimants made far more use of www.gov.uk in the three months prior to interview (84 per cent) than any other benefit groups apart from JSA, yet only six per cent of UC claimants would have preferred to use the website over other channels to carry out their transaction (see Chapter 3, Section 3.5). UC claimants were the most willing of all claimants in receipt of working-age benefits to consider using in the future the full range of digital services they were asked about in the survey (74 per cent, compared with 62 per cent JSA, 65 per cent IS and 53 per cent ESA claimants).

## 7.4 Getting it right

In most respects, DWP performed equally well across claimants in receipt of UC, JSA and ESA when it came to delivering the right service to claimants (see Chapter 4, Section 4.2):

- UC claimants had a similar likelihood as JSA and ESA claimants to be offered clear explanations about their payment calculations (80 per cent) and about decisions regarding their benefit (83 per cent). Notably, IS claimants were more likely to feel that the explanations they received were clear (89 per cent and 92 per cent, respectively).
- Similar proportions of UC, JSA and ESA claimants described the staff they encountered during their transactions as 'knowledgeable' and said that they provided them with correct information. IS claimants were more likely than other claimants in receipt of working-age benefits to express positive views in this regard.
- Over four-fifths of UC claimants (84 per cent), and similar proportions of JSA (87 per cent) and ESA claimants (85 per cent) said that DWP did what it said it would do during their transactions. Once again, proportionately more IS claimants reported that this was the case (92 per cent).

However UC claimants were more likely than all other claimants on working-age benefits to say that they were given incorrect or contradictory information from DWP staff (16 per cent, compared with 13 per cent of JSA, 12 per cent of ESA, and nine per cent of IS claimants).

## 7.5 Keeping you informed

The experiences of UC claimants were broadly aligned to those of JSA claimants in terms of how effectively they were kept informed by DWP during their transactions (see Chapter 5, Section 5.2):

- Similar proportions of claimants in receipt of UC (81 per cent), JSA (79 per cent) and IS claimants (85 per cent) were told what would happen next in their transaction. However, fewer ESA claimants reported that this was the case (74 per cent).
- Approximately three-quarters of UC (72 per cent) and JSA claimants (76 per cent) said they were given clear timings on what DWP would do. IS claimants were proportionately more likely than both of those groups to be provided with clear timings (80 per cent), whereas ESA were proportionately less likely (66 per cent).
- Around seven in ten UC, JSA and IS claimants reported being kept up to date with the progress of their transactions (71 per cent, 70 per cent, and 73 per cent, respectively). Updates on progress were less commonly reported by ESA claimants (64 per cent).

The experiences of UC and JSA claimants diverged when it came to seeking updates on the progress of their transactions, with JSA claimants less inclined to initiate further contact to find out about progress (23 per cent, compared with 29 per cent of UC and IS claimants, and 32 per cent of ESA claimants). Perhaps in connection to this, proportionally more UC claimants (18 per cent) than JSA claimants (14 per cent) said that their transactions had required more contact with DWP than they had expected, though the reasons given by the two groups for any unanticipated contact did not differ.

## 7.6 Right treatment

UC, JSA and ESA claimants reported similar perceptions of DWP staff's politeness, helpfulness and understanding of their personal circumstances. In general, IS claimants had more positive perceptions of all these aspects of their treatment (see Chapter 6, Sections 6.2 to 6.4):

- Around nine in ten UC claimants described the staff they met in person as polite (91 per cent) or helpful (86 per cent). These views were shared with a similar proportion of JSA and ESA claimants, but were more common amongst IS claimants (97 per cent and 94 per cent, respectively).
- UC and IS claimants were more likely than JSA and ESA claimants to say that the staff they encountered in person understood their particular circumstances (87 per cent, 91 per cent, 83 per cent and 81 per cent, respectively).
- Claimants' impressions of telephone staff were more uniform, with almost no differences in the perceptions of claimants in the four benefit groups.

Similar proportions of JSA and UC claimants reported problems or difficulties when dealing with DWP (12 per cent and 14 per cent, respectively). Around two-fifths of claimants with such experiences (in either group) said that DWP had managed to resolve their difficulties. ESA claimants were the most likely of all those in receipt of working-age benefits to report difficulties or problems (15 per cent), whereas IS claimants were the least likely (seven per cent).

## 7.7 Making a UC claim

Almost nine in ten claimants who made a claim for UC (89 per cent) were satisfied with the way the application process was handled by DWP (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4). Views on this process were more positive than views on the process of claiming ESA (84 per cent satisfaction) or JSA (81 per cent satisfaction).

Experiences of using UC Online were generally positive. Almost nine in ten UC online users (88 per cent) found it easy to navigate to the relevant webpage to make their claim (see Chapter 8, Section 8.4). A similar proportion of JSA Online users found it easy to navigate to the JSA Online webpage (89 per cent). However, it was more common for UC Online users (30 per cent) than JSA Online users (15 per cent) to experience difficulties when making their application. Further investigation into the nature of these difficulties is not possible, given the small number of claimants reporting problems with the service.

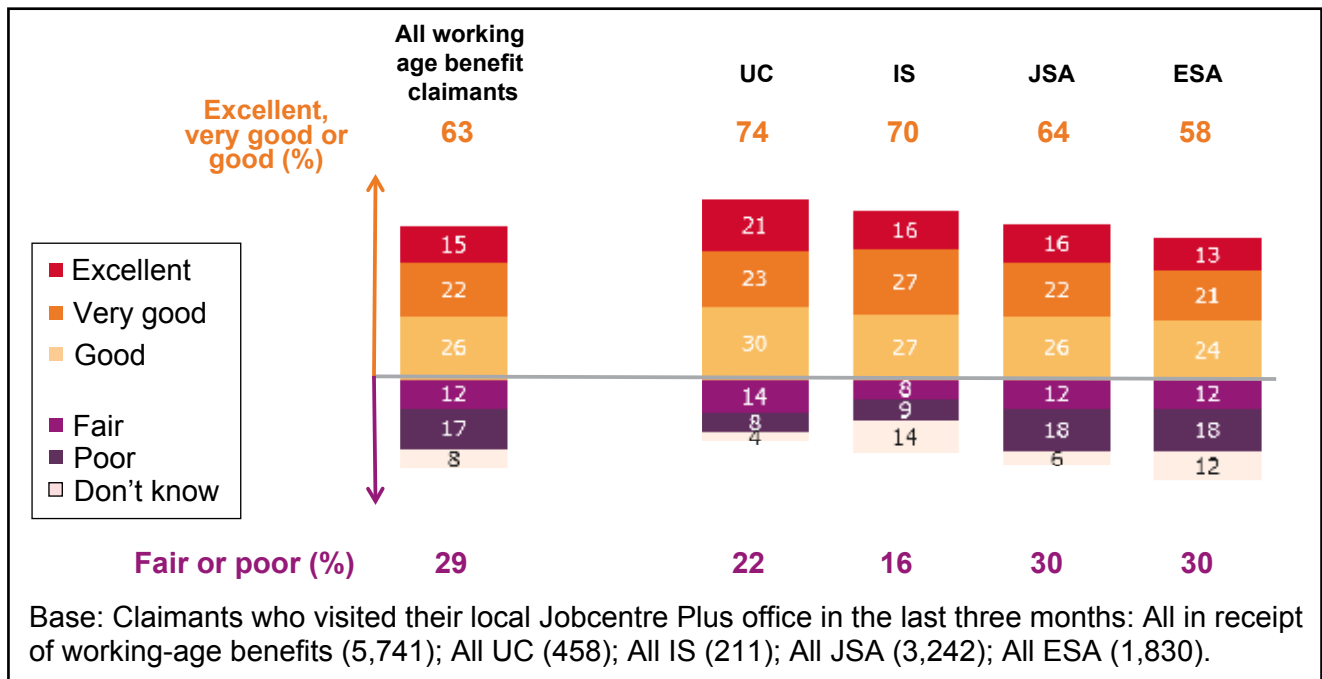
Around seven in ten UC Online users (73 per cent) said they were likely to recommend the service to family and friends if they needed it (see Chapter 8, Section 8.5). Although this is a high proportion of users, it is lower than the proportion of users who would recommend JSA Online (83 per cent) or Carer's Allowance (CA) Online (84 per cent).

## 7.8 Views on Jobcentre Plus' employment services

Claimants in receipt of working-age benefits can benefit from the employment services offered by their local Jobcentre Plus office as well as Universal Jobmatch, the digital job-searching service available on the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website.

As shown in Figure 7.2 (see also Chapter 3, Section 3.7), UC claimants who had visited their local Jobcentre Plus office in the last three months were more likely to rate the office's job searching facilities positively (74 per cent) than either JSA claimants (64 per cent) or ESA claimants (58 per cent). Notably, only around half (53 per cent) reported making use of the internet facilities at Jobcentre Plus. Their usage levels were therefore similar to those of JSA and IS claimants (50 per cent and 46 per cent, respectively), but higher than usage amongst ESA claimants (38 per cent) (see Chapter 8, Section 8.2).

