



Valuation Office  
Agency

# Property Services (DVS) Customer Survey: Findings 2013-14

## Published January 2015

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This research report has been written by BMG Research based on research carried out in April 2013 to March 2014. The views and findings are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect those of the Valuation Office Agency.

### Revised Version: Correction April 2015

Please note that some figures have been changed in this report from the version that was originally produced. It has come to our attention that some figures in this report were incorrectly displayed in Figures 3 and 4. The changes made are to these Figures:

#### Figure 3

Independence: 'Don't Know' (1% to no figure)

Meeting requirements: 'Very Satisfied' (71% to 63%); 'Fairly Satisfied' (25% to 30%); 'Fairly Dissatisfied' (3% to 2%)

Keeping updated: 'Very Satisfied' (44% to 45%); 'Very Dissatisfied' (1% to no figure)

Availability of staff: 'Fairly Dissatisfied' (2% to 3%)

#### Figure 4

Professionalism: 'Neither' (2% to no figure)

Meeting timescales: 'Neither' (1% to no figure)

Keeping to budget: 'Neither' (3% to 4%); 'Don't know/no opinion' (2% to 3%)

Speed of response: 'Neither' (1% to 2%)

Keeping you updated: 'Neither' (3% to 4%)

Flexibility: 'Don't know/no opinion' (1% to no figure)

Availability of staff: 'Don't know/no opinion' (1% to no figure)

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# 1. Executive Summary



This report summarises the annual results from the 2013/2014 Property Services Customer Satisfaction Survey, undertaken on behalf of the Valuation Office Agency (VOA).

A total of 300<sup>1</sup> interviews were undertaken across four waves between July 2013 and May 2014 via Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing (CATI) with customers who have had personal dealings with Property Services within the last two years. The Property Services directorate within the VOA markets itself to customers as DVS.

## Key Findings

Overall, responses were generally very positive:

- Almost all (94%) were satisfied with their most recent dealing, including three in five (61%) who were very satisfied. Only 2% were dissatisfied.
- Satisfaction with all aspects of performance was high, ranging from 82% to 98%, while the proportion who were very satisfied ranged from 44% to 80%.
- Satisfaction with the professionalism of staff, their independence/ impartiality and their professional knowledge was particularly high (80%, 72% and 71% respectively very satisfied).

Over four in five (83%) respondents reported that DVS delivered the work within the originally agreed timescales, while one in seven (14%) reported that they did not.

Over four in five (85%) reported that DVS delivered the work within the originally agreed budget, whilst one in ten (11%) reported that they did not.

When asked if there were any aspects of the DVS service that caused them concern, speed of response/meeting deadlines and pricing were the two most commonly mentioned issues (12% and 5% respectively). However it should be noted that, overall, respondents were more than twice as likely to mention something about the DVS service that particularly impressed them as they were to mention something that caused concerns or issues (65% compared with 31%).

## Key Driver Analysis

Analysis indicates that the most important predictor of overall satisfaction is 'meeting key requirements', and that this is an aspect on which DVS performs particularly strongly in terms of overall levels of satisfaction.

In contrast, other important predictors of overall satisfaction, and where DVS performs less well than on some other measures, are 'speed of response to queries', and 'keeping you updated on progress of work'.

## 2. Introduction



### 2.1 Background

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) is an executive Agency of HMRC. Its strategic function is to provide “the valuations and property advice required to support taxation and benefits”<sup>2</sup> in England and Wales. Property Services (known externally as DVS) is the property arm of the VOA, and provides professional property advice to clients from across the public sector. It should be noted that the survey refers to District Valuer Services (DVS) throughout.

This report summarises the annual results from the 2013/2014 Property Services Customer Satisfaction Survey, undertaken on behalf of the VOA.

### 2.2 Method

Interviews were undertaken between July 2013 and May 2014 using Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing (CATI), with customers who have had personal dealings with PS within the last two year, the majority within the last month.

The sample was provided by VOA, and a total of 300 interviews were completed from 530 contacts supplied, representing a 58% response rate. Targets were set to ensure a representative spread across customer types, with the following breakdown achieved over the year.

