



Ministry of
JUSTICE

HMCS Court User Survey Findings from Year Two (2007/08)

Ministry of Justice
Statistics bulletin

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1. Summary

- More than eight in ten court users (83%) are either very satisfied (41%) or fairly satisfied (42%) with their overall experience at court. This is an increase of three percentage points from 80 per cent in the year one survey. Eight per cent are either very dissatisfied (4%) or fairly dissatisfied (4%). The remaining nine per cent either said that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied or expressed no view.
- When asked about the different service areas, experiences with court staff received the largest proportion of users saying they are satisfied. More than nine out of ten users (93%) are satisfied that staff treated them fairly and sensitively, and slightly under nine tenths (89%) are satisfied with the ability of staff to deal with their query.
- Fewer users are satisfied with court facilities that take into account any particular needs they may have (68%), waiting areas to keep parties safe and separate (61%), the availability of private discussion rooms (59%) and the available refreshments (49%).
- Professional users of the courts are more satisfied overall than public users (90% against 79% fairly or very satisfied). This represents an increase of two percentage points from 88 percent for professional users in the first year's survey, and an increase of 3 percentage points from 76 per cent for public users. The difference between the two groups may be due to differing levels of expectation as professional users are likely to have greater familiarity with the service; or because they have a less personal interest in the outcome of a case and are therefore less directly affected by any negative experiences.
- Among the public users, those in court to appear as a defendant or to support a friend or relative have the lowest levels of satisfaction (73% in both cases). Overall satisfaction for both these groups increased from 70 and 69 per cent respectively since the first year's survey.
- Users of the Civil courts have the highest levels of overall satisfaction amongst the four main court jurisdictions, with 94 per cent of professional users and 85 per cent of public users saying they are very or fairly satisfied. Magistrates' court users have the lowest levels of satisfaction. However, despite lower levels of satisfaction this group exhibit the biggest year-on-year increases, with overall satisfaction, rising from 82 to 86 per cent for professional users and 69 to 74 per cent for public users.
- In two other separate surveys, 88 per cent of jurors said they were satisfied with the overall service provided by the court, and 97 per cent of probate service users said they were satisfied with the process of obtaining a grant of representation.

2. Introduction

Background

Her Majesty's Courts Service (HMCS) Court User Survey measures the satisfaction of court users, both public and professional, across England and Wales.

This survey was launched in 2006/07 to provide the first comprehensive picture of user satisfaction across all courts, following HMCS's formation in April 2005. It replaced the following surveys which were in operation during 2005/06 and previous years:

- A postal paper survey of users of the former Courts Service (i.e. the County, Crown and Higher Courts), administered by an external market research contractor.
- A 'handout' paper survey of users of the Magistrates' Courts, administered by court staff.

The creation of HMCS, which brought together all English and Welsh courts into a single administration, heightened the need for comparable information about user satisfaction in different types of court. However, the surveys described above were clearly not comparable with each other, because they were conducted using different questionnaires and different methodologies. There were also some concerns that they were not capturing a sufficiently broad range of court users. For these reasons, it was decided to replace them with a single survey covering all of the main courts of HMCS, using a single questionnaire and a single survey methodology (face-to-face interviewing) designed to capture as broad a range of court users as possible.

This report presents the key results from the second year (2007/08) of this survey. Detailed supplementary tables are separately available on line.

Methodology

The survey was conducted in each court in England and Wales and consists of three main parts:

- A face-to-face survey of 11,519 professional and public users approached to participate as they left the court building between 1 May 2007 and 28 March 2008. All Crown, County, and Magistrates' courts were covered, plus a number of High Court jurisdictions sitting at the Royal Courts of Justice (397 courts in total). The notional response rate for the survey (based on the number of interviews achieved as a proportion of all that were sought) was 45 per cent.
- A self-completion survey sent to a sample of 3,042 jurors who served in February 2008. A response rate of 41% was achieved (1,244 responses).
- A self-completion survey sent to a sample of 6,622 applicants to Probate Registries issued with a grant of representation between 12th May 2007 and 25th May 2008. The overall response rate for this survey was 27% (1,814 responses, including 989 from legal professionals and 809 from personal applicants).

The main focus of this report is the survey of professional and public court users, although there are short sections covering the juror's survey and the survey of probate service users. However, these surveys are not directly comparable with the main Court User Survey or with each other.

Further details on methodology can be found in the accompanying on-line technical report.

Interpreting the data

When interpreting the findings of the survey, it is important to remember that the results are based on the sample of respondents who took part in the survey and not the entire population of court users in England and Wales. Consequently, results are subject to sampling tolerances, and not all differences between sub-groups will be statistically significant. Full details can be found in the separate technical report.

It should be noted that we are assuming randomness within the samples for the purposes of significance testing and confidence intervals. The sample is collected on a voluntary basis. Therefore, what we are assuming is that those respondents who were interviewed (45% of those approached) are a representative and random selection of all court users. We believe from our understanding of the methodology that this is a reasonable assumption, given the difficulty in identifying a relevant and typical set of court users close to the time of survey collection.

On this basis, we can assume with 90% confidence that results based on the total sample of 11,519 users are accurate to within $\pm 1\%$ of the figure we

would have obtained if we had interviewed all court users - see the on-line technical report for a full explanation.

Throughout the report, we highlight differences between sub-groups of respondents in the 2007/08 survey – on the basis, for example, of age, gender, and ethnicity. We also bring to light differences between sub-groups of respondents in this year’s survey and compare to those in last year’s. Differences are commented on where they are statistically significant to at least 90% confidence.

Sub-group reporting includes differences for those with long-term illness/disability and it should be noted that illness and disability are self-reported by respondents.

Where percentages in the charts or tables in the report do not add up to 100 per cent, it is due to multiple answers or rounding. **All findings exclude those who stated “not applicable” or who did not provide any response, but include those who stated “don’t know”.**

All findings are based on unweighted data. Data has not been weighted because of the lack of reliable data sources to inform any potential weighting scheme.

There was a minor change in the sample composition between the 2006/07 and 2007/08 surveys. This has led to a slightly greater representation of larger courts (notably Crown Courts) within the 2007/08 survey sample and a slightly lower representation of smaller courts (including Magistrates’ courts) compared to 2006/07. This issue is discussed in more detail in the technical report and should be borne in mind when comparing 2006/07 and 2007/08 data. However, we believe that this report’s key findings on the direction and approximate magnitude of year-to-year changes are sound.

All results are broken down by the following court types:

- **Civil Courts** hear civil proceedings in either County courts or the High Court. There are 2,220 respondents from this court type in the survey.
- **Family Courts** deal with all matters in the family division of the High Court, in County courts and, with the exception of divorce proceedings, in family proceeding courts (those parts of the Magistrates’ court having a family jurisdiction). There are 1,493 respondents from this court type in the survey.
- **The Crown Court** deals with criminal matters including cases sent for trial by Magistrates’ courts in respect of ‘indictable only’ offences (i.e. those that can only be heard in the Crown Court) and ‘either way’ offences (i.e. those that can be heard in either a Magistrates’ or the Crown Court); defendants committed from a Magistrates’ court for sentence; and appeals against decisions of the Magistrates’ court. There are 2,439 respondents from this court type in the survey.