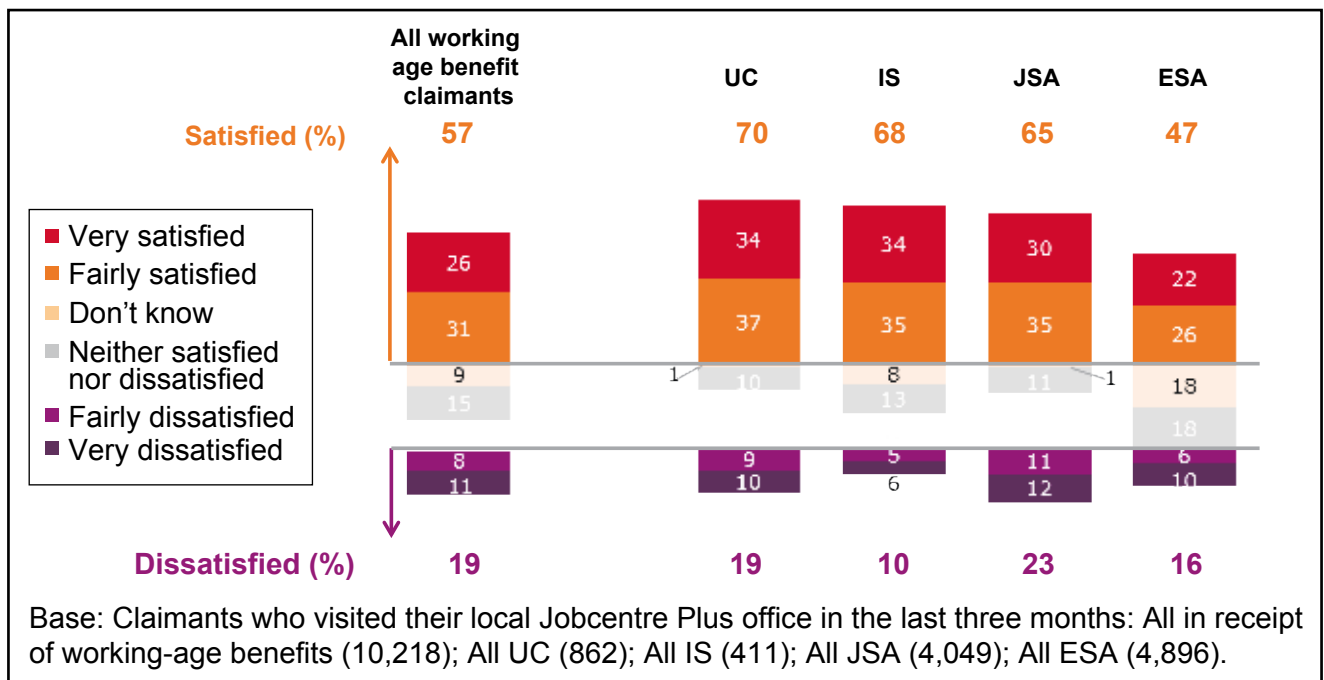
Figure 7.2 Ratings of Jobcentre Plus job searching facilities



Over four-fifths of UC claimants (82 per cent) made use of Universal Jobmatch at some point during the three months prior to interview (see Chapter 8, Section 8.3). Usage levels were higher for claimants currently in receipt of UC (85 per cent) or who had off-flowed in the past month (81 per cent) than those who off-flowed more than a month before they were interviewed (55 per cent), suggesting that take-up of this service is gradually on the rise. A similar pattern was evident amongst JSA claimants. The two groups also showed a similar likelihood of applying for jobs found through the service (81 per cent of UC claimants and 82 per cent of JSA claimants).

Seven in ten UC claimants (70 per cent) were satisfied with the employment services provided by Jobcentre Plus (Figure 7.3; see also Chapter 3, Section 3.7). This group was more likely to express satisfaction with this aspect of the service than JSA claimants (65 per cent) and far more likely to do so than ESA claimants (47 per cent).

**Figure 7.3 Satisfaction with service provided by Jobcentre Plus to help find employment**





# 8 Digital services

## 8.1 Summary of chapter

While Chapter 3 presented information about all the modes of communication that claimants use during their dealings with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) – with the website [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) serving as just one of the many channels that claimants can access to carry out transactions – this chapter provides additional detail on claimants' use of DWP's digital services.

A fundamental element of DWP's Digital Strategy is that it is built around the needs of users, with user feedback and analytics contributing to improvements in services so that they meet service standards. The findings in this chapter contribute towards this by exploring claimants' take up of the services, their experiences when using them, as well as their intentions for using them in the future, all of which can help assess DWP's progress towards becoming 'digital by default'.

The chapter begins by presenting information about claimants' access to the internet. While nine in ten claimants (90 per cent) had access through one or more routes, access levels ranged from near-universal (amongst universal Credit (UC), Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Income Support (IS) claimants) to 68 per cent (for Pension Credit (PC) customers).

There was variable take-up of the available digital services by relevant benefit groups:

- Over four-fifths of JSA claimants (83 per cent) and UC claimants (82 per cent) made use of Universal Jobmatch, though usage amongst IS and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants was lower (as might be expected given that these benefit groups have different job-searching requirements).
- The SP Estimator was used by 17 per cent of SP customers; the service for requesting an SP statement was used by seven per cent of those in receipt of SP and extremely small numbers of customers in receipt of other pension-related benefits; while the PC Calculator was used by nine per cent of SP customers, seven per cent of PC customers and three per cent of Attendance Allowance (AA) claimants.

Data on the ease of finding and using the services showed that the majority of users had no trouble in locating the webpages they needed, especially with regards to JSA Online and UC Online. Users found it easier to locate most of the benefit application digital services and Universal Jobmatch on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) than benefit calculation and estimation services. Universal Jobmatch users were the most likely to say that they experienced problems with the content or functionality of the site (35 per cent), followed by users of UC online (30 per cent). The services which caused the fewest issues for users were the PC Calculator and SP Estimator (10 per cent and nine per cent, respectively, of users experienced problems).

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CA Online and JSA Online were the services most likely to be recommended by their users (recommended by over four-fifths) while the service least likely to be recommended by those who had experience in using it was UC Online (73 per cent).

The final section of the chapter looks at claimants' future intentions regarding the use of these (and potentially other) online services. Claimants were most likely to show willingness to search online for eligibility criteria and information on the process of claiming. Overall, around one in five claimants (18 per cent) said they would not use any of the services read to them from a list during their interview, with PC and AA claimants the most resistant to taking up these services.

## 8.2 Online access

Nine in ten claimants (90 per cent) had access to the internet in some way, though there were substantial variations in access between benefit groups (Table 8.1). Access was universal amongst UC claimants (100 per cent); close to universal for JSA, DLA and IS claimants (97 per cent, 95 per cent, and 95 per cent, respectively); slightly less common for those in receipt of CA (91 per cent) and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) (90 per cent); and lower still for those in receipt of pension-related benefits. Only around two-thirds of PC customers had internet access (68 per cent), and this was mostly at home (57 per cent).

**Table 8.1 Online access in last three months by benefit group**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Home	81	57	74	70	85	84	71	65	76	[81]
Mobile	31	30	66	26	68	65	73	47	59	[58]
Tablet/Kindle	27	19	40	36	41	29	29	26	30	[34]
Jobcentre Plus	7	10	22	6	26	53	46	38	50	[18]
Regular elsewhere	18	12	36	15	36	51	48	38	48	[24]
Irregular elsewhere	11	10	24	10	20	23	20	20	29	[24]
Don't know	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	*	-	-
<b>Any</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>[90]</b>
<b>None</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>[10]</b>
<i>Bases</i>	<i>115</i>	<i>140</i>	<i>118</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>106</i>	<i>109</i>	<i>815</i>	<i>693</i>	<i>42</i>

Caution: small base size for PIP.

Notably, only around half of JSA, IS and UC claimants, and even fewer ESA claimants, reported having internet access through facilities at Jobcentre Plus. While IS and ESA claimants may not visit Jobcentre Plus offices with sufficient regularity to be aware of these facilities, JSA and UC claimants would visit offices regularly as part of their Claimant

Commitment and might be expected to know where to find and access computer terminals. Their responses may therefore indicate a genuine lack of facilities at their local office; an inability to access the computer terminals due to high demand; or simply a lack of awareness that such facilities exist due to lack of need (for those who have ready access elsewhere).

Access did not vary significantly by age or region for JSA claimants. For ESA claimants there was likewise no variation in internet access between regions, but access amongst those aged 45 or over was less common (84 per cent) than for younger claimants (97 per cent).<sup>12</sup>

### 8.3 Use of digital services

Looking across the entire contacting population of DWP claimants, there were varying levels of usage of the Department’s online services (Table 8.2)<sup>13</sup>. The job-searching tool Universal Jobmatch (UJ) was far more widely used than any other service.

**Table 8.2 Use of digital services**

	Universal Jobmatch %	State Pension Estimator %	Request State Pension statement %	Pension Credit calculator %
Yes	43	3	1	2
No	57	97	99	98
<i>Bases</i>	<i>14,918</i>	<i>14,918</i>	<i>14,918</i>	<i>14,918</i>

A closer look at UJ usage shows that over four-fifths of JSA claimants (83 per cent) and UC claimants (82 per cent) made use of it at some point during the three months prior to interview. There are indications that take-up of this service may be on the rise amongst these two groups. Claimants who were still in receipt of their benefit at the time of the interview or who only off-flowed recently were more likely to report having used UJ. Usage levels were higher for claimants currently in receipt of JSA (90 per cent) or who off-flowed less than a month ago (84 per cent) than those who off-flowed further in the past (63 per cent). Similarly, usage levels were higher for claimants currently in receipt of UC (85 per cent) or who had off-flowed recently (81 per cent) than those who off-flowed more than a month before they were interviewed (55 per cent).

<sup>12</sup> It is not possible to analyse the results for other benefit groups by region due to small base sizes.

<sup>13</sup> Online application services are not included in Table 8.2, as their usage levels mostly varied according to the size of the population in the relevant benefit group. Hence the high usage of JSA Online relative to UC Online, SP Online and CA Online reflects the relatively large proportion of JSA claimants in the DWP contacting population relative to SP, UC or CA claimants.

Around three in ten IS claimants (30 per cent) and ESA claimants (26 per cent) used UJ. The lower levels of usage amongst claimants in receipt of these two working-age benefits is not surprising in view of the fact that many are not expected to actively search for job vacancies. In addition, these two groups were less likely to apply for the jobs that they found through the service: only 61 per cent of ESA claimants and 59 per cent of IS claimants who used the service made applications for vacancies seen on the site, compared to four-fifths of their counterparts in receipt of JSA or UC (82 per cent and 81 per cent, respectively). Again, one possible explanation for this is variation in job-search requirements between these claimant groups.