**Figure 1: Breakdown of achieved sample by customer type**

Income Group	Sector	2013/14
<£1k	Central Government	*
	Health	10
	Local/Devolved Government	20
	Other	*
	Transport	*
£1k<£5k	Central Government	*
	Health	60
	Local/Devolved Government	110
	Other	20
	Transport	*
>£5k	Central Government	*
	Health	20
	Local/Devolved Government	40
	Other	*
	Transport	0
Grand Total (rounded)		300

<sup>2</sup> VOA Annual Report 2014 [http://www.voa.gov.uk/corporate/\\_downloads/pdf/ARandA2014.pdf](http://www.voa.gov.uk/corporate/_downloads/pdf/ARandA2014.pdf)

All counts have been rounded to the nearest 10. Counts based on five or fewer responses have been suppressed to protect confidentiality, denoted by a "\*".

A sample size of 300 carries an approximate maximum confidence interval of  $\pm 5\%$  at the 95% level of confidence, although the size of this confidence interval reduces as the proportion of respondents giving an answer gets closer to 0% or 100%.

Differences between quarters and between subgroups have been indicated at the 95% level of confidence, i.e. where we can be 95% confident that the differences are real and did not occur by chance.

Respondents were asked to rate how satisfied they were with the overall service they received and with DVS' performance on a number of specific aspects of their service. They were also asked questions on whether DVS delivered on budget and to time, the relative importance to the respondent of various aspects of DVS' performance, and whether DVS' service had improved or worsened since the respondents' last dealings with them.

## 3. Summary of results



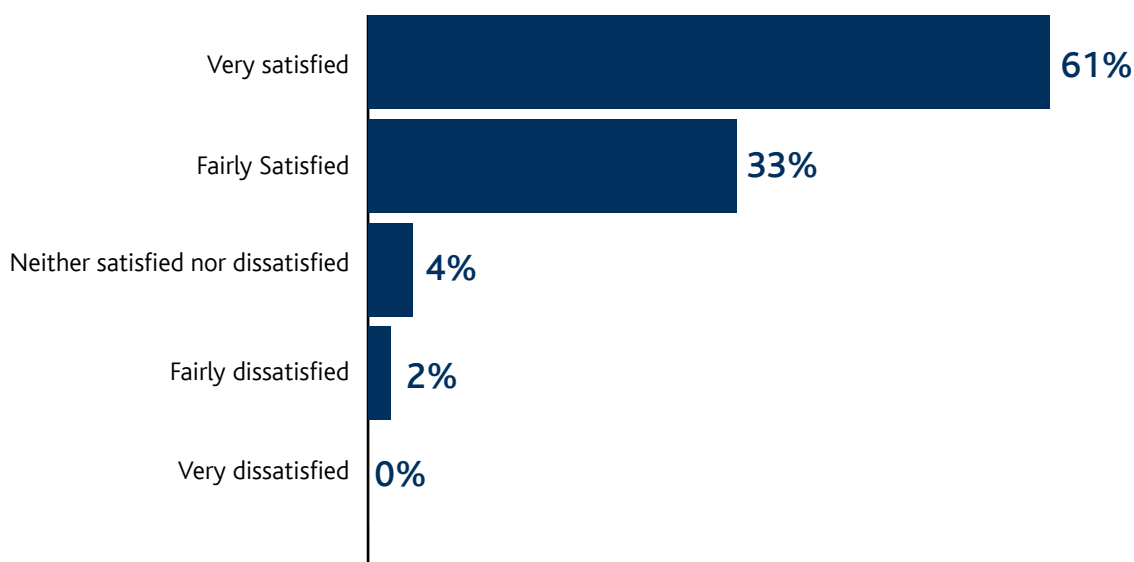
### 3.1 Dealings with DVS

More than four in five (83%) respondents had used DVS on more than one previous occasion, one in twenty (5%) had used DVS once before and for just over one in ten (12%) this was their first occasion. Of those that had used DVS before, over nine in ten (93%) had done so in the last two years, and almost two thirds (63%) of all respondents had used the service in the last three months.

### 3.2 Overall rating of current/most recent contract with DVS

Appendix 1 summarises the results of the key closed questions in the survey, indicating where responses were positive, neutral or negative. Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the overall service they received in their current or most recent contract, this is shown in Figure 2. Over nine in ten (94%) respondents rated themselves as satisfied overall, including three in five (61%) who rated themselves as very satisfied. Fewer than ten respondents indicated that they were fairly dissatisfied and no respondents indicated that they were very dissatisfied.