- **Magistrates' Courts** are where all criminal cases start and where 95 per cent are completed. This type of court deals with all ancillary matters connected to criminal cases and also with some civil cases (e.g. family matters, and betting and gaming proceedings). Magistrates' courts cannot normally order sentences of imprisonment that exceed 6 months (or 12 months for consecutive sentences) or impose fines exceeding £5,000. In triable 'either way' or indictable cases offenders are committed to the Crown Court, if more severe sentencing is thought to be appropriate. There are 3,980 respondents from this court type in the survey.
- The remaining 1,387 interviews were carried out in the Courts of Appeal, certain specialist jurisdictions of the High Court or with customers of the probate service. This total also includes respondents for whom the court type was not recorded.

The full numbers of respondents in the sample, and that broken down by various categories, is found in the accompanying on-line supplementary tables. The overall sample size has increased from 5,121 to 11,519 respondents between the first and second years of the survey. Table 1 below shows that the court type which has increased the most is the Crown Court, whose respondents account for just over a fifth (21%) of the sample.

Table 1: Sample breakdown by main court type

	Number of respondents		Percentage of respondents	
	2006/07	2007/08	2006/07	2007/08
Civil courts	922	2,220	18%	19%
Family courts	713	1,493	14%	13%
The Crown court	847	2,439	17%	21%
Magistrates' courts	2,006	3,980	39%	35%
All other courts	516	881	10%	8%
Unclassified	117	506	2%	4%

Table 2 shows the professional user group has increased from 33% to 36% between the first and second years of the survey. The group that has decreased most between the two surveys is defendants, which went down from 25% to 22%.

Table 2: Sample composition by user group

	Number of respondents		Percentage of respondents	
	2006/07	2007/08	2006/07	2007/08
Professional users:				
Appear in a professional capacity	1707	4108	33%	36%
Public users:				
Appear as a victim of a criminal offence	44	84	1%	1%
Appear as a defendant	1258	2519	25%	22%
Appear as a party in a case	295	605	6%	5%
Appear as a witness	175	363	3%	3%
Appear as an expert witness	20	48	0%	0%
Support a friend or relative	490	1137	10%	10%
Applicant	-	107	-	1%
Claimant	7	11	0%	0%
Make a payment	215	501	4%	4%
Obtain other information	155	384	3%	3%
Search court records/obtain	106	228	2%	2%
File/deliver papers	292	711	6%	6%
View a case but not connected to any person in the proceeding	78	186	2%	2%
Pre-court visit	46	89	1%	1%
Other	233	251	5%	2%
Not stated	-	187	-	2%

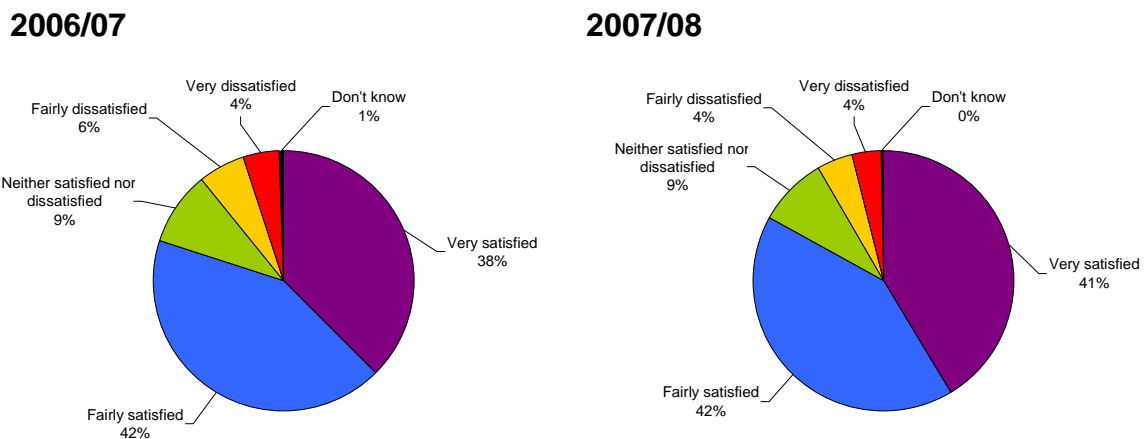
Survey interviews were carried out in the reception areas of courts, as users left the building. It should therefore be noted that the results will necessarily exclude defendants who left the court into custody.

3. Satisfaction of Court Users

Overall satisfaction

In the 2007/08 survey eighty three per cent of users are either very satisfied (41%) or fairly satisfied (42%) with their overall experience at court on the day they were interviewed. This compares to eighty per cent in the 2006/07 survey. Eight per cent are either very dissatisfied (4%) or fairly dissatisfied (4%). This is two percentage points lower than in last year's survey (10%).

Figure 1: Overall satisfaction with the court experience

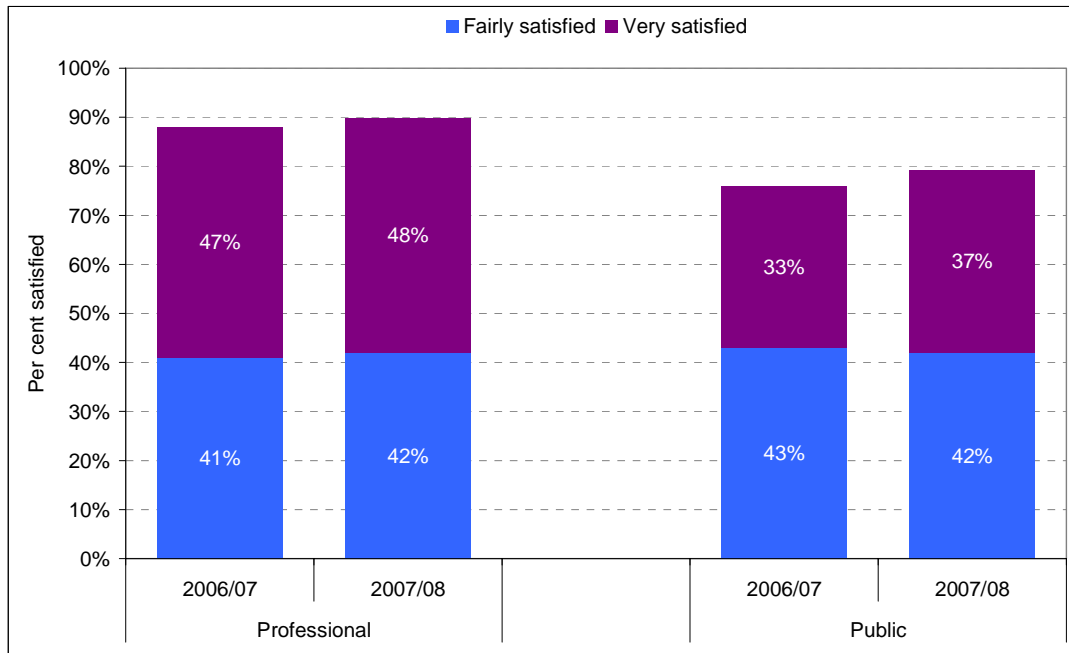


Differences in satisfaction by user group

The percentage of professional and public users of the courts that are either very satisfied or fairly satisfied has increased since the first year's survey. For professional users this increase is two percentage points year-on-year from eighty eight per cent in last year's survey to ninety per cent in this year's one. With public users the increase is three percentage points from seventy six to seventy nine per cent.