The rest of the digital services had low take-up amongst relevant claimant groups:

- The State Pension Estimator was used by 17 per cent of SP customers, and very small proportions (between one and four per cent) of other claimant groups who were interested in finding out how much they would be entitled to when they reach State Pension age.
- The service for requesting a State Pension statement was used by seven per cent of those in receipt of SP, two per cent of those in receipt of PC, but no AA claimants. Very small numbers of claimants in receipt of other benefits also attempted to use the service.
- The PC Calculator was used by nine per cent of SP customers, seven per cent of PC customers and three per cent of AA claimants. It is possible that customers currently in receipt of PC had used the service before making their PC claim, and that this fact (i.e. usage earlier than three months ago) may partly explain the apparently low level of usage amongst PC customers in the last three months.

## **8.4 Ease of finding and using digital services**

Claimants who used the digital services were asked how easily they had found the relevant pages on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk). Their answers are shown in Tables 8.3 and 8.4.

**Table 8.3 Ease of finding pages for online services for claiming benefits**

	<b>Jobseeker's Allowance Online</b>	<b>Universal Credit Online</b>	<b>State Pension Online</b>	<b>Carer's Allowance Online</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Very easy	46	45	50	49
Fairly easy	43	43	35	31
Fairly difficult	7	7	6	9
Very difficult	3	5	5	4
Don't know	1	-	4	7
<b>Easy</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Difficult</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>Bases</i>	<i>1,579</i>	<i>196</i>	<i>157</i>	<i>393</i>

While the majority of users found it easy to locate the pages they needed, this was less likely to be the case for users of CA Online and SP Online (80 per cent and 85 per cent of whom, respectively, said they found the relevant pages easily) than users of JSA Online (89 per cent).

Claimants reported that it was easier to locate most of the benefit application digital services and UJ on www.gov.uk than it was to locate benefit calculation and estimation services. Only around three-quarters of those who tried to use the PC Calculator, SP Estimator or the service for requesting an SP statement found the pages they required easily (Table 8.4).

**Table 8.4 Ease of finding pages for online services for claiming benefits**

	Universal Jobmatch	State Pension Estimate	Request State Pension statement	Pension Credit calculator
	%	%	%	%
Very easy	45	36	33	40
Fairly easy	40	37	40	37
Fairly difficult	8	7	9	6
Very difficult	5	9	10	7
Don't know	1	10	9	9
<b>Easy</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Difficult</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>14</b>
<i>Bases</i>	<i>7,178</i>	<i>524</i>	<i>189</i>	<i>405</i>

Users of each of the services were asked whether they experienced problems or difficulties when using them. Table 8.5 shows the proportion of users who reported negative experiences with the services. Users of UJ were the most likely to say that they experienced problems (35 per cent), followed by users of UC online (30 per cent); around a fifth of users of SP Online encountered issues (18 per cent), as did fewer than one in six JSA Online users (15 per cent), CA Online users (14 per cent) and claimants requesting an SP statement online (14 per cent). The services which caused the fewest issues for users were the PC Calculator and SP Estimator (10 per cent and nine per cent, respectively, of users experienced problems).

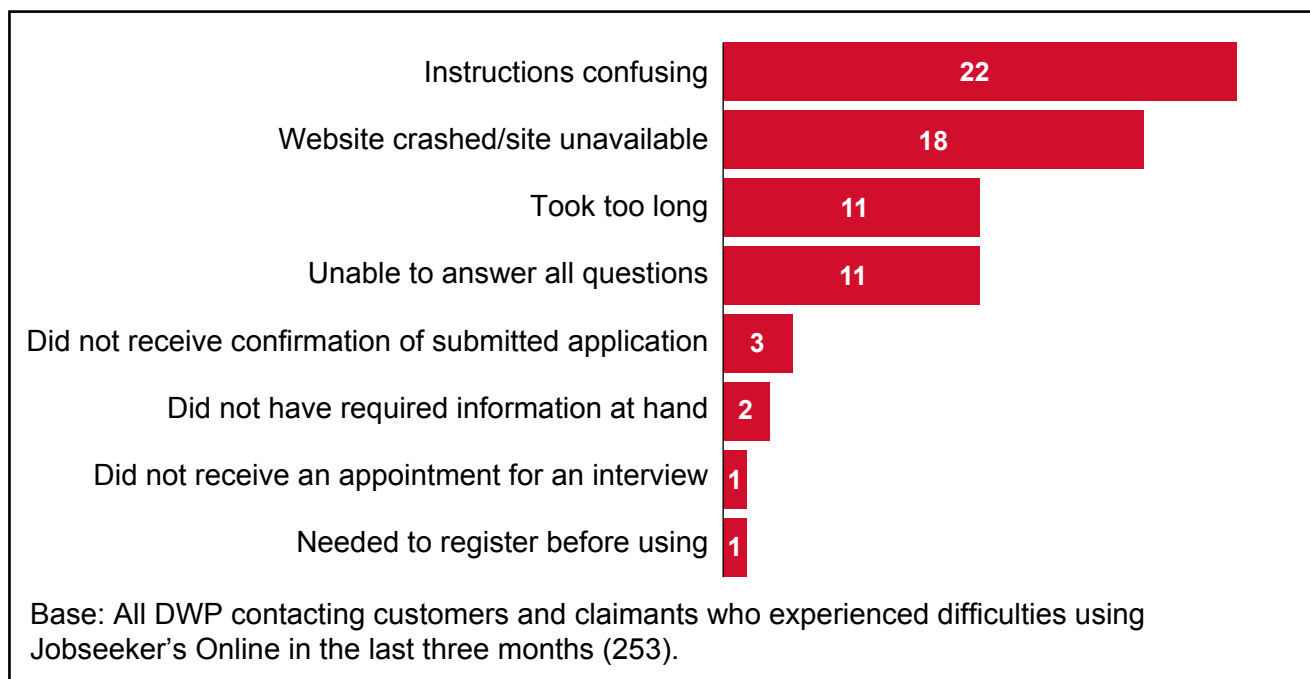
**Table 8.5 Whether experiences difficulties or problems using digital services**

	JSA Online	UC Online	SP Online	CA Online	UJ	SP estimator	SP statement	PC calculator
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	15	30	18	14	35	9	14	10
No	84	70	80	82	64	80	71	82
Don't know	*	*	1	4	1	12	15	8
<i>Bases</i>	<i>1,440</i>	<i>175</i>	<i>158</i>	<i>393</i>	<i>7,178</i>	<i>524</i>	<i>189</i>	<i>405</i>

Claimants who experienced problems were asked to specify what those problems were. Since only small numbers of claimants reported problems with most of the services, it is not possible to analyse their responses. However, base sizes are fairly large for those who reported issues with JSA Online and UJ.

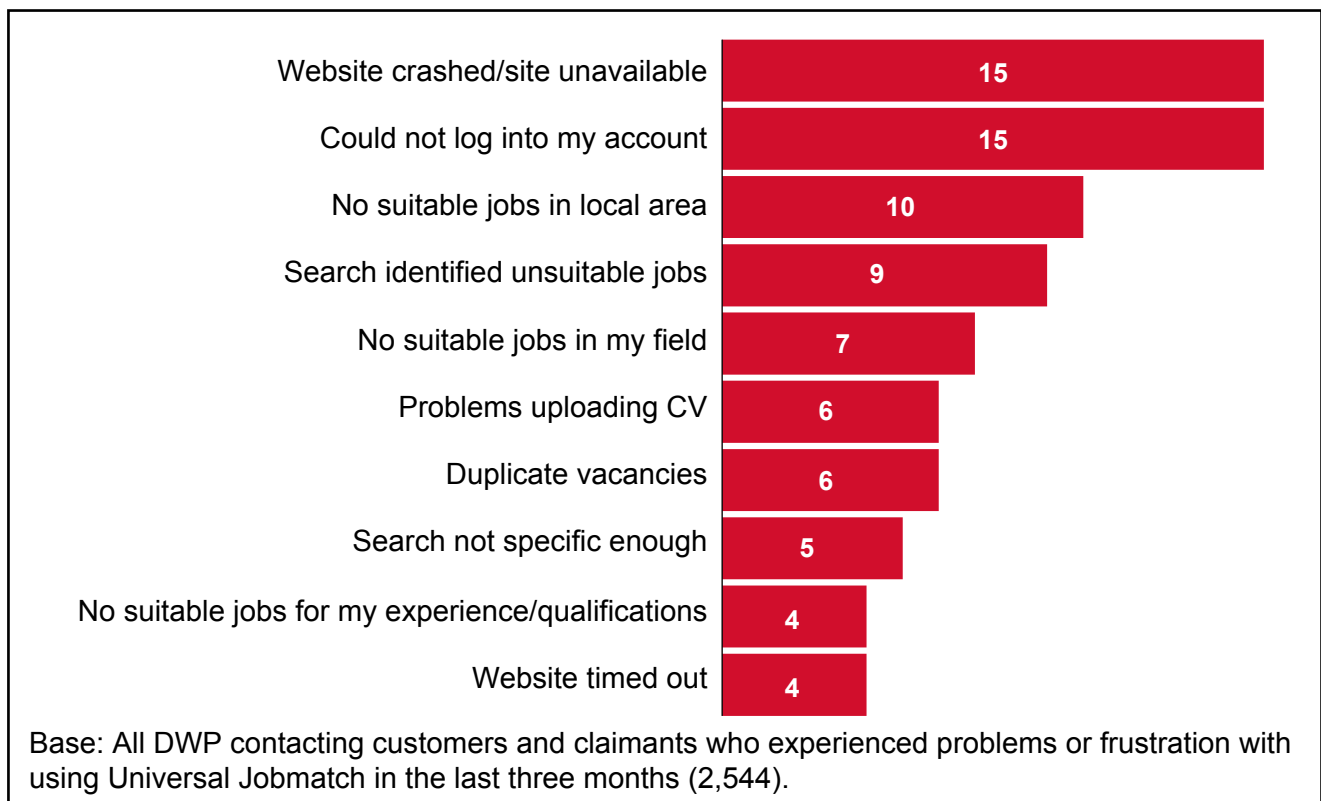
Amongst users of JSA Online who experienced ‘difficulties using the website while attempting to make the application’, the most common problems had to do with the clarity of the instructions (22 per cent) and the unavailability of the service or its tendency to crash (18 per cent). Approximately one in ten mentioned that the process took too long (11 per cent) or that they found it difficult to answer all the question (11 per cent). The eight most common difficulties cited by claimants are shown in Figure 8.1, but it is worth noting that 30 per cent of users mentioned a variety of other issues in small numbers.

