

**Department for Work and Pensions**

**Working Paper No 19**

# **Best Value User Satisfaction Surveys 2003/2004**

## **Topline Summary: The Benefits User Satisfaction Survey**

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A report of research carried out by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Department for Work and Pensions

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 The Benefits Planning Survey

The Best Value User Satisfaction survey 2003/04 was carried out by all local authorities (LAs) in England with responsibility for Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB). A randomly selected sample of people who pursued a new or renewal claim for HB/CTB in each LA, completed the questionnaire. Figures are accurate to a confidence interval (CI) of +/- 0.4%.

The results of the 2003/04 Benefits User Satisfaction Survey indicate that a majority of the public are satisfied with the services they receive from LAs in England and a minority are dissatisfied. This continues the theme of similarly high levels of satisfaction revealed by the 2000/01 survey.

## 1.2 Indicator results

For each of the indicators collected in the Best Value Performance Indicator surveys this report presents:

- a table which breaks down the ratings of satisfaction according to the scale used<sup>1</sup> and by LA type, together with a national average<sup>2</sup>.
- a graph showing the average satisfaction by LA type and the national average<sup>3</sup>. The data for 2003/04 is presented next to the results for 2000/01 to enable time series comparison.

BV80 consists of six modules which measure various aspects of satisfaction with the benefits service. This report will concentrate on three of those modules [the same as were covered in the 2000/01 Topline report.

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<sup>1</sup> The data presented in this report is aggregated and merged. It, therefore, presents the results from different surveys with different sampling probabilities as well as different modes of data collection. In order to measure the sampling tolerance, a rule of thumb has been applied to calculate the CI for a simple random sample. To accurately calculate the CI for the merged data set would otherwise not have been possible.

<sup>2</sup> Please note that all the figures presented in these Topline reports are 'mean' averages and are rounded to the nearest whole percentage point. This has resulted in some of the tables presenting very satisfied to very dissatisfied figures not always adding up to exactly 100%. For the actual 'Indicator' results readers should always refer to the graphs.

<sup>3</sup> 'Satisfied' includes all those who said they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied', or who responded either 'agree' or 'strongly disagree' to positive statements about satisfaction.

## 2 Best Value Performance Indicator 80 – User Satisfaction survey

### 2.1 Contact facilities at the benefit office

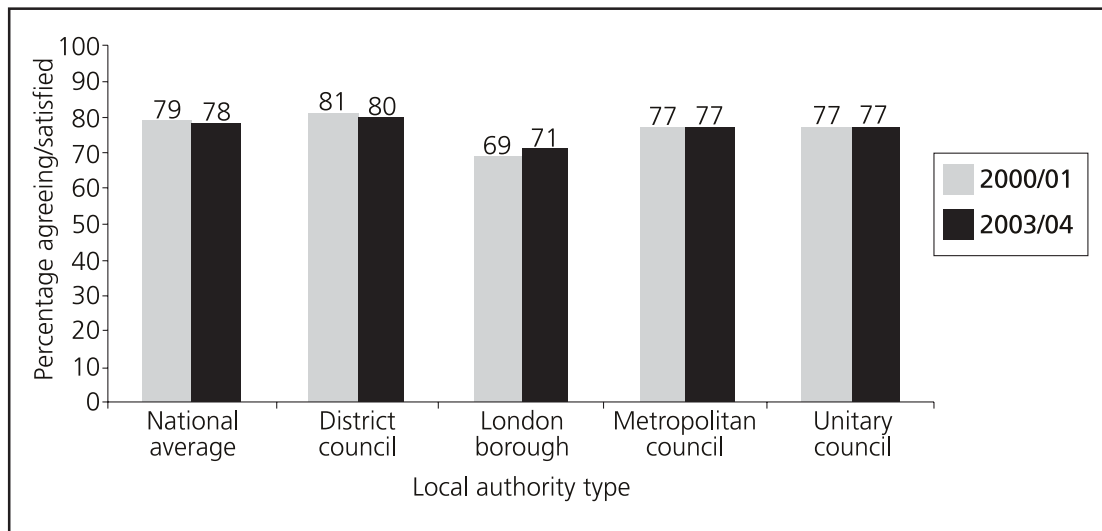
**Table 2.1 Response to the statement ‘Overall, I am satisfied with the ways in which I can contact the local authority’**

LA type (Bases)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
National average	19%	59%	12%	6%	4%
District councils	20%	60%	12%	5%	3%
London boroughs	17%	54%	14%	9%	7%
Metropolitan boroughs	18%	59%	12%	7%	4%
Unitary councils	19%	58%	12%	7%	4%

Base: All valid responses 284566 (\*\*\*) LAs)

National Sample Confidence Interval +/-0.4

**Figure 2.1 Satisfaction with contact facilities at the benefit office, 2000/01 and 2003/04**



In general, LAs recorded high levels of satisfaction across areas of service provision related to contact facilities at the benefits office. Nationally, nearly four-fifths of service users expressed satisfaction within this indicator. In comparison with the results for 2000/01, satisfaction levels have remained at identical, or very similar, levels across all LA types. Satisfaction levels remained lower in the London boroughs than in any of the other LA types, but show a small improvement in 2003/04.