The different levels of satisfaction between professional and public users may be due to differing levels of expectation. This is because professional users are likely to have greater familiarity with the service. It may also be because they have a less personal interest in the outcome of cases, and are therefore less directly affected by any negative experiences.

Figure 2: Overall satisfaction with the court experience by user group, 2007/08



The following groups listed in Table 3 showed statistically significant changes (at 90% confidence) in their overall satisfaction between 2006/07 and 2007/08.

- Professional users
- Defendants
- People attending as a party in a case
- People attending in support of a friend or relative
- People attending for a pre-court visit

In all cases the satisfaction changes were year on year increases. There were no groups that showed a statistically significant year-on-year decrease in satisfaction.

For a more in depth look at the experiences of victims and witnesses please see the most recent findings of the Witness and Victim Experience Survey (WAVES), published by the Office for Criminal Justice Reform. These can be found at:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/witness-victim-experience-survey.htm>

Table 3: Overall satisfaction with the court experience by user group, 2006/07 and 2007/08

	Number of respondents		Percentage of respondents	
	2006/07	2007/08	2006/07	2007/08
All Users	5069	11400	80%	83%
Professional users:				
Appear in a professional capacity	1687	4055	88%	90%
Public users:				
Appear as a victim of a criminal offence	43	84	84%	75%
Appear as a defendant	1250	2510	70%	73%
Appear as a party in a case	293	604	75%	83%
Appear as a witness	174	360	78%	81%
Appear as an expert witness	20	48	85%	83%
Support a friend or relative	485	1124	69%	73%
Applicant		107		83%
Make a payment	209	500	88%	89%
Obtain other information	152	381	83%	85%
Search court records/obtain documents	106	225	91%	89%
File/deliver papers	290	708	90%	91%
View a case but not connected to any person in the proceeding	76	178	84%	90%
Pre-court visit	45	88	60%	80%
Other public users	239	250	83%	83%
All public users	3382	7167	76%	79%
Not stated	-	178	-	87%

Among the public users, those in court to appear as a defendant or to support a friend or relative have very low levels of satisfaction (73% in both cases) compared with most other groups. This is consistent with the findings of the previous year's survey.

The characteristics of those court users who are less likely to be satisfied with the courts service include:

- male (82% satisfied compared with 85% for females);
- aged 16 to 24 years (76% satisfied compared with 84% for those over 24 years); and
- from a Black ethnic group (78% satisfied compared with 84% for those from a White ethnic group and 82% for those from an Asian ethnic group).

However, it is also the case that court users with these characteristics are more likely than others to be public rather than professional users, and to appear as a defendant or to support a friend or relative (groups that tend to have lower overall satisfaction levels).

Additional statistics or research on diversity issues in the courts can be found in, among other publications:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/raceandcjs.htm>

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/womencriminaljusticesystem.htm>

Differences in overall satisfaction by court type

Users of Civil courts have the highest levels of overall satisfaction, with 94 per cent of professional users and 85 per cent of public users saying they are satisfied. In the first year of the survey this was 92 and 85 per cent respectively.

In the Family courts 91 per cent of professional users and 85 per cent of public users said they were satisfied respectively. This compares to 90 per cent and 81 per cent in the first year's survey.

Users of the Magistrates' courts have the lowest levels of satisfaction, with 86 per cent of professional users and 74 per cent of public users saying they are satisfied. This was an increase on the first year of the survey, where they were 82 per cent and 69 per cent respectively.

Users of the Crown Court have a higher level of satisfaction than Magistrates' court users, with 88 per cent of professional users and 78 per cent of public users saying they are satisfied with their overall experience. This compares to 88 per cent of professional users and 76 per cent of public users in the first year's survey.

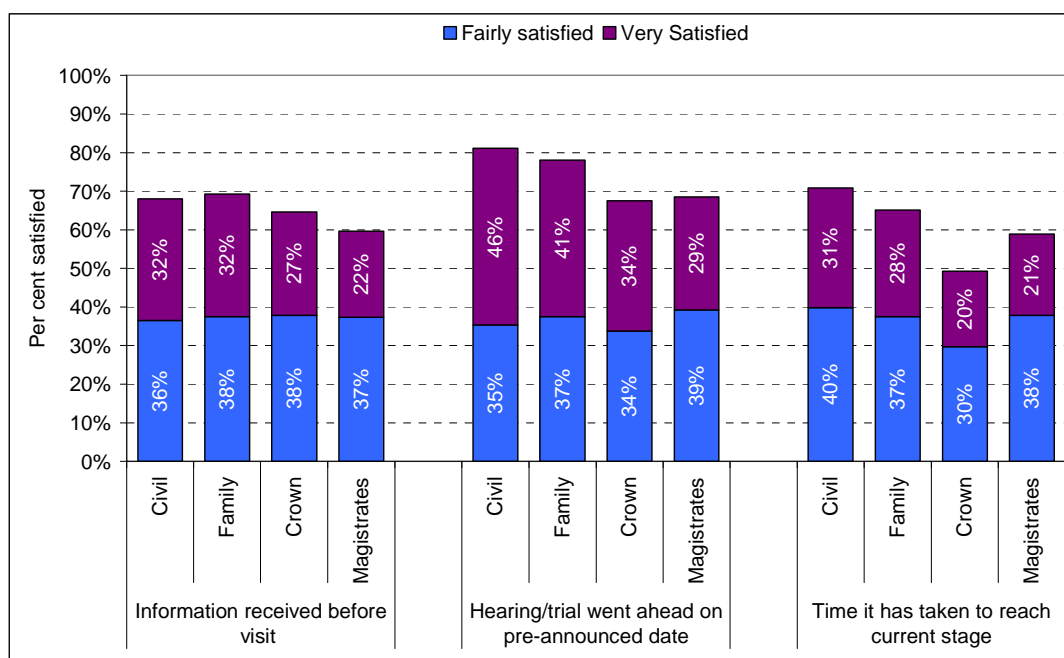
Differences by court type may be partly due to the different business conducted in each, and the different types of users represented in the results for each court type. For example, defendants make up 40 per cent of the Magistrates' court sample compared with 18 per cent for Civil courts and 12 per cent for the Crown Court.

Pre-court experiences

In the survey, questions around pre-court experiences were asked to public users only. This is because they are likely to have less experience of court cases than professional users, and less knowledge about what to expect. It was therefore necessary to quantify their satisfaction with pre-court preparations.

Just over seven in ten public users (72%) are satisfied that their hearing/trial went ahead as they were told it would do. Fewer users are satisfied about the information they received before their court visit (64%) and the time taken to reach that stage (61%). In the first year of the survey these satisfaction figures were 72, 65 and 59 per cent respectively.

Figure 3: Proportion of public users satisfied with pre-court experiences by court type, 2007/08



Generally, this is an area where there is little improvement in user satisfaction between the two surveys. However, there is an increase in satisfaction amongst public users in Family courts who say they are satisfied with the time it took for their case to reach the current stage (65% compared with 58%).