**Figure 8.1 Difficulties experienced using Jobseeker’s Online when attempting to make application (eight most commonly cited)**



The experiences of UJ users were more varied. Figure 8.2 shows the ten most common problems with the service cited by those who had negative experiences. More than one in seven of these users mentioned the unavailability of the website or its tendency to crash, and problems logging into personal accounts (15 per cent each). Other frustrations had to do with the unsuitability of the advertised job vacancies, as well as aspects of the system’s functionality such as the facility for uploading a CV, for entering specific search criteria, or for staying on the site before it timed out. The proportion of JSA claimants reporting each of these problems did not differ significantly from the proportion of ESA claimants who did the same.

**Figure 8.2 ‘Problems or frustration’ experienced when looking for job vacancies on Universal Jobmatch (ten most commonly cited)**



## 8.5 Whether would recommend digital services

Users of each of the services were asked whether they would recommend them to friends and family if they should ever require them. Table 8.6 displays the results.

**Table 8.6 How likely to recommend digital services**

	JSA Online	UC Online	SP Online	CA Online	UJ	SP estimator	SP statement	PC calculator
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very likely	56	50	53	55	41	50	47	48
Fairly likely	27	23	27	29	33	24	32	33
Neither likely nor unlikely	4	2	3	5	6	6	5	4
Fairly unlikely	4	1	8	3	7	6	3	4
Very unlikely	5	17	5	6	11	9	10	7
Don't know	3	8	4	3	1	5	4	5
<b>Likely</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Not likely</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>
<i>Bases</i>	<i>1440</i>	<i>175</i>	<i>122</i>	<i>265</i>	<i>7,178</i>	<i>524</i>	<i>189</i>	<i>405</i>

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CA Online (84 per cent) and JSA Online (83 per cent) were the services most likely to be recommended by their users, while four in five of the claimants who used SP Online (80 per cent), the PC calculator (81 per cent), or the service for requesting an SP statement (79 per cent) said they were likely to recommend those services. Around three-quarters of those who used UJ (74 per cent) or the SP estimator (74 per cent) also indicated they would be willing to recommend them.

The service least likely to be recommended by those who had experience in using it was UC Online (73 per cent). However, half of those users were willing to say they were 'very likely' to recommend it; this is in contrast to UJ users, only 41 per cent of whom would be 'very likely' to recommend the tool.

## 8.6 Online intentions

Table 8.7 shows the online services which claimants would consider using in the future. Claimants were most likely to show willingness to search online for eligibility criteria and information on the process of claiming. Those who were not on working-age benefits were, understandably, less likely to consider searching for jobs.

**Table 8.7 Online Services would consider using in the future**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Find out if eligible for benefit	57	43	70	43	70	65	68	69	84	71
Find out how to claim benefit	57	43	69	42	69	63	68	67	84	72
Apply for benefit	51	38	63	37	61	62	63	64	82	63
Search for jobs	22	22	62	20	61	66	71	72	93	59
Find out how to apply for loan	23	22	50	15	50	55	57	54	69	47
Update details	48	36	61	31	59	62	61	62	81	61
Don't know	1	1	2	1	1	29	17	*	1	*
<b>All</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>None</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>21</b>
<i>Bases</i>	<i>487</i>	<i>398</i>	<i>465</i>	<i>379</i>	<i>284</i>	<i>981</i>	<i>460</i>	<i>1,357</i>	<i>1,414</i>	<i>246</i>

Overall, around one in five claimants (18 per cent) said they would not use any of the services read to them from a list during their interview, with PC and AA claimants the most likely to say this. By contrast, UC and JSA claimants were open to the possibility of using at least one of the services. Whereas almost three-quarters of UC claimants indicated they would consider using all six of the services on the list (74 per cent), only 62 per cent of JSA claimants did the same.



## 9 Conclusion

The 2014/15 DWP Claimant Service and Experience Survey revealed high levels of satisfaction amongst claimants who had contacted DWP in the three months prior to interview. As in previous years, customers in receipt of pension-related benefits reported the highest overall satisfaction scores, whereas claimants in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) were the least likely to express satisfaction.

For the first time this year, the views and experiences of claimants in receipt of two new benefits – Universal Credit (UC) and Personal Independence Payments (PIP) – were also recorded:

- UC claimants were more likely to be satisfied than either JSA or ESA claimants. Their experiences broadly reflected those of JSA claimants in terms of the four key elements of DWP's Customer Charter (ease of access, getting it right, keeping you informed, and right treatment), and their usage of digital services. Nevertheless, UC claimants were more likely than all other claimants on working age benefits to say that they were given incorrect or contradictory information, and more likely to say that their transactions entailed more contact than they had originally anticipated, suggesting that there is still room to improve service delivery to this group. More positively, this group was more inclined than the rest to give positive views of the employment services offered by DWP.
- Sixty-eight per cent of PIP claimants were satisfied with DWP's service in the last three months, though their satisfaction scores were often lower than for other benefit groups. Their experiences of the service they received during a single transaction may help explain this. Although over two thirds of PIP claimants found it easy to access DWP during their transaction, this group was more likely to report that access to the service was difficult. Similarly, although over four fifths of PIP claimants stated that the written correspondence they received contained no errors, other benefits performed higher on this indicator. PIP claimants were also more likely to report their calls left unanswered; explanations of decisions inadequate; information incorrect or contradictory; timings unclear; and progress updates lacking. DWP is taking steps to improve service delivery further (for example, by replacing the original five-day call back expectation with a much quicker process).

The survey also recorded claimants' take-up of DWP's digital services. Universal Jobmatch was used by over four fifths of JSA and UC claimants, but users of this service were the most likely to say that they experienced problems with the content or functionality of the site compared to other online services.

# Appendix A

## Technical details

Between July 2014 and May 2015, TNS BMRB conducted a telephone survey amongst 14,918 people (conducted across four waves) who were either personally in receipt of benefits administered through the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), or who had been in contact with DWP on a claimant's behalf. The survey was designed to measure their experiences of the service and their attitudes towards, and satisfaction with, the service. Claimants who had not been in touch with DWP or used its services within the three months prior to being contacted by TNS BMRB were excluded from the survey. This meant that information collected during the survey in regards to DWP's services and the opinions given by respondents were informed by recent personal experience.

As in the 2013 Claimant Experience survey, a representative proportion of contacting claimants from DWP's broader claimant base<sup>14</sup> formed the sample in 2014/15. This ensures that the Claimant Experience survey continues to cover a broad spectrum of the overall claimant population.

### A.1 Questionnaire

Between the 2013 and 2014 surveys the questionnaire went through a review process to reduce interview length from 27 minutes to an average of 15. The 2014/15 version of the questionnaire retained all the same modules and a focus on an individual transaction undertaken within the past three months.

The questionnaire was designed so that transactions were selected from a hierarchically-arranged list of items. In 2014 various new items were added to the hierarchical list and some existing items were amended. The list was designed to be read out in strict order, with more complex or involved transactions positioned towards the top of the list; this was done to ensure that respondents shared their experiences regarding the most involved transaction they had undertaken in the three months prior to interview. In addition, the relatively simple transactions which were asked as part of a separate question in 2013 were now incorporated into the hierarchical list.

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<sup>14</sup> Claimants (or their representatives) in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Universal Credit, Carer's Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payments, Attendance Allowance, State Pension or Pension Credit were included in the survey. The survey did not specifically seek to include people claiming Incapacity Benefit, Bereavement benefits, Invalidity Allowance, War Disablement Pension, Industrial Injuries Disablement benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance, benefits related to the Pneumoconiosis, Byssinosis and Miscellaneous Diseases Benefits Scheme, Widow's benefits, Winter Fuel Payments, Workmen's Compensation Supplementation, Statutory Sick Pay, Maternity Allowance, or Statutory Maternity/Paternity/Adoption pay.

The complete list of transactions, and the order in which they appeared, was as follows:

- Started a new claim for a benefit.
- Had a reassessment of your entitlement following a change of benefit.
- Asked DWP to reconsider or appeal a decision (that you didn't agree with concerning the benefit you applied for).
- Received a decision following a medical assessment.
- Had an interview or review meeting (for example at a Jobcentre).
- Received notification of a sanction.
- Reported a change of circumstances to DWP, or stopped a claim.
- Reported problems with a benefit you are receiving (for example, delayed or missing payment, or incorrect closure of a claim).
- Made a request for an advance payment to benefits.
- Received notification of a change to benefit payment (for example from monthly to fortnightly).
- Asked for details of benefits you could claim.
- Enquired about the amount of State Pension or Pension Credit you are entitled to.
- Discussed jobs or training opportunities with someone at the Jobcentre.
- Signed on.
- Visited the website [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)
- Made a complaint.
- Looked for job vacancies.
- Made an appointment (e.g. for an interview at the Jobcentre) or asked for an appointment to be changed.
- Tried to get help understanding or completing a form.
- Applied for financial help (e.g. for travel to interviews, childcare costs, training, moving into work, or mortgage relief).
- Tried to get information or an update on progress.
- Requested a form.
- Enquired about your eligibility for another benefit.

## A.2 The sample

The survey was designed to cover the population of **contacting** DWP claimants as opposed to all benefit recipients. The rationale for this is that claimants who have had no recent contact would not be able to provide useful information about the current state of the service.

For the purposes of the survey, the definition of 'claimants' includes people in receipt of the main DWP benefits as well as non-recipients who are normally responsible for dealing with DWP on a recipient's behalf. All 'professional' customer representatives were excluded from the research (e.g. Citizens' Advice Bureaux, Solicitors making contact on behalf of a client, MPs making contact on behalf of a constituent). These parties were excluded because it was felt that they were likely to make contact on behalf of a number of different people and their responses would be an 'average' of all their contact with DWP, rather than focusing on a specific case.

