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**The Driver & Vehicle
Testing Agency**
Customer Survey
2003
Final Report
November 2003



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Preface

Report: **Customer Survey 2003**

Prepared for: **The Driver & Vehicle Testing Agency**

Date: **December 2003**

Background

The Driver & Vehicle