Accessibility

A large majority of users are satisfied with the convenience of sitting/opening times (90%), how easy it was to find the building (93%) and that there are easily identifiable staff to deal with queries (91%). In the first year's survey these figures were 88, 92 and 90 per cent respectively.

Differences between satisfaction of professional and public users are very small overall, but more marked when split by court type. 92 per cent of professional users at Magistrates' courts are satisfied (64% very satisfied) with the convenience of sitting/opening times compared with 84 per cent of public users. 94 per cent of professional users at the Crown Court are satisfied (76% very satisfied) that there are easily identifiable staff to deal with queries compared with 88 per cent of public users.

Figure 4: Proportion of professional users satisfied with accessibility by court type, 2007/08

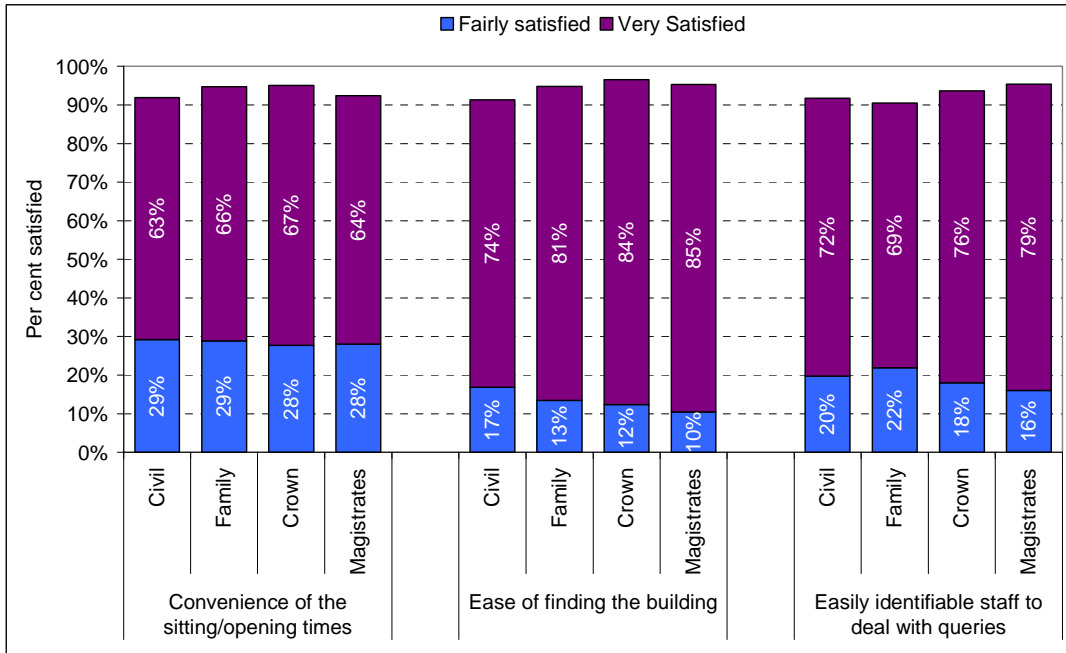
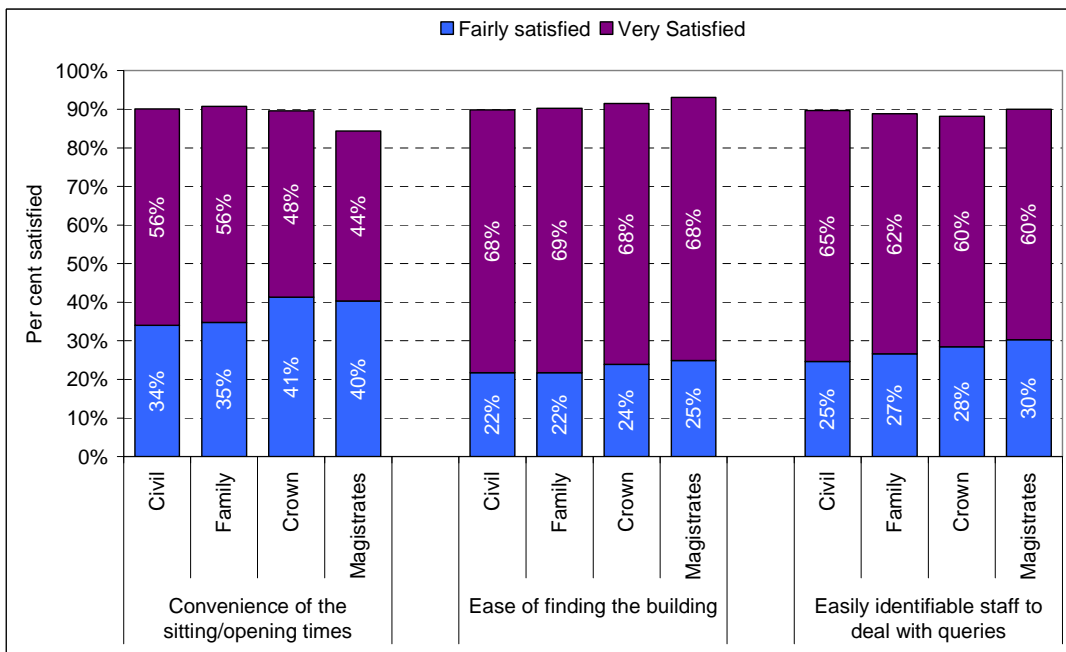


Figure 5: Proportion of public users satisfied with accessibility by court type, 2007/08



The main change since the first year's survey is that there is an increase in the proportion of Crown Court users who say they are satisfied with the convenience of sitting/opening times. For professional users the increase was from 90 to 95 per cent and for public users it was from 86 to 90 per

cent. Satisfaction with this aspect of accessibility did not improve as much in any of the other court types.

Waiting times

89 per cent of all users are satisfied (64% very satisfied) with the time they waited at the public counter/reception before they were seen. Fewer users are satisfied with the time they waited for court staff to deal with their case (75%) and how they were being kept informed by court staff of reasons for any delay to their case (70%). In the first year's survey these were 88, 71 and 66 per cent respectively.

More professional than public users are satisfied with the time they waited for the court or its staff to deal with their case (80%) and that they were kept informed of any reasons for delay (80%). The equivalent figures for public users are 72 and 63 per cent respectively. This could reflect the fact that professional users are remunerated for time spent in court and are more familiar with the court service.

The differences between professional and public users are particularly marked in the Magistrates' courts. Here, 75 per cent of professional users compared with 61 per cent of public users are satisfied with the time they waited for court staff to deal with the case; and 81 per cent of professional users compared with 56 per cent of public users are satisfied they were kept informed by court staff of the reasons for any delay. It is notable that users of non-criminal courts are more satisfied with their 'on the day' wait than those in criminal courts. This may be because attendance at a criminal court is more often in connection with a court hearing, which can involve a significant wait. Attendance at a non-criminal court can be for a broader range of functions, some of which can be completed with little or no wait.