### A.2.1 Sample frame

The sample was drawn from two frames; the 100% National Benefit Database (NBD) and an internal database held by DWP.

Claimants in receipt of working-age benefits were sampled from the NBD. The NBD is a 'live' database of all benefits paid to claimants, together with the personal data of these claimants. Anyone who appeared on the database during a designated three month period claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Universal Credit (UC) or Income Support (IS) was eligible for the survey.<sup>15</sup>

Since claimants in receipt of pension, disability and carer-related benefits tend to have less frequent interaction with DWP, only a small proportion of those who appear on the NBD would be eligible for the survey. Using the NBD as a sample frame would consequently prove an inefficient way of sampling these types of claimants. The internal DWP database is an administrative tool derived from operational management information, which holds data about every person who made a new claim for a pension, disability or carer-related benefit, had a renewal or disallowance, or was claiming one of these benefits and had been through some other change of circumstance that could be identified on the system (bank details, address, marital status etc). This served as an effective sample frame as it allowed the identification of claimants who have made contact with DWP at some point during the designated three-month period.<sup>16</sup> Notably, any claimants who may have contacted DWP to lodge a query which did not then lead to a new claim or change of circumstance could not be identified from this source.

### A.2.2 Sample selection

Since two different sample frames were employed, the sampling process was slightly different for claimants on working-age benefits and other claimants.

#### Sampling claimants on working age benefits

To reflect recent and ongoing changes to the benefits system it was necessary to differentiate between claimants who made recent claims for ESA and JSA and those who had been in receipt for some time.

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<sup>15</sup> With some exclusions determined by DWP (e.g. individuals sampled for surveys in the last three years, or who are terminally ill).

<sup>16</sup> The assumption was made that customers who had a different status at the start and end of the three-month period had contacted DWP (either directly or through an intermediary) to report their change of circumstance.

Overall, six types of claimant were sampled:

- ESA new claimants.
- ESA existing claimants.
- JSA new claimants.
- JSA existing claimants.
- UC claimants.
- IS claimants.

The sample was disproportionately selected across the six groups, so that some groups accounted for a larger percentage of the sample population than the true population. Oversampling in this way made it possible to conduct sufficient interviews with each of the six groups to allow robust analysis of the data.

In total there were six strata, and within each stratum the records were ordered by Jobcentre Plus Region<sup>17</sup>, age, gender and length of claim, and a random selection was made.

### **Sampling claimants on pensions, carers or disability benefits**

Claimants in receipt of various pension, carer or disability-related benefits were in scope for the survey. The benefits in question were:

- Attendance Allowance (AA).
- Disability Living Allowance (DLA).
- Carer's Allowance (CA).
- State Pension (SP).
- Pension Credit (PC).
- Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

Each benefit was stratified by an individual's reason for contact with the Department, as recorded by DWP (e.g. to make a claim, report a change of circumstances or receive notification of benefit disallowance).<sup>17</sup> The records in these strata were ordered by Government Office Region<sup>18</sup>, age, gender and length of claim, and a random selection was made.

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<sup>17</sup> The seven Jobcentre Plus 'Regions' or 'Groups' reflect DWP sub-national operational structures and consist of: North West, Central England, Wales, North East, Southern, Scotland, and London and Home Counties.

<sup>18</sup> The nine Government Office Regions (GOR), also known as One Service Network Regions, are the primary statistical subdivisions of England and are made up of complete counties, unitary authorities, metropolitan counties and London boroughs. GOR have been referred to as 'regions' since 2011, but retain the names, codes and boundaries of the former GOR. The nine regions are: East Midlands, East of England, London, North East, North West, South East, South West, West Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber.

## A.3 Fieldwork

All respondents were sent an advance letter on DWP-headed paper before the start of fieldwork. This letter explained the purpose of the study, reasons for their inclusion in the research sample and the form the survey would take. The letters included a free postal address and freephone number for respondents to call if they did not wish to be contacted or if they required help or further information about the study. Anyone who contacted TNS BMRB to opt out of the research was removed from the sample and not called during the fieldwork period.

Telephone fieldwork was conducted in four stages using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). In total 14,918 interviews were carried out. The fieldwork dates were as follows:

- Quarter 1: 09/07/14 to 10/08/14.
- Quarter 2: 02/10/14 to 05/11/14.
- Quarter 3: 13/01/15 to 16/02/15.
- Quarter 4: 13/04/15 to 10/05/15.

## A.4 Response break-down

Table A.1 gives an overview of the interviews achieved, broken down by benefit.

**Table A.1 Breakdown of achieved interviews by benefit and quarter**

Benefit	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
Attendance Allowance	75	130	128	129	462
Disability and Living Allowance	113	-	52	61	226
Employment and Support Allowance	1,384	1,393	1,265	1,558	5,600
Carer's Allowance	116	115	108	122	461
Income Support	117	119	128	85	449
Jobseeker's Allowance	1,373	1,412	1,151	1,668	5,604
Pension Credit	66	164	146	59	435
Personal Independence Payment	-	116	-	109	225
State Pension	105	77	92	176	450
Universal Credit	-	-	550	456	1,006
Total	3,349	3,526	3,620	4,423	14,918

Over the full year, the **fieldwork response rate was 41 per cent**. This is calculated based on the productivity of a valid and eligible sample. The definition of eligibility excludes respondents who died; respondents with invalid or incorrect telephone numbers; cases where a named respondent was unknown at the telephone number recorded in the sample; and claimants who did not contact (or could not remember contacting) DWP within the last three months. The **overall response rate (25 per cent)** is calculated as the number of interviews divided by the number of cases issued.

Table A.2 shows the full breakdown of response during the fieldwork period.

**Table A.2 Response details**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP	Total
Sample sent advance letters	2,359	1,977	1,786	2,652	873	3,995	1,604	22,888	23,013	1,024	62,171
Office opt-out before fieldwork	222	149	68	335	39	32	20	900	322	17	2,104
Unused sample	0	0	0	0	0	638	106	2,093	3,382	0	6,219
<b>Sample issued to telephone unit</b>	<b>2,137</b>	<b>1,828</b>	<b>1,718</b>	<b>2,317</b>	<b>834</b>	<b>3,963</b>	<b>1,584</b>	<b>21,988</b>	<b>22,691</b>	<b>1,007</b>	<b>60,067</b>
<b>Sample loaded into CATI</b>	<b>2,137</b>	<b>1,828</b>	<b>1,718</b>	<b>2,317</b>	<b>834</b>	<b>3,963</b>	<b>1,478</b>	<b>19,895</b>	<b>19,309</b>	<b>1,007</b>	<b>53,848</b>
<b>Invalid sample data</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>811</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>4,559</b>	<b>5,630</b>	<b>567</b>	<b>13,483</b>
<b>Ineligible</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>1,399</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>3,597</b>
No recent contact with DWP	533	375	243	369	131	32	43	1,380	206	206	3,502
Died	7	7	2	49	0	1	0	19	7	3	95
Valid sample (in scope of fieldwork)	1,177	1,034	1,065	1,459	528	2,481	1,050	13,937	13,466	567	36,764
Refusals (including proxy refusals)	242	266	104	394	57	142	76	1,406	1,100	71	3,857
Abandoned interview	2	2	5	4	0	6	1	24	27	0	71
Unavailable during fieldwork	39	33	18	49	12	26	15	185	141	7	525
Unresolved	444	298	477	550	233	1,301	509	6,722	6,594	264	17,393
<b>Achieved interviews</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>435</b>	<b>461</b>	<b>462</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>1,006</b>	<b>449</b>	<b>5,600</b>	<b>5,604</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>14,918</b>
<b>Response rate (%)</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>41</b>

## A.5 Coding and weighting of data

Most questions in the questionnaire were closed, and did not require coding. Almost all fully and partially open-ended questions which appeared in the 2014/15 questionnaire had already appeared in the 2013 Claimant Survey or its predecessors, and used established code-frames built up from responses collected in previous years. Any verbatim responses collected during the 2014/15 survey were coded using these code-frames. Code-frames were adjusted where necessary to accommodate new responses (as long as a new response was given by 10 per cent of more of the claimants who answered the question).

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Weighting was applied to the data to ensure the survey respondents were representative of the population to which they were generalising. There were two stages to the weighting: non-response weights to correct for non-response during fieldwork, and design weights used to account for the survey design.

Non-response weights were created to correct for differing levels of response between different groups of individuals. The non-response weights were calibrated at the benefit level so that they matched the population of (contacting) benefit recipients in terms of gender, benefit, age, region, length of claim, and – in the case of pension-related, carer and disability-related benefits – reason why contact was recorded.

Design weights were calculated to take account of unequal selection probabilities across strata. These were calculated at the time of selection as 1/probability of selection. A ‘DWP weight’ was created after fieldwork was completed to match the profile of the completed interviews in each benefit group to the overall population of contacting DWP claimants, and allow for analysis at the overall DWP level. This was created by rescaling the ‘benefit weights’ described above to reflect the relative population size of each benefit group as a proportion of all contacting claimants. The population of contacting claimants was provided through DWP management information, but adjusted using information from the survey.<sup>19</sup> The representativeness of the sample is shown in Table A.3.

**Table A.3 Representativeness of sample**

	SP	PC	CA	AA	DLA	UC	IS	ESA	JSA	PIP	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Contacting population	249,082	447,094	62,423	94,480	52,365	46,450	103,469	7,823,482	4,071,417	83,956	13,034,218
Proportion of total DWP contacting population	1.91%	3.43%	0.48%	0.72%	0.40%	0.36%	0.79%	60.02%	31.24%	0.64%	100%
Interviews	450	435	461	462	226	1,006	449	5,600	5,604	225	14,918
Proportion of total survey population	3.02%	2.92%	3.09%	3.10%	1.51%	6.74%	3.01%	37.54%	37.57%	1.51%	100%
Whether benefit group is under or over-represented in sample	Over	Under	Over	Over	Over	Over	Over	Under	Over	Over	

<sup>19</sup> DWP’s management information enumerated individuals who had a recorded transaction or who were claiming a working-age benefit during a three-month window prior to interview. It was possible to improve estimates of the contacting population using survey information, by calculating the proportion of sampled individuals who reported that they had not, in fact, had contact with DWP of any kind during that window, and applying those proportions onto DWP’s population figures.