**Figure 2: Satisfaction with overall service received in current/most recent contract with DVS – 2013/14 (all respondents)**



Q4. I'm going to read out some aspects relating to DVS' work for you. Could you please rate how satisfied you were with their performance on each one in your current or most recent contract?  
Overall service you received.  
Rounded base = 300

### 3.3 Satisfaction with aspects of DVS' performance

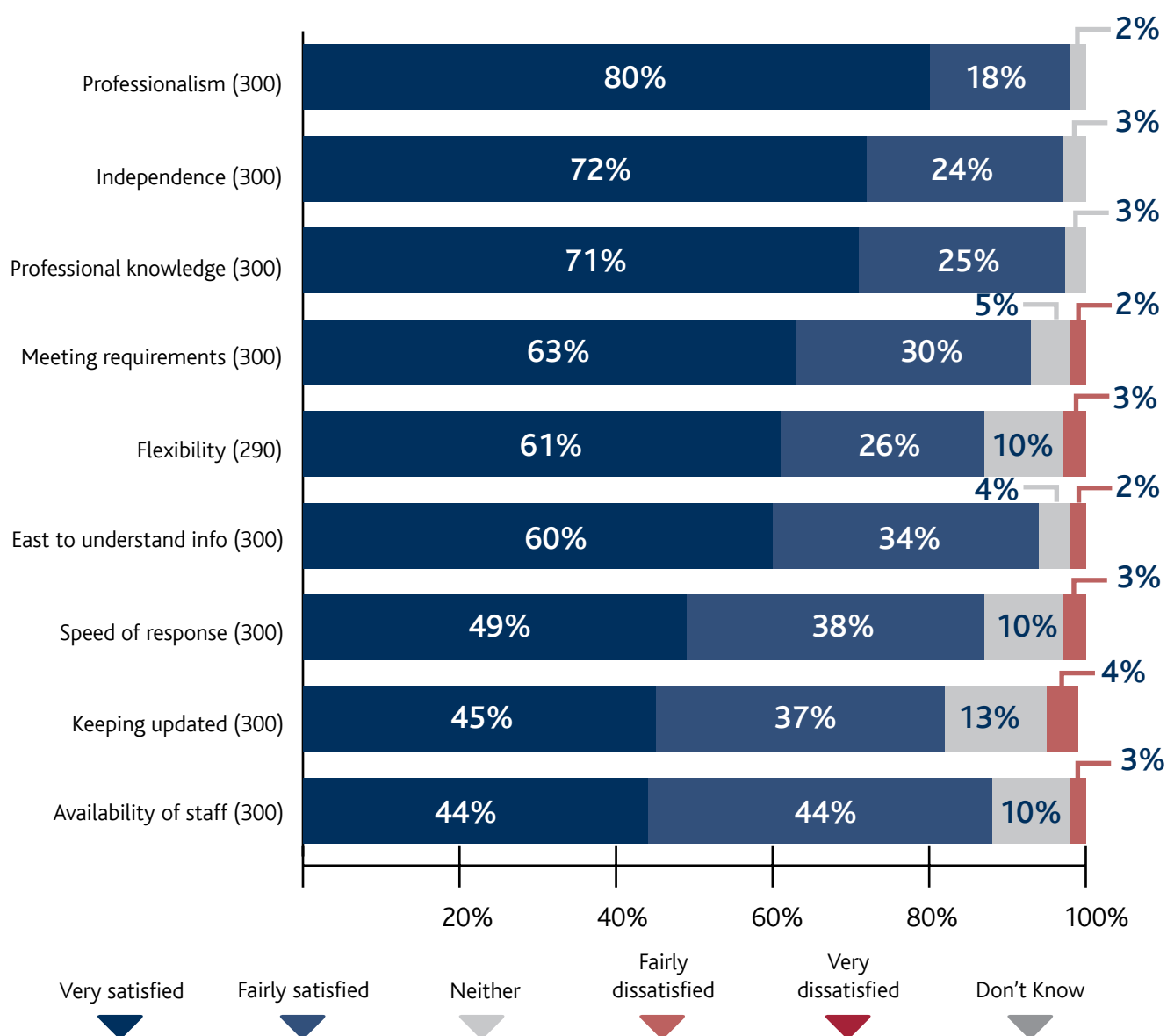
Figure 3 illustrates the extent to which customers were satisfied or dissatisfied with various aspects of DVS' performance in their current/ most recent contact, ranked on the proportion rating themselves as very satisfied.