Figure 6: Proportion of professional users satisfied with waiting times by court type, 2007/08

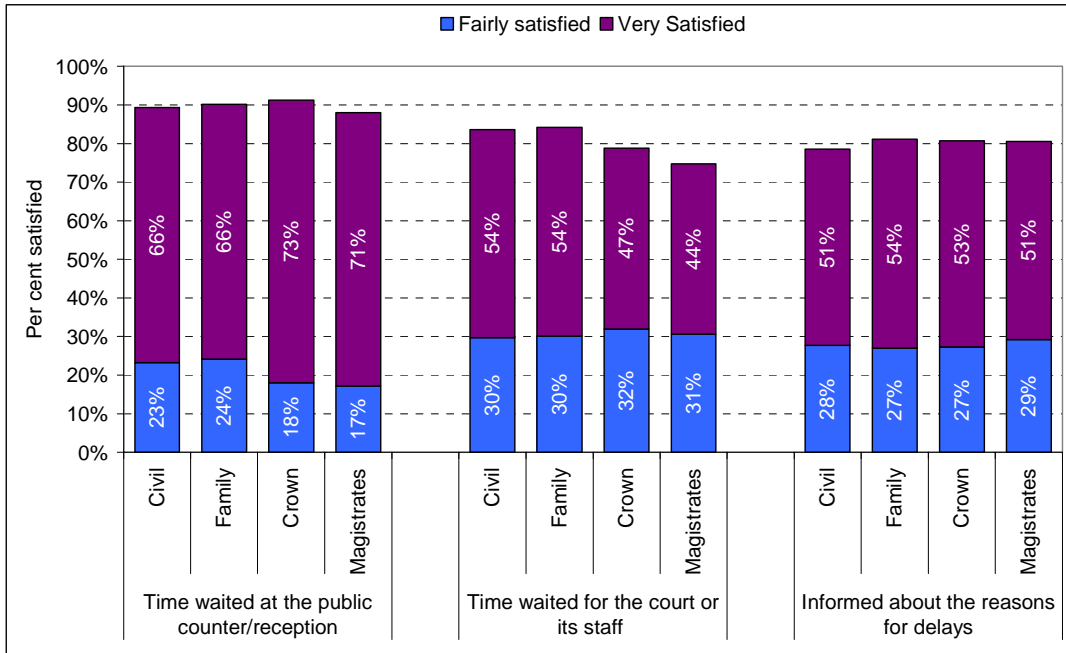
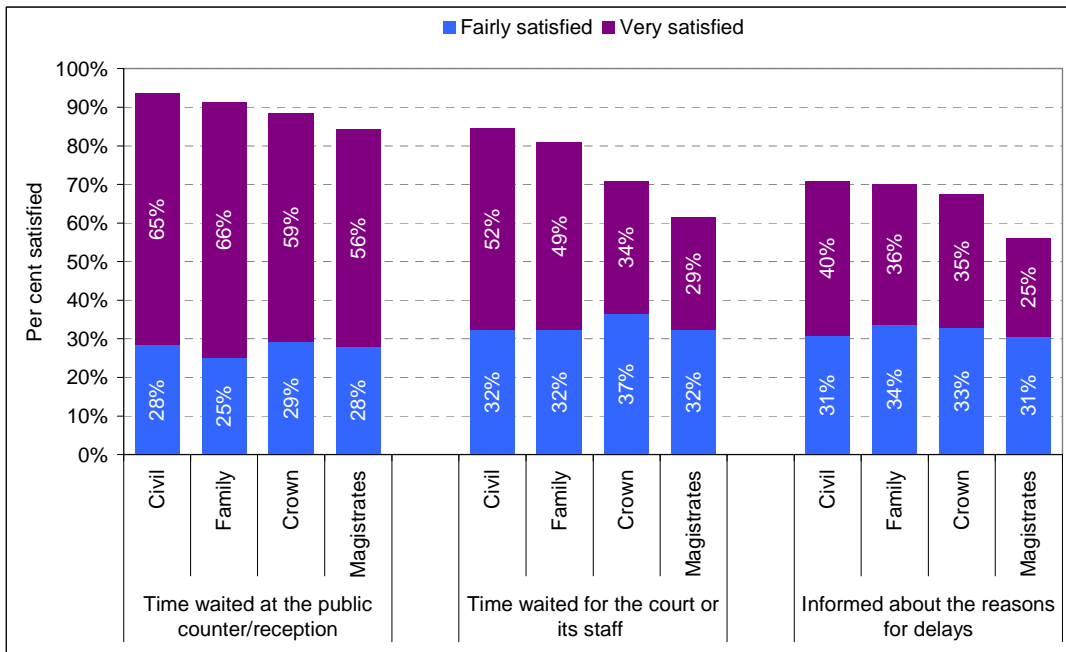


Figure 7: Proportion of public users satisfied with waiting times by court type, 2007/08



Professional users are more satisfied with the time waited for the court or its staff to deal with their case. 80 per cent are satisfied with this, up two percentage points since the year one survey (78%).

For public users there is also an increase in satisfaction with the time waited for the court or its staff to deal with their case. The proportion satisfied with this went up to 72 per cent from 68 per cent in the first year's survey. The biggest increase is in the Crown Court where satisfaction went up from 65 to 71 per cent. Public users are also generally more satisfied that they were kept informed about the reasons for delays. The proportion satisfied with this went up to 63 per cent from 59 per cent in the year one survey. The largest increase occurred in the Crown Court, with overall satisfaction going up from 57 to 68 per cent.

Information provided by the court

The majority of court users are satisfied with the information available regarding court procedures and facilities (73%) and that the forms they needed were clear and easy to understand (79%). In the first year's survey these were 73% and 76% respectively.

The greatest differences between the satisfaction of professional and public users are in the Crown Court and Magistrates' courts. In the Crown Court, 82 per cent of professional users are satisfied with the information available regarding court procedures and facilities compared with 70 per cent of public users. In the Magistrates' courts the proportions are 81 per cent of professional users and 66 per cent of public users respectively.

Figure 8: Proportion of professional users satisfied with information by court type, 2007/08