# Appendix B

## Getting it right – breakdown by transaction

### **B.1 Transaction: Making a new JSA claim**

#### **B.1.1 Main outcome**

Almost nine in ten claimants (89 per cent) who had been in contact with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) within the last three months in order to start a new Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claim reported that a decision had been reached about their claim. Ninety-one per cent of this group reported that they agreed with the decision that was reached.

Approximately three in ten (29 per cent) of the claimants who did not agree with the decision they received stated that they had asked DWP to reconsider the decision or made a formal appeal. Of this group, nine in ten were dissatisfied with the way in which their appeal had been handled (15 per cent saying 'fairly dissatisfied' and 75 per cent 'very dissatisfied') compared to eight per cent who were fairly satisfied. No one felt very satisfied with this process.

Eighty-seven per cent of claimants who had received a decision felt that it had been clearly explained, with most (55 per cent) saying it was explained very clearly. A further seven per cent reported that it had not been clearly explained and five per cent that the decision had not been explained at all.

Eighty-eight per cent of claimants who had received a decision from DWP regarding their new JSA claim felt that a conclusion had been reached in a reasonable length of time.

#### **B.1.2 Perceived complexity**

Almost three-quarters (72 per cent) of those who made a new JSA claim reported that they had not found the process complicated, with 43 per cent describing it as 'not at all' and 29 per cent as 'not very' complicated. Around three in ten (27 per cent) felt the opposite: 18 per cent reported that it was 'fairly complicated' and nine per cent 'very complicated'.

Nine in ten of the claimants who used the gov.uk website as part of their JSA claim – either in order to make the application or search for information surrounding this – felt that it was easy to find the relevant pages to enable them to do this. Claimants were slightly more likely to describe this as 'very easy' (47 per cent) than 'fairly easy' (43 per cent), while nine per cent felt that it was difficult.

### **B.1.3 Provision of incorrect or contradictory information**

Approximately one in seven claimants who made a new JSA claim reported receiving incorrect or contradictory information (15 per cent).

### **B.1.4 Staff knowledge**

Around four in five of the claimants who telephoned DWP during the process of making their JSA claim (78 per cent) reported that the first member of staff they spoke to was able to help them. More than four-fifths (84 per cent) described the staff that they spoke to on the phone as knowledgeable, and a similar proportion (83 per cent) believed they were provided with correct information during the call.

Claimants who received a call from DWP when making a JSA claim were slightly more likely to report positive experiences: around nine in ten felt that the staff were knowledgeable (89 per cent) and that the staff provided them with correct information (92 per cent).

Over four in five claimants who had face-to-face contact with staff when making their claim felt that the staff were knowledgeable (81 per cent) and had provided them with correct information (85 per cent).

### **B.1.5 Experiences of receiving payment**

Around one in five claimants who started a new claim for JSA (17 per cent) felt that they had to contact DWP more often than they had expected. Of this group, 13 per cent said that it was because they had not received a payment and three per cent reported that this was because a payment had been incorrect.

Fewer than half (43 per cent) of the claimants who had contacted DWP more than expected due to issues with their payments felt that DWP had taken prompt action in order to correct it.

## **B.2 Transaction: Making a new ESA claim**

### **B.2.1 Main outcome**

Eighty-six per cent of claimants who made a new claim for ESA in the last three months reported that a decision had been reached about their claim. Ninety-four per cent of this group said that they agreed with the decision they received.

A third of claimants who did not agree with the decision asked DWP to reconsider it or made an appeal. Approximately one-fifth of this group (18 per cent) were satisfied with the way in which their appeal had been handled (eight per cent 'very satisfied' and eleven per cent 'fairly satisfied'), while 68 per cent were dissatisfied (26 per cent 'fairly dissatisfied' and 42 per cent 'very dissatisfied').

Eighty-six per cent of claimants who received a decision about their claim felt that the decision had been clearly explained to them (52 per cent 'very clearly' and 34 per cent 'fairly clearly'), whereas 10 per cent felt that this was not the case and five per cent that it had not been explained at all.

## **B.2.2 Perceived complexity**

Approximately two-thirds (64 per cent) of claimants who made a new claim for ESA did not perceive the process as complicated, with 37 per cent describing it as 'not at all complicated'. A fifth (20 per cent) found the process 'fairly complicated' and 14 per cent 'very complicated'.

The majority of claimants who visited the gov.uk website as part of their application (either to lodge the application or search for information about doing so) felt that it had been easy to find the relevant pages to enable them to do this (85 per cent). However, nine per cent found this 'fairly difficult' and six per cent 'very difficult'.

Where respondents had filled out a paper form as part of their application, they were asked how easy they had found these forms to complete: six in ten felt that they were easy (14 per cent describing them as 'very easy' and 46 per cent as 'fairly easy'), while 31 per cent thought they were difficult (20 per cent saying 'fairly difficult' and 11 per cent 'very difficult'). An additional four per cent said that the level of ease varied depending on the form.

## **B.2.3 Provision of incorrect or contradictory information**

One in seven claimants who had contacted DWP in order to make a new claim for ESA reported receiving incorrect or contradictory information during the process (14 per cent).

## **B.2.4 Staff knowledge**

Almost nine in ten of the claimants who telephoned DWP during the process of making their ESA claim reported that the first person they spoke to was able to help them (86 per cent). Similar proportions felt that the staff they interacted with on the phone were knowledgeable and provided them with correct information (87 per cent each).

Eighty-nine per cent of claimants who had received a phone call from DWP as part of their new claim for ESA felt that the staff with whom they interacted were knowledgeable, and the same proportion believed that staff had provided them with correct information.

In cases where respondents had interacted with staff face-to-face as part of their new claim for ESA, they were asked the same questions as with telephone contact. Slightly fewer of these claimants (84 per cent) felt that the staff were knowledgeable or had provided them with correct information.

## **B.2.5 Experiences of receiving payment**

Just under a tenth of claimants (nine per cent) who had been in touch with DWP in order to start a new ESA claim reported having to contact the Department more than they had expected. Within this group, 16 per cent stated that it was because they 'hadn't received a payment' and two per cent reported that it was because 'a payment was incorrect'.

Half of the claimants who had contacted DWP more than expected due to payment issues felt that DWP took prompt action in order to correct the problem.

## **B.3 Transaction: Making a new IS claim**

### **B.3.1 Main outcome**

Ninety-three per cent of claimants who had been in touch with DWP in order to make a new claim for Income Support (IS) reported that a decision had been reached by the time of the interview. Nearly all of those who received a decision (96 per cent) stated that they agreed with the outcome.

Where a decision had been reached, 92 per cent of claimants felt that it had been clearly explained (64 per cent saying that it was 'very clearly explained' and 28 per cent 'fairly clearly explained'). Three per cent reported it was 'not clearly explained' and two per cent that it was 'not explained at all'.

Approximately nine in ten (89 per cent) of those who received a decision reported that they felt that a conclusion was reached within a reasonable length of time.

### **B.3.2 Perceived complexity**

Over seven in ten claimants who started a new IS claim said that the process was not complicated (27 per cent saying 'not very' and 45 per cent 'not at all' complicated). Around a quarter (26 per cent) described the process as complicated (eight per cent saying it was 'very complicated' and 18 per cent 'fairly complicated').

Nine in ten of the claimants who visited the gov.uk website as part of process of starting an IS claim (either to submit the application or to look for information about starting their claim) felt that it was easy to find the relevant pages (52 per cent saying 'very easy' and 37 per cent 'fairly easy'), while 10 per cent found it difficult (four per cent 'fairly difficult' and six per cent 'very difficult').

### **B.3.3 Provision of incorrect or contradictory information**

One in ten claimants who had contacted DWP in order to make a new claim for IS reported receiving incorrect or contradictory information.

### **B.3.4 Staff knowledge**

Almost nine in ten of the claimants who phoned DWP as part of making an IS claim reported that the first person that they spoke to was able to help them (88 per cent). Ninety-two per cent felt that the staff they interacted with on the phone were knowledgeable, or had provided them with correct information.

In contrast to this, fewer claimants who received a call from DWP during the process of making a claim for IS felt that the staff were knowledgeable (86 per cent) or had provided them with correct information (94 per cent).

Ninety per cent of claimants who had interacted with staff face-to-face as part of their new claim for IS felt that the staff were knowledgeable, and 94 per cent believed they were provided with correct information.

### **B.3.5 Experiences of receiving payment**

One in seven claimants who started a new IS claim reported having to contact DWP more than they expected during the process (14 per cent). Nine per cent of this group stated that it was because they had not received a payment, and two per cent because a payment had been incorrect. Due to small base sizes, it is not possible to report on how promptly errors were addressed.

## **B.4 Transaction: Appealed a decision about ESA eligibility**

### **B.4.1 Main outcome**

Three in five claimants who were in contact with DWP to ask them to reconsider the outcome of their claim for ESA reported that a decision had been made by the time of their interview. Seven in ten of those who received a decision said that they agreed with it, and a similar proportion (69 per cent) felt that it has been clearly explained to them (33 per cent describing the explanation as 'very' and 36 per cent as 'fairly' clear). However, 15 per cent of claimants who received a decision about this felt that the decision was 'not clearly explained' and a further 12 per cent reported that it had not been explained at all. The proportion who felt they were denied an explanation was higher for this transaction than for any other transaction.

Approximately half of those who received a decision (51 per cent) felt that a conclusion had been reached in a reasonable length of time. The proportions who found this unreasonable were higher than in any other transaction.

### **B.4.2 Perceived complexity**

This transaction was perceived to be more complicated than other transactions recorded by the survey. When asked how complicated they had found the process of asking DWP to reconsider or appeal a decision concerning their ESA claim, 65 per cent felt that it had been complicated (43 per cent saying 'very complicated' and 22 per cent 'fairly complicated'). Only 31 per cent felt the opposite, with 17 per cent saying it was 'not very complicated' and 14 per cent feeling it was 'not at all complicated'.