Overall satisfaction was high across all aspects, with the proportion who were very or fairly satisfied ranging from 82% to 98%.

Satisfaction was particularly high in relation to the professionalism of staff (80% very satisfied), their independence and impartiality (72% very satisfied), and their professional knowledge (71% very satisfied).

Very few respondents indicated dissatisfaction, although small proportions (between 3% and 4%) were dissatisfied with being kept updated, the availability of staff and the speed of response to queries.

**Figure 3: Satisfaction with aspects of DVS' performance – 2013/14 (excludes not applicable)**



Q4. I'm now going to ask you to rate how satisfied you were with various aspects of DVS' performance, in relation to your current or most recent contract. I'm going to read out some aspects relating to DVS' work for you. Could you please rate how satisfied you were with their performance on each one in your current or most recent contract, using the scale of...?  
Rounded bases in parentheses



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More than four in five (83%) respondents reported that DVS delivered the work within the originally agreed timescales, while one in ten (14%) reported that they did not, and in over half (52%) of these cases the changes in the agreed timescales were not fully explained and agreed.

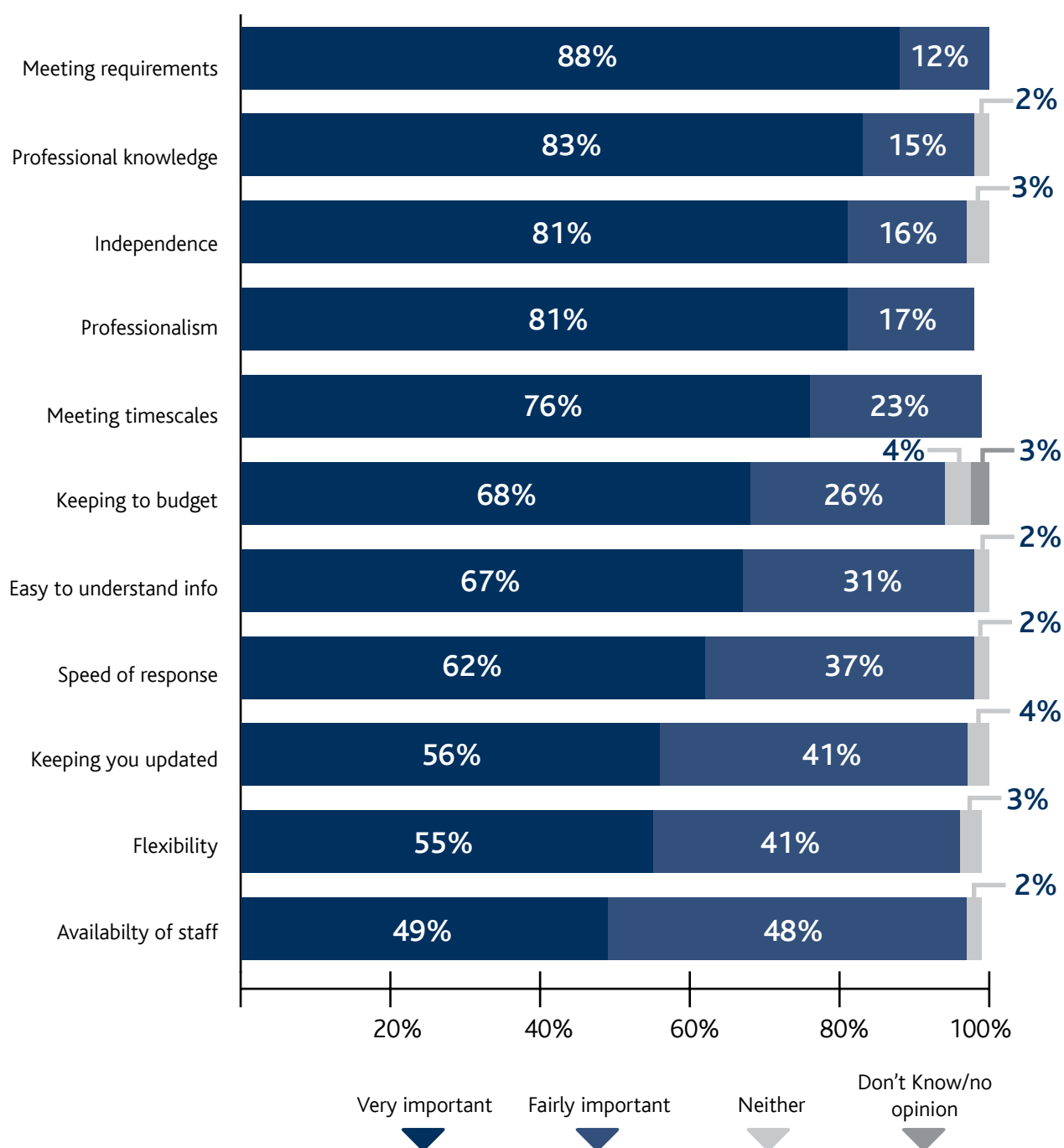
Overall more than eight in ten (85%) respondents reported that DVS delivered the work within the originally agreed budget. Where the work was not completed within the agreed budget fewer than ten respondents reported that changes to the original cost of the work were **not** fully explained or agreed.