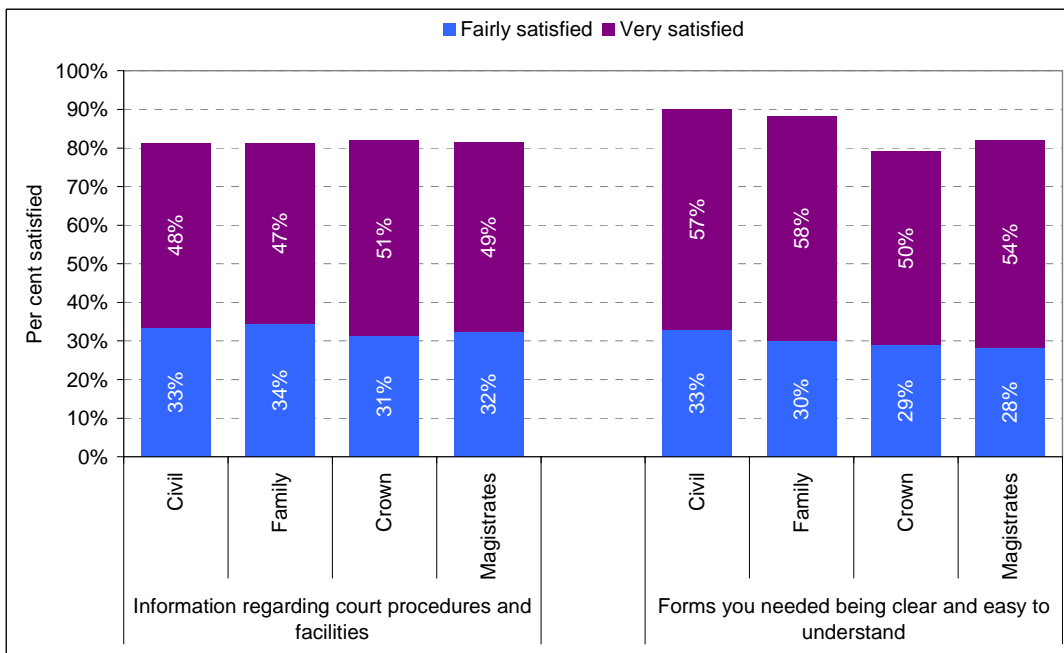
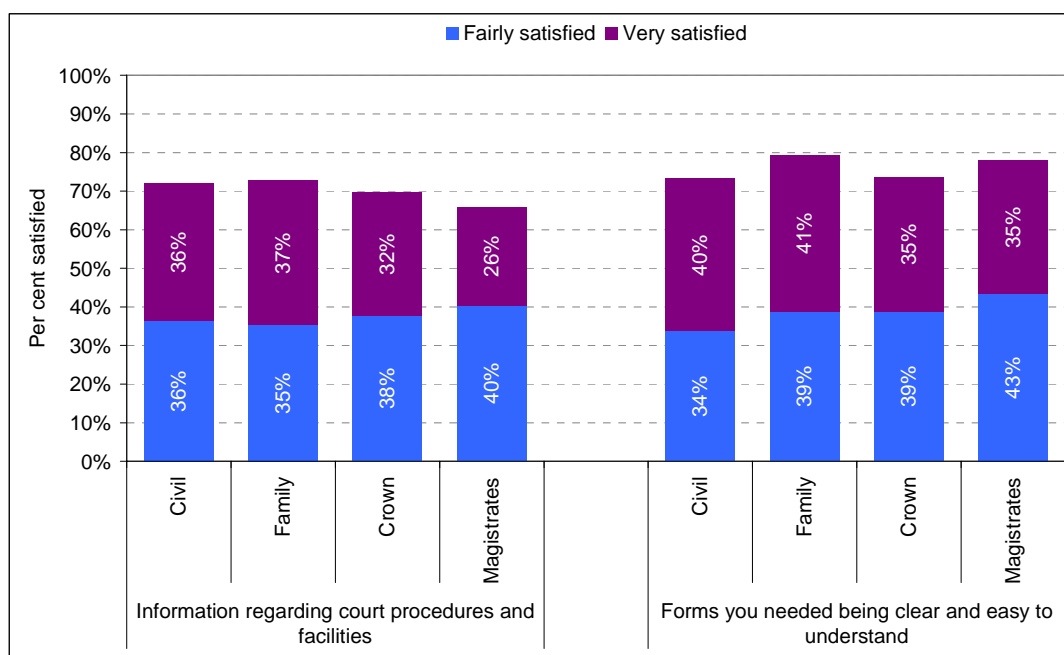


Figure 9: Proportion of public users satisfied with information by court type, 2007/08



Except in the Crown Court, professional users are more satisfied that the forms they needed were clear and easy to understand. The proportion of such users who say that they are satisfied with this increased to 84 from 82 per cent in the first year's survey. The largest increase is in the Magistrates' courts where satisfaction increased from 76 to 82 per cent. However, there is a slight year-on-year decrease in satisfaction among professional users with the information available regarding procedures and facilities. The proportion who say they are satisfied with this fell to 82 from 84 per cent in the first year's survey. The biggest fall is in the Magistrates' courts and is to 81 from 86 per cent in the first year's survey.

Some of these changes are also reflected in the responses of public users. The proportion of such users who say that they are satisfied that the forms they needed were clear and easy to understand increased to 76 from 74 per cent in the first year's survey. The biggest increase, in the Crown Court, is six percentage points from 68 to 74 per cent. On the issue of information regarding procedures and facilities the picture was more mixed. The biggest improvement was in the Crown Court where satisfaction with this increased to 70, from 65 per cent in the first year's survey.

How staff dealt with court users

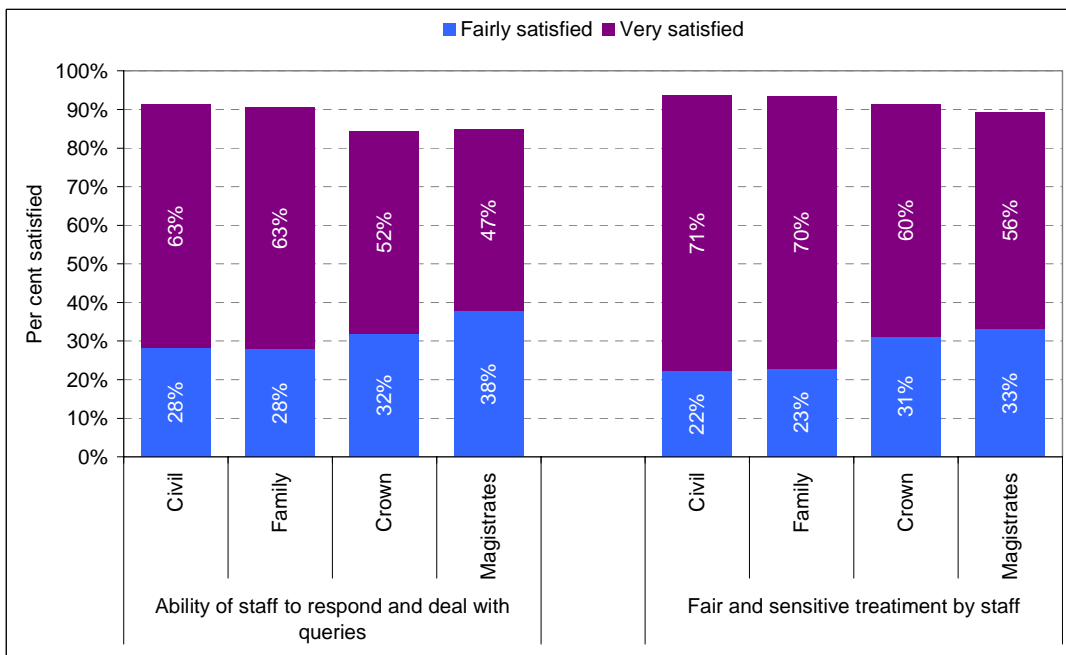
There were generally high levels of satisfaction among court users with the way staff dealt with them. Just over nine out of ten users (93%) are satisfied that staff treated them fairly and sensitively and 89 per cent are satisfied with the ability of staff to deal with their query. These figures compare to 92% and 88% respectively in the first year's survey.

Once again more professional users were satisfied than public users. For example in the Crown Court, 93 per cent of professional users are satisfied with the ability of staff to respond and deal with their query compared with 84 per cent for public users.