### **B.4.3 Provision of incorrect or contradictory information**

Approximately one in five of the claimants who asked DWP to reconsider a decision concerning their ESA claim or lodged an appeal reported they had received information which they found to be incorrect or contradictory (21 per cent).

### **B.4.4 Staff knowledge**

Around half of claimants who made a telephone call to DWP during the process of appealing or requesting a reconsideration of their eligibility for ESA said that the first person that they spoke was able to help them (53 per cent).

Levels of staff knowledge were perceived to be low with regards to the appeal process. Only around two-thirds (64 per cent) of those who called DWP felt that the staff they interacted with were knowledgeable and 61 per cent believed they were provided with correct information by staff. Seven in ten (71 per cent) claimants who interacted with DWP staff face-to-face as part of this process felt that the staff they encountered in person had been knowledgeable, and 63 per cent believed the staff had provided them with correct information.

### **B.4.5 Experiences of receiving payment**

Around two in five claimants who asked DWP to reconsider or appeal a decision concerning their ESA claim reported having to contact DWP more often than they had expected as part of their transaction (37 per cent). Three per cent of this group reported that it was because they had not received a payment, while one per cent attributed this to an incorrect payment. Due to small base sizes, it is not possible to report whether DWP took prompt action to address these payment issues.

## **B.5 Transaction: ESA claimants whose entitlement was reassessed following a change of benefit**

### **B.5.1 Main outcome**

Over four in five ESA claimants who had contact with DWP with regards to the reassessment of their entitlement stated that a decision had been reached about this matter (84 per cent). Around nine in ten (92 per cent) of those who received a decision agreed with the decision they were given and a similar proportion (88 per cent) felt that the conclusion had been reached in a reasonable length of time.

When claimants who had received a decision were asked whether it had been clearly explained, 84 per cent reported that it had been (50 per cent saying 'very clearly' and 34 per cent 'fairly clearly'); six per cent thought that the decision was 'not clearly explained' and a further six said it was 'not explained at all'.

### **B.5.2 Perceived complexity**

ESA claimants whose entitlement was reassessed were asked how complicated they found dealing with DWP about this matter: 43 per cent found it complicated (18 per cent 'very complicated' and 25 per cent 'fairly complicated') whereas 55 per cent did not (21 per cent saying 'not very complicated' and 34 per cent 'not at all complicated').

### **B.5.3 Provision of incorrect or contradictory information**

One in ten ESA claimants whose entitlement was reassessed following a change of benefit said they received information during the process which they found to be incorrect or contradictory.

## **B.5.4 Staff knowledge**

Less than a third of ESA claimants who phoned DWP regarding the reassessment of their entitlement said they were helped by the first person they spoke to (31 per cent). This proportion is lower than in other transactions, reflecting the need for multiple points of contact with regards to this matter.

Approximately four in five claimants who made a call about this felt that the staff they spoke to were knowledgeable (78 per cent) and provided them with correct information (79 per cent).

Similarly, around four-fifths of claimants who received a call from DWP as part of this transaction (82 per cent) or who had interacted with staff face-to-face (83 per cent) felt that staff were knowledgeable and had provided them with correct information.

## **B.5.5 Experiences of receiving payment**

Around one in seven ESA claimants who were in touch with DWP regarding the reassessment of their entitlement felt that more contact was required than they had initially expected (15 per cent). Of this group, nine per cent reported it was because they had not received a payment and three per cent reported it was because a payment was incorrect.

## **B.6 Transaction: JSA claimants who reported a change of circumstances**

### **B.6.1 Main outcome**

Eight per cent of JSA claimants who reported a change in their circumstances said they had to notify DWP again about the same issue. This suggests that only in a minority of cases was the information incorrectly documented or not passed on to the relevant parties.

### **B.6.2 Perceived complexity**

Approximately one in six JSA claimants who reported a change of circumstances felt that the process of making a report was complicated (16 per cent), with six per cent describing it as 'very complicated' and ten per cent as 'fairly complicated'. Most, however, thought it was 'not at all complicated' (60 per cent) and almost a quarter (23 per cent) 'not very complicated'.

JSA claimants who had visited the gov.uk website during the process of reporting a change of circumstances were asked how easy it was to find the relevant pages. The vast majority (95 per cent) found it easy to do so (five per cent saying 'very easy' and half saying 'fairly easy') and only five per cent thought that it was difficult (three per cent saying 'fairly difficult' and two per cent 'very difficult').

### **B.6.3 Provision of incorrect or contradictory information**

The majority of JSA claimants who reported a change of circumstances to DWP (89 per cent) said they had not received any incorrect or contradictory information during the process.

### **B.6.4 Staff knowledge**

Almost nine in ten JSA claimants who called DWP during the process of reporting a change in their circumstances said that the first person they spoke to was able to help them (87 per cent). A similar proportion (89 per cent) believed the staff they spoke to were knowledgeable and provided them with correct information.

Eighty-two per cent of JSA claimants who spoke to DWP staff in person when reporting a change in their circumstances felt that the staff they encountered were knowledgeable, while 84 per cent believed that the staff provided them with correct information.

### **B.6.5 Experiences of receiving payment**

One in ten JSA claimants who reported a change of circumstances said that they needed to contact DWP more than they had expected. Nine per cent of this group explained that this was because they had not received a payment and four per cent said that it was because a payment had been incorrect.

## **B.7 Transaction: ESA claimants who reported a change of circumstances**

### **B.7.1 Main outcome**

Fewer than one in seven ESA claimants who tried to report a change in their circumstances said that they had to report the same issue again later (13 per cent)

### **B.7.2 Perceived complexity**

Around a quarter of ESA claimants who reported a change in their circumstances found the process complicated (nine per cent describing it as 'very complicated' and 14 per cent as 'fairly complicated'). A further quarter (24 per cent) said that they found it 'not very complicated' but the majority (52 per cent) described it as 'not at all complicated'.

### **B.7.3 Provision of incorrect or contradictory information**

One in ten ESA claimants who reported a change in their circumstances said that they were provided with incorrect or contradictory information during their contact with DWP (11 per cent).

### **B.7.4 Staff knowledge**

Four-fifths of ESA claimants who called DWP with regards to a change in their circumstances reported that the first person they spoke to was able to help them (82 per cent). Almost nine in ten (88 per cent) believed the staff they spoke to were knowledgeable, and 85 per cent said that they provided them with correct information.



Eighty-four per cent of ESA claimants who had face-to-face interaction with staff in regards to this felt that the staff they encountered were knowledgeable, and the same proportion believed they were provided with correct information.

### **B.7.5 Experiences of receiving payment**

Approximately one in six ESA claimants who were in touch with DWP to report a change in their circumstances felt that they needed to make more contact than they had anticipated (16 per cent). Six per cent of this group reported that the additional contact arose in connection to the non-receipt of a payment, while three per cent attributed it to an incorrect payment.

## **B.8 Transaction: PC customers who reported a change of circumstances**

### **B.8.1 Main outcome**

Thirteen per cent of Pension Credit (PC) customers who had contact with DWP in order to report a change in their circumstances said that they had to report the same issue to DWP again later.

### **B.8.2 Perceived complexity**

Thirteen per cent of PC customers who reported a change of circumstances found the process complicated, with five per cent describing it as 'very complicated' and eight per cent as 'fairly complicated'. Almost a fifth (18 per cent) said it was 'not very complicated' and the majority (67 per cent) said it was 'not at all complicated'.

### **B.8.3 Provision of incorrect or contradictory information**

Only six per cent of PC customers who were in touch with DWP about a change of circumstances reported receiving incorrect or contradictory information.

### **B.8.4 Staff knowledge**

Approximately four-fifths of PC customers who telephoned DWP with regards to a change in their circumstances stated that the first member of staff that they spoke to on the phone was able to help them (81 per cent). Around nine in ten of these claimants felt that the member(s) of staff they interacted with were knowledgeable (91 per cent) and provided them with correct information (89 per cent).

### **B.8.5 Experiences of receiving payment**

Nine per cent of PC customers who tried to report a change in their circumstances felt they had been in contact with regards to this matter more often than they would have expected. However, when asked why, only one respondent reported that it was because they had not received a payment and nobody reported that it was due to an incorrect payment.

## **B.9 Transaction: Reporting problems with benefit**

### **B.9.1 Perceived complexity**

The survey did not record whether claimants who reported problems with their benefits had resolved the problems in question. However, the proportions who found it difficult to report these problems was collected: 43 per cent said that they found the process complicated (25 per cent saying 'very complicated' and 18 per cent 'fairly complicated'), while 22 per cent felt that it was 'not very complicated' and a third (33 per cent) that it was 'not at all complicated'.

### **B.9.2 Provision of incorrect or contradictory information**

Under a fifth of claimants who had been in touch with DWP in the last three months to report a problem with their benefit reported receiving incorrect or contradictory information during their contact (17 per cent).

### **B.9.3 Staff knowledge**

Around two-thirds of claimants who telephoned DWP with regards to problems with their benefits said the first person who they spoke to was able to help them (64 per cent). Approximately three-quarters felt that the staff they spoke to on the phone were knowledgeable and that the staff provided them with correct information (73 per cent each). Meanwhile, around four-fifths of the claimants who spoke to staff in person as part of the process felt that the staff they encountered were knowledgeable and had given them correct information (81 per cent each), though the bases sizes used for this analysis are small and these findings should be treated with caution.

### **B.9.4 Experiences of receiving payment**

Around a third (34 per cent) of claimants who reported a problem with their benefit stated that they had contacted DWP more than they had expected as part of the transaction. Of this group, nearly one in four (23 per cent) said that it was because they had not received a payment and 12 per cent said it was because a payment had been incorrect. Thirteen of the 29 claimants who attributed the additional contact to payment issues felt that DWP took prompt action to correct the payment.