### **3.4 Perceived importance of aspects of DVS' performance**

Customers were also asked to rate how important they feel various aspects of DVS' performance are, and Figure 4 shows that no respondents identified any of the aspects as unimportant to any extent.

The most important aspect of DVS' performance was identified as meeting key requirements (88% very important), however very large proportions also felt that the professional knowledge of staff (83%), their independence and impartiality (81%) and their professionalism (81%) were very important.

**Figure 4: Perceived importance of aspects of DVS' performance – 2013/14 (all respondents)**



Q9. I'm now going to ask you to rate these aspects of performance in terms of how important they are to you. For each one, please say whether you think they are...?  
 Rounded base = 300

### 3.5 Extent of improvement

Seven in ten (73%) respondents who had used DVS previously within the last two years felt that, compared to their previous experiences, the service they received the most recent time they used DVS services had stayed the same. While just under one in ten (8%) felt it had worsened, one in five (17%) felt that it had improved.

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Of the respondents who felt the service had worsened, less than half mentioned speed of response/meeting deadlines. Also mentioned were capacity, consistency, price and communication, all mentioned by one or two respondents.

Of the respondents who felt that the service had improved, almost half (49%) mentioned faster response. Other aspects mentioned were:

- More familiar/improved understanding (16%);
- More approachable/better relationship (14%);
- Communication/keep informed (14%);
- Better reporting (9%);
- More customer focused (9%);
- Professionalism (7%);
- Flexibility (5%).

When asked if there were any aspects of the DVS service that particularly impressed them, two thirds (65%) mentioned something, with the following key themes coming through:

- Knowledge/understanding/experience (17% of all respondents);
- Speed of response/meeting deadlines (16%);
- Professionalism (13%);
- Helpfulness/approachability (9%);
- Flexibility (6%);
- Positive comment about individual/working relationship (6%);
- Good service (general) (5%).

In contrast, when asked if there were any specific aspects of the DVS service that caused them concerns or issues, a third (31%) mentioned something, with the following themes coming through:

- Speed of response/meeting deadlines (12% of all respondents);
- Pricing (5%);
- Capacity/availability of staff (4%);
- Accuracy/precision/consistency (4%);
- Billing/invoicing (3%);
- Clarity/ease of understanding (2%);
- Ease of contact (2%).

Given that over nine in ten (96%) of all respondents would consider commissioning future work from DVS, and that almost all of the remaining respondents were unsure, it is unsurprising that over two in five (41%) were unable to mention anything that would increase the likelihood of them commissioning services in the future. In addition a further one in twenty (5%) felt that DVS should maintain their existing high standards.

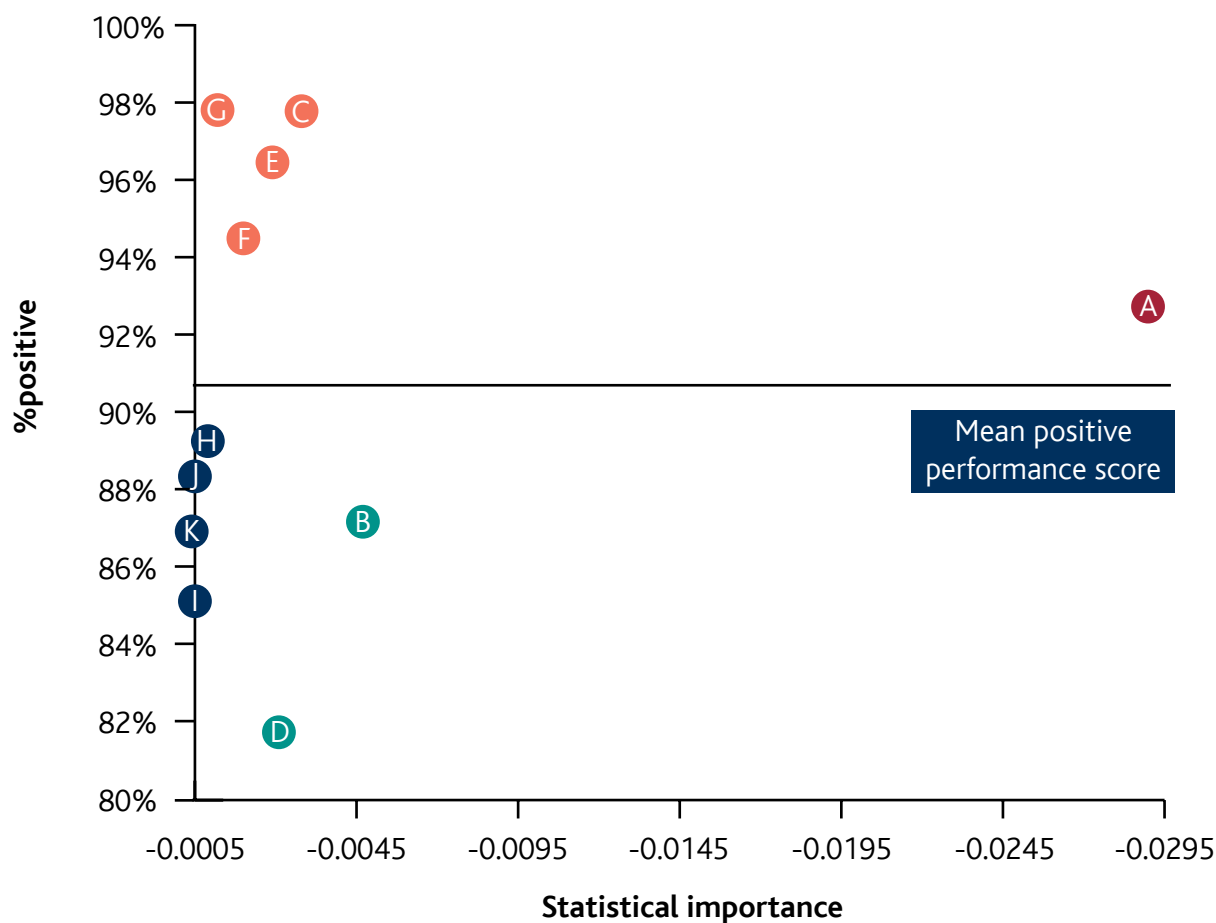
The only area to be mentioned by a significant number of respondents was price/value for money, mentioned by almost one in five (17%) respondents.

### 3.6 Key Driver Analysis

The aspects of performance that are most important in predicting levels of overall satisfaction (its 'key drivers') were explored through statistical analysis.

Figure 5 summarises the results of this analysis, which considers a range of variables relating to performance and their relationship with the outcome measure of 'overall satisfaction'.

**Figure 5: Overview of Key Driver Analysis**



See table overleaf

The statistical importance of each performance aspect is plotted along the horizontal axis. The vertical axis indicates the extent to which DVS is rated positively on each performance aspect, with the line parallel to the horizontal axis representing the mean positive score.

This analysis indicates that the most important predictor of overall satisfaction is 'meeting key requirements', and that this is an aspect on which DVS performs more strongly than the average in terms of overall levels of satisfaction.

In contrast, other important predictors of overall satisfaction include 'speed of response to queries', and 'keeping you updated on progress

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of work', and DVS performs less well on these than on some other aspects.

Other elements identified as being important predictors are 'independence and impartiality', 'the professional knowledge of DVS staff', 'providing information that is easy to understand' and 'the professionalism of staff', and these are also areas on which DVS performs above average in terms of overall satisfaction.