Figure 10: Proportion of professional users satisfied with how court staff dealt with users by court type, 2007/08



Figure 11: Proportion of public users satisfied with how staff dealt with users by court type, 2007/08



Among professional users there is little, if any, change in overall satisfaction with either the ability of staff to deal with queries or that they were treated fairly and sensitively by staff. However, in the Crown Court, there is a noticeable transfer from very to fairly satisfied. The proportion very satisfied with the ability of staff to deal with queries is 69 per cent; this went down 8 percentage points from 77 per cent in the first year's survey. The proportion very satisfied that they were treated fairly and sensitively fell from 83 to 77 per cent.

With public users the main year-on-year change was that the proportion of Crown Court users who said they are satisfied with the ability of staff to deal with queries went up from 78 to 84 per cent. This was a similar figure to that in the Magistrates' courts (85%), whereas in the first year's survey the Crown Court figure was lower.

Court environment and facilities

A large proportion of users are satisfied with the ease with which they found the courtroom or office (94%) and the cleanliness of public areas and toilets (86%). Fewer users are satisfied with facilities that take into account particular needs (68%), waiting areas to keep parties safe and separate (61%), the availability of private discussion rooms (59%) and refreshments (49%).

The court environment and facilities is the only service area where more public users are satisfied than professional users. In particular, fewer professional users (55%) were satisfied with waiting areas that keep the parties safe and separate than public users (66%). This reversal in the order of satisfaction of the users might be due to the fact that the professional users are more likely to be 'regular customers', and therefore any perceived flaws in the standard and condition of the facilities will have a more sustained, cumulative impact on them.

Privacy and separate waiting rooms is a particular issue in Family courts, where just 49 per cent of professional users and 64 per cent of public users are satisfied with the availability of private discussion rooms. Similar proportions are satisfied with waiting areas to keep parties safe and separate.

Figure 12: Proportion of professional users satisfied with court environment and facilities by court type, 2007/08

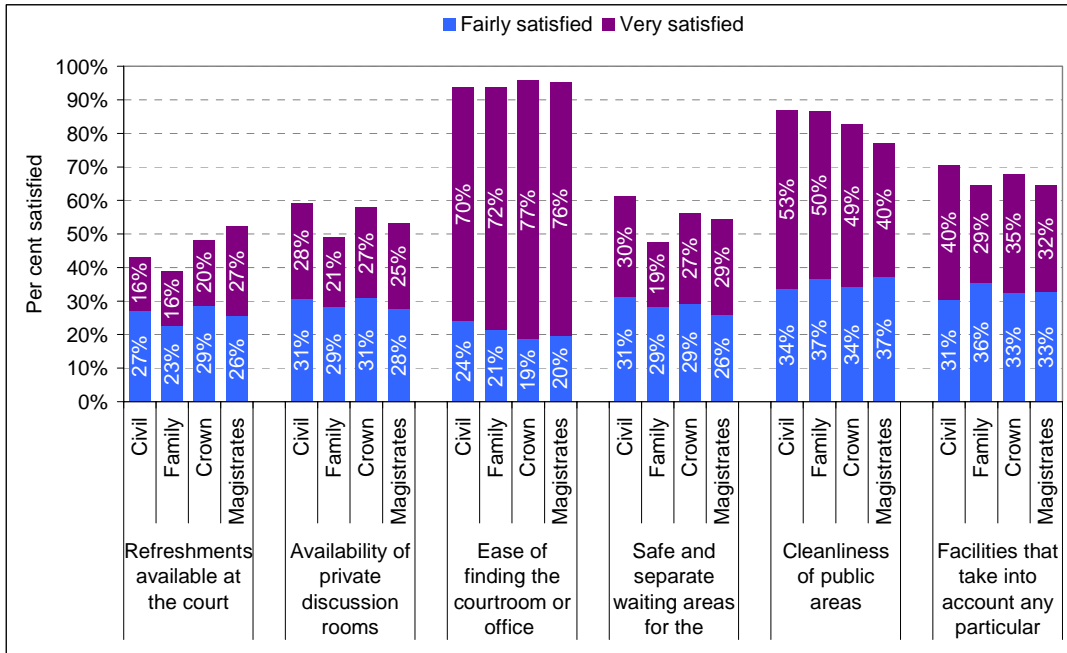
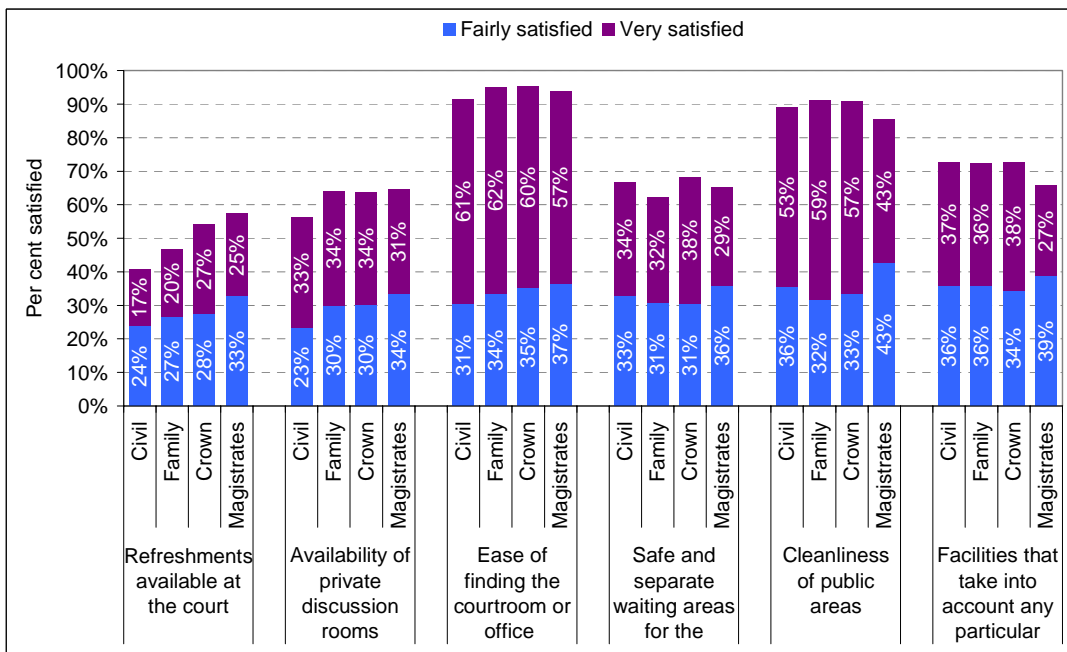


Figure 13: Proportion of public users satisfied with court environment and facilities by court type, 2007/08



Among professional users in the Civil courts there is an increase in the proportion satisfied with the availability of private discussion rooms. This is a rise to 59 from 54 per cent in the first year's survey. However, there is a decrease in satisfaction with the refreshments available at court. Here, the proportion of users who say they are satisfied went down to 46 from 52 per

cent in the first year's survey. The largest fall was in the Family courts where the proportion satisfied with the refreshments fell from 48 to 39 percent.