# Appendix C

## Keeping you informed – breakdown by transaction

### **C.1 Transaction: Making a new JSA claim**

#### **C.1.1 Provision of information on next steps and progress updates**

Around nine in ten claimants who started a Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claim reported they had been told what would happen next as part of their application (86 per cent). Slightly fewer (82 per cent) said that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) had given them clear timings on what they would do.

Just under three-quarters of claimants who started a JSA claim (74 per cent) reported that DWP kept them up to date with the progress of their application, with 14 per cent saying that they received a text message at some point during the process. Over a quarter (27 per cent) initiated further contact with DWP in order to get an update on its progress, mostly via telephone (70 per cent) or in person (34 per cent).<sup>20</sup>

#### **C.1.2 Need for additional contact with DWP**

Just over half of the claimants who started a claim for JSA said that the amount of contact they had as part of their transaction was as anticipated (52 per cent); 27 per cent felt they had needed to contact DWP less than expected; and 17 per cent reported having to be in contact more than expected.

For those claimants who had been in contact more than they expected, the top three reasons for this were: 'something was unclear or confusing' (19 per cent), '[I] didn't receive a reply' (14 per cent) and 'hadn't received payment' (13 per cent).

### **C.2 Transaction: Making a new ESA claim**

#### **C.2.1 Provision of information on next steps and progress updates**

Around four-fifths of claimants who had been in contact with DWP in the last three months to make an Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claim reported that DWP told them what would happen next as part of their application (81 per cent). Approximately seven in ten (69 per cent) reported being given clear timings by DWP for what they would do.

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<sup>20</sup> This was a multi-coded question and as such the percentages sum to more than 100 per cent.

While over two-thirds said that they had been kept up to date on the progress of their claim (68 per cent), only three per cent said that they received an update via text message.

Just over a third (38 per cent) of claimants who were making a new claim for ESA initiated additional contact with DWP to get an update on the progress of their application. This was done almost exclusively on the phone (93 per cent), with one in ten also reporting having done it in person.

### **C.2.2 Need for additional contact with DWP**

Just under half of claimants who made a new ESA claim felt the amount of contact they had with DWP with regards to their application was about as much as they had anticipated (48 per cent); 27 per cent felt that they had contacted DWP less than expected and 19 per cent more than they had expected.

For those who felt that they had contacted DWP more than they had expected, the three most common reasons were: 'something was unclear or confusing' (19 per cent), 'didn't receive a reply' (18 per cent) and '[I] was anxious to get an update or receive confirmation' (17 per cent).

## **C.3 Transaction: Making a new IS claim**

### **C.3.1 Provision of information on next steps and progress updates**

Almost nine in ten claimants who started a new Income Support (IS) claim said they had been told what would happen next with regards to their application (87 per cent). Four in five said DWP had provided them with clear timings about what they would do.

Three-quarters stated that they had been kept up to date with the progress of their claim, though only four per cent reported receiving an update via text.

Three in ten claimants who lodged an IS claim initiated additional contact with DWP in order to get an update on the progress of their claim. As with other transaction types the majority of this contact was via telephone (89 per cent) or in person (11 per cent).

### **C.3.2 Need for additional contact with DWP**

Over half of the claimants who made a new IS claim (53 per cent) felt that they needed to contact DWP about as often as they had expected during the process; a further 29 per cent felt that they needed less contact than they had anticipated; and 14 per cent said the process required more contact than expected.

Those who made more contact than expected most commonly attributed this to not receiving a reply, something non-payment-related being incorrect, or something 'unclear or confusing' (18 per cent each).

## **C.4 Transaction: Appealed a decision about ESA eligibility**

### **C.4.1 Provision of information on next steps and progress updates**

Approximately three-fifths of claimants who were in contact with DWP to ask them to reconsider the outcome of their claim for ESA reported that they had been told what would happen next in regards to their appeal (61 per cent). Around half indicated that they had been given clear timings on what DWP would do (51 per cent).

Almost two-fifths (39 per cent) of claimants who made an appeal regarding their ESA eligibility said that they had been kept up to date on the progress of their appeal. However, just over a third (37 per cent) contacted DWP while the process was underway in order to get a progress update. This contact was mostly on the phone (85 per cent) or via post (13 per cent).

### **C.4.2 Need for additional contact with DWP**

Almost a third (32 per cent) of those appealing a decision regarding their ESA eligibility felt they had to contact DWP about as often as they had expected regarding this; 18 per cent said the process required less contact than they expected; but the most common view, expressed by 37 per cent, was that the amount of contact required surpassed all expectations.

The top three reasons for additional contact were: 'something was unclear or confusing' (26 per cent), 'didn't receive a reply' (26 per cent) and 'anxious to get an update or receive an update' (21 per cent).

## **C.5 Transaction: ESA claimants whose entitlement was reassessed following a change of benefit**

### **C.5.1 Provision of information on next steps and progress updates**

Approximately two-thirds (67 per cent) of claimants who had contact with DWP as a result of having had a reassessment of their entitlement to ESA following a change of benefit stated that they were told what would happen next in the process. The same proportion reported that they were given clear timings on what DWP would do.

While two per cent of ESA claimants whose entitlement was reassessed received updates about this from DWP by text, around a quarter (24 per cent) said they contacted DWP at some point in order to request an update. Contact was mostly made on the phone (90 per cent), however, a substantial minority made contact in person (16 per cent) and a further seven per cent used post.

## **C.5.2 Need for additional contact with DWP**

Almost half (46 per cent) of claimants who were in touch with DWP regarding the reassessment of their entitlement felt that they had contacted DWP as much as expected regarding their change of entitlement; 29 per cent needed less contact than they had expected; and 15 per cent reported needing to contact DWP more than expected.

A quarter of those who made more contact than anticipated attributed this additional contact to 'something [being] unclear or confusing' (24 per cent), while 15 per cent stated that it was because 'something else [non-payment related] was incorrect' and 11 per cent because '[I] didn't receive a reply'.

## **C.6 Transaction: JSA claimants who reported a change of circumstances**

### **C.6.1 Provision of information on next steps and progress updates**

Seven in ten JSA claimants who reported a change of circumstances (69 per cent) said that they were told by DWP what would happen next, and the same proportion said they were given clear timings by DWP on what they would do.

In less than two-thirds of cases (64 per cent), JSA claimants who reported a change of circumstances were kept up to date with the progress of this change, though only one per cent said they received an update via text concerning this. One in ten got in touch again during the process in order to get an update: of those who sought an update, three-quarters did so via telephone and 40 per cent in person.

### **C.6.2 Need for additional contact with DWP**

In the majority of cases, JSA claimants who reported a change in their circumstances said that the amount of contact they had with DWP about this matter was as much as they had expected (59 per cent); 23 per cent reported having less contact than expected; and one in ten JSA needed to contact DWP more than they expected.

The main reasons given for having more contact than expected were: '[I wasn't] able to speak to the right person' (15 per cent), 'something was unclear or confusing' and '[I] didn't receive a reply' (13 per cent each).

## **C.7 Transaction: ESA claimants who reported a change of circumstances**

### **C.7.1 Provision of information on next steps and progress updates**

In approximately two thirds (68 per cent) of cases where ESA claimants reported a change in their circumstances they were told what would happen next in the process. Around three in five (62 per cent) were provided with clear timings on what DWP would be doing.

DWP kept over half of ESA claimants who reported a change of circumstances up to date with progress (57 per cent), with one per cent saying they received an update via text. A quarter (24 per cent) said that they contacted DWP in order to get a progress update; most of them did so by phone (93 per cent), though six per cent did this in person.

### **C.7.2 Need for additional contact with DWP**

Just over half (51 per cent) of ESA claimants who reported a change in their circumstances felt that the amount of contact entailed was about as much as they had expected; 26 per cent felt that they had contacted DWP less often than expected; and 16 per cent felt that they needed to make more contact than they had anticipated.

When asked to give their reasons for any unanticipated contact the most common reason was '[I] did not receive a reply' (18 per cent) followed by 'something was unclear or confusing' (15 per cent) and 'something else [non-payment related] was incorrect' (13 per cent).

## **C.8 Transaction: PC customers who reported a change of circumstances**

### **C.8.1 Provision of information on next steps and progress updates**

Three-quarters of PC customers who had been in contact with DWP in order to report a change in their circumstances said they were informed about what would happen next. Around two-thirds (67 per cent) were provided with clear timings of what DWP would do.

Over seven in ten (71 per cent) Pension Credit (PC) customers who reported a change of circumstances said they were kept up to date with the progress of their request. Thirteen per cent initiated contact at some point during the process in order to request an update, but the number who did so was too small to permit analysis of the channels used to do this.

## **C.8.2 Need for additional contact with DWP**

Almost two-thirds of PC customers who reported a change in their circumstances (64 per cent) felt the amount of contact required to achieve this was as much as they had expected; 18 per cent felt it had been less than expected; and nine per cent reported contacting the department more often than they had expected to. The number of people who made more contact than they had originally anticipated is too small to explore what prompted the additional contact.

## **C.9 Transaction: Reporting problems with benefit**

### **C.9.1 Provision of information on next steps and progress updates**

Approximately three-quarters of claimants who were in touch with DWP to report a problem with their benefit were told what would happen next (73 per cent). Almost three-fifths (59 per cent) reported being given clear timings for what DWP would do.

Two-fifths of claimants who reported a problem with their benefit were kept updated on how this matter was progressing, though none received an update via text message. Over a third (36 per cent) got in touch at some point in order to get an update on progress, with the majority of them doing so over the phone (87 per cent) rather than in person (17 per cent).

### **C.9.2 Need for additional contact with DWP**

Whereas claimants undertaking most other types of transactions were most likely to feel that the amount of contact they had with DWP was neither greater nor less than expected, the views of claimants who reported problems with their benefit were more varied. Similar proportions felt that contact was as much as anticipated (32 per cent), less than anticipated (30 per cent), or more than anticipated (34 per cent).

For those claimants who reported contacting DWP more than expected, the main reasons were: 'something was unclear or confusing' (27 per cent), '[I] hadn't received payment' (22 per cent) and 'needed to make repeated contact to get [my] problem solved' (22 per cent).