Key	
A	Meeting your key requirements
B	Speed of response to queries
C	Independence and impartiality
D	Keeping you updated on progress of work
E	Professional knowledge of DVS staff
F	Providing information that is easy to understand
G	Professionalism of staff
H	Flexibility of DVS staff to adapt to changes in your requirements
I	Did DVS deliver the work within the originally agreed timescales
J	Did DVS deliver the work within the originally agreed budget
K	Availability of staff when you wanted to get in contact with them

# Appendices



## Appendix 1: Overview of results (all respondents)

To protect confidentiality, cells derived from values of less than 5 have been suppressed, denoted with a "\*". Cells may not sum due to rounding.

	<b>Very satisfied</b>	<b>Fairly Satisfied</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
Overall rating of service received	61%	33%	4%	2%	0%
<b>Satisfaction with performance (excludes 'not applicable')</b>	<b>Very satisfied</b>	<b>Fairly Satisfied</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
Professionalism of staff	80%	18%	2%	*	0%
Independence and impartiality	72%	24%	3%	0%	*
Professional knowledge of DVS staff	71%	25%	3%	*	*
Meeting your key requirements	63%	30%	5%	3%	*
Flexibility of DVS staff to adapt to changes in your requirements	61%	26%	10%	3%	*
Providing information that's easy to understand	60%	34%	4%	2%	0%
Speed of response to queries	49%	38%	10%	3%	0%
Keeping you updated on progress of work	45%	37%	13%	4%	*
Availability of staff when you wanted to get in contact with them	44%	44%	10%	3%	0%
<b>Timings and budget</b>		<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>	<b>DK</b>
Completed within agreed timescales		83%		14%	2%
Work delivered within agreed budget		85%		11%	4%

Importance of elements of performance	Very Important	Fairly Important	Neither	Unimportant	Don't Know
Meeting your key requirements	88%	12%	*	0%	*
Professional knowledge of DVS staff	83%	15%	2%	0%	*
Independence and impartiality	81%	16%	3%	0%	0%
Professionalism of staff	81%	17%	*	0%	*
Meeting agreed timescales	76%	23%	*	0%	*
Keeping to agreed budget	68%	26%	4%	0%	3%
Providing information that is easy to understand	67%	31%	2%	0%	0%
Speed of response to queries	62%	37%	2%	0%	0%
Keeping you updated on progress of work	56%	41%	4%	0%	0%
Flexibility of DVS staff to adapt to changes in your requirements	55%	41%	3%	0%	*
Availability of staff when you wanted to get in contact with them	49%	48%	2%	0%	*
<b>(Had dealings in last 2 years)</b>		<b>Improved</b>	<b>Same</b>	<b>Worse</b>	<b>DK</b>
Improvement		17%	73%	8%	2%

## Appendix 2: Technical note on Key Driver Analysis

Key Driver Analysis was conducted using random forest modelling. This statistical technique searches through all predictor variables, and potential splits between predictor variable categories, to determine which combination best predicts the outcome variable.

During this process splits may occur where the predictor response does not match the outcome response ('misclassification' at different stages), so most models are compiled using randomly selected subsets of the sample ('bootstrapping').

From these models the variables which have the lowest level of misclassification are determined, i.e. those that most accurately predict the outcome variable under a wide range of circumstances.

The variable importance measure that is produced is dependent on depends on the type of random forest model used, conditional vs. unconditional; and the difference between the two is how it best identifies splits in individual trees. For this analysis a conditional inference model was used.

**Conditional inference** models are computationally more intensive, but have twofold advantages:

- Predictor variables with more categories tend to be favoured in non-conditional models, as more detailed permutations are possible.

- Predictor variables may be highly correlated, in which case, it is likely that they share some inherent meaning. Whilst both correlated predictor variables are in the model, having conditional individual trees which include both, one or the other, or neither variable, helps to distinguish which is the more accurate predictor.

NB Respondents are originally split randomly, so running the model twice can produce marginally different variable importance scores. It is therefore important to run a random forest more than once, to check that the solution replicates itself. Multiple models were run with four or five different seed values (starting points for randomisation). If the variable importance rankings had been substantially different on a rerun, then a totally different model would have been pursued.