With public users in Family courts there is an increase in satisfaction, since the first year of the survey, with the availability of private discussion rooms and safe and separate waiting areas. These increases are from 52 to 64 per cent and from 56 to 62 per cent respectively. This means that satisfaction with the availability of private discussion rooms is similar in Family courts to that in the Crown Court and Magistrates' courts (64% and 65% respectively). There is also an increase, amongst this group, in satisfaction with the facilities that take into account particular needs. The proportion of these users who are satisfied with this increased from 64 to 69 per cent. The biggest increase was in the Magistrates' courts, where satisfaction went up from 58 to 66 per cent.

4. Satisfaction of Jurors

This section summarises the main findings from the 2008 survey of jurors and gives some comparisons with the 2007 survey.

In the 2008 survey 1,244 of the postal questionnaires were returned and the response rate was 41%.

Overall satisfaction

- Eighty eight per cent of jurors said that they were satisfied with the overall service provided by the court. Thirty eight per cent said they were very satisfied.

Pre-court experience

- Eighty six per cent of jurors were either very or fairly satisfied with their overall treatment by the Jury Central Summoning Bureau (JCSB). This is in line with the eighty seven per cent found in the 2007 survey.
- Ninety nine per cent of jurors said that they received their jury summons in good time to make the necessary arrangements, 89 per cent said they found it easy to complete, 97 per cent said they found the accompanying guidance helpful and 91 per cent were satisfied with the speed with which they received a response to their summons reply. Again, these are broadly in line with the 2007 results (99%, 91%, 97% and 90% respectively).

Contact with court staff

- Amongst the jurors there was high satisfaction with the way staff dealt with them. 94 per cent were satisfied with the politeness and helpfulness of staff, 93 per cent were satisfied that staff treated them fairly and sensitively and 90 per cent were satisfied that there were easily identifiable staff to deal with queries. In the 2007 survey 92 per cent were satisfied that staff treated them fairly and sensitively, 91 per cent were satisfied that there were easily identifiable staff to deal with queries, 95 per cent were satisfied with the politeness of court staff and 95 per cent were satisfied with the helpfulness of court staff.
- A slightly smaller proportion (86%) were satisfied with the ability of court staff to deal with their query there and then. This matched the 87 per cent found in the 2007 survey.

Information provided

- Fifty nine per cent of jurors were confident that they knew what to expect before they went to court. 17 per cent were not very confident or not at all confident in this respect.

- A large proportion were satisfied with the video played on the first day at court (85%) and with the information given by court staff regarding court procedures and facilities (91%). Fewer jurors (81%) were satisfied that the forms they needed were clear and easy to understand. In the 2007 survey 86 per cent were satisfied with the video played on the first day at court and, although this cannot be directly compared, 87 per cent were satisfied with the information talk and other information available regarding court procedures and facilities. 79 per cent of jurors in the 2007 survey were satisfied that the forms they needed were clear and easy to understand.
- Ninety three per cent of jurors said they understood the role they were expected to play. 71 per cent fully understood their role and 22 per cent mainly understood it. This broadly matched the 2007 survey where 93% of jurors understood their role, 68 per cent fully and 25 per cent mainly.

Jury assembly area and facilities

- Most jurors were satisfied with the cleanliness of the Jury Assembly Area (81%) and how well the waiting areas kept them safe and separate from other court users (81%). However, these were both below the 2007 survey figures of 86 per cent and 84 percent respectively.
- A smaller proportion (64%) were satisfied with the comfort of the Jury Assembly Area. This a decrease of 5 percentage points since the 2007 survey.
- Even fewer were satisfied with the cost (41%) and choice and quality (48%) of refreshments available at the court. The question about choice and quality of refreshments available at the court wasn't asked in the 2007 survey. However, the 41 per cent figure for the cost of the refreshments is lower than the 46 per cent found in this earlier survey.

Travel and access

- Just over nine in ten (91%) were satisfied with how easily they found the building. In the 2007 survey this was 93 per cent.

Wait

- Only 36 per cent of jurors were satisfied with the time they spent waiting to be selected for trial, although 66 per cent were satisfied that they were kept informed of the reasons for any delay. These were both lower than the figures in the 2007 survey (39% and 76% respectively).

5. Satisfaction of Probate Service Users

This section summarises the main findings from the 2007/08 survey of probate service customers.

In the 2008 survey 1,814 of the postal questionnaires were returned and the overall response rate was 27%. Of the 1,814 responses, 989 (55%) were from legal professionals and 809 (45%) were from personal applicants.

Overall satisfaction

- Overall, ninety six per cent of respondents were satisfied (71% very satisfied) with the process of obtaining a grant of representation. However, legal professionals were more likely than personal applicants to say they were very satisfied with the process (74% compared with 67%).
- Ninety three per cent of respondents were satisfied with the time taken for the grant of representation to be issued and eighty one per cent were satisfied with the cost of obtaining a grant of representation. However, legal professionals were more likely than personal applicants to say they were satisfied with the cost (95% as opposed to 63%). This may reflect the fact that the cost is not paid directly by the legal professional.

Contact with probate registries

- Ninety four per cent of respondents were satisfied with the service they received when they telephoned the Probate Registry and Inheritance Tax helpline. Similar proportions were satisfied with the service they received when they visited in person and the service they received when they telephoned the Registry directly (94% and 93% respectively). Fewer respondents (75%) were satisfied with the service they received in response to an e-mail, but only a very small proportion (3%) of respondents said they had e-mailed the Probate Registry. Forty eight per cent said they had telephoned the Probate Registry directly, 31% said they had telephoned the helpline and 9% said they had visited in person.
- Eighty six percent of legal professionals were satisfied with the way pre-lodgement enquiries were handled and eighty eight per cent were satisfied with the usefulness of the settling service.

Treatment by staff

- Ninety six per cent of respondents were satisfied with the politeness and helpfulness of staff. Similar proportions were satisfied with the ability of staff to respond to and deal with their query and that staff treated them fairly and sensitively (94% and 96% respectively).

Questions about respondents' experiences of completing the forms to apply for a grant of representation and attending the follow-up interview were asked of personal applicants only.

Information provided

- Ninety three per cent of personal applicants said they found it easy to obtain the necessary forms to apply for a grant of representation and seventy nine per cent said they found it easy to complete the forms.
- Ninety seven per cent of personal applicants said they found the information and guidance on completing the forms helpful. Fifty five per cent said they found it very helpful.
- Eighty six per cent of personal applicants were confident that they knew what to expect before their interview.

Travel and access

- Ninety per cent of personal applicants said that they found it easy to find the Probate Registry or Probate Office.
- Eighty four per cent of personal applicants said they were satisfied with the distance they travelled to get to the Registry or Office.

Wait

- Ninety five per cent of personal applicants were satisfied with the length of time they had to wait at the Registry or Office before their interview.

Facilities

- Ninety one per cent of personal applicants were satisfied that the facilities provided at the Registry or Office took account of their particular needs (disregarding those for whom the question was not applicable).

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Notes

1. For a brief summary of the methodology used in this survey refer to the relevant introductory paragraphs. A more detailed explanation of the methods employed can be found in the accompanying technical note which builds on the technical report from the 2006/07 survey.
2. All counts given in the tables and charts refer to the numbers of respondents, where a sub-group is not represented by a single respondent a dash (-) is used in tabulations.

Contact points for further information

Current and previous editions of this publication are available for download at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/hmcsusersurvey.htm>

Spreadsheet files of the tables and graphs contained in this document are also available for download from this address.

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