## 2.2 Staff at the benefit office

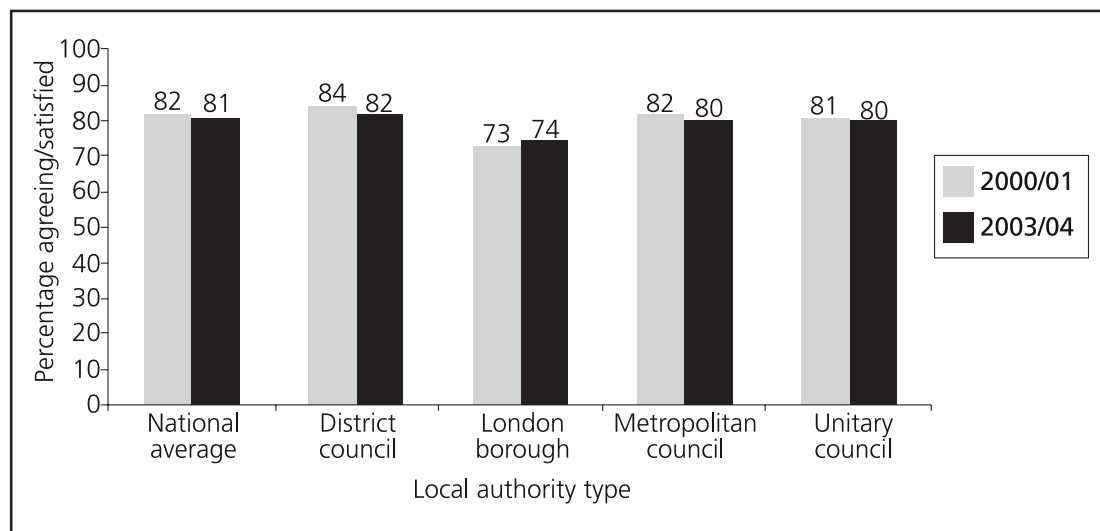
**Table 2.2 Responses to the statement 'Overall, I am satisfied with the service provided by staff in my local authority benefit office'**

LA type (Bases)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
National average	23%	58%	11%	5%	3%
District councils	24%	58%	11%	5%	3%
London boroughs	19%	55%	14%	7%	5%
Metropolitan boroughs	22%	58%	12%	5%	3%
Unitary councils	23%	57%	11%	5%	3%

Base: All valid responses 275973 (\*\*\*) LAs)

National Sample Confidence Interval +/- 0.4

**Figure 2.2** Satisfaction with staff in the benefits office, 2000/01 and 2003/04



An average of approximately four-fifths of users across all types of LAs expressed satisfaction with the service received from staff in benefit offices – a very similar result to the 2000/01 survey. Again, users in the London boroughs were least satisfied with the service received from benefit office staff, but approximately three-quarters were satisfied, and the results indicate a very slight increase.

### 2.3 Time taken to make a decision about a claim

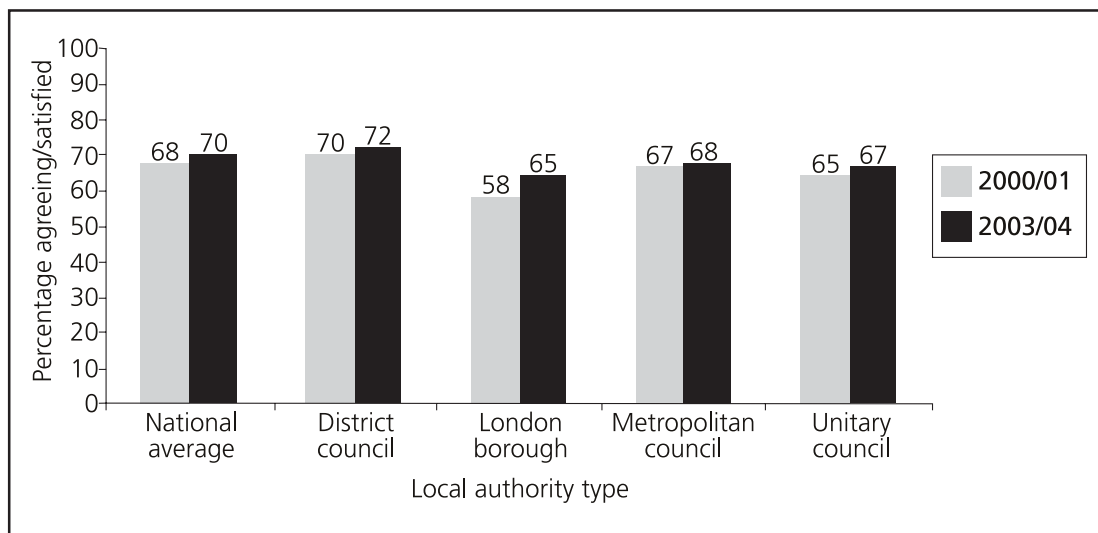
**Table 2.3** Satisfaction with the amount of time it took to tell claimant whether their claim had been successful or not

LA type (Bases)	Satisfaction level				
	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied nor satisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
National average	31%	39%	10%	10%	11%
District councils	33%	39%	9%	10%	9%
London boroughs	26%	39%	11%	10%	14%
Metropolitan boroughs	28%	40%	10%	10%	12%
Unitary councils	29%	38%	10%	11%	13%

Base: All valid responses 292589 (\*\*\*) LAs)

National Sample Confidence Interval +/- 0.4

**Figure 2.3** Satisfaction with time taken to make a decision about claim



According to the 2003/04 survey, over two-thirds of service users in each type of LA expressed satisfaction with the time it took to process their claims and inform them of the outcome. Significantly, there were increases in the numbers of people satisfied between 2000/01 and 2003/04 across all LA types, with the biggest increase in satisfaction in the London boroughs.

## 3 Further information

For further information on the 2003/04 Benefits User Satisfaction survey please contact either of the following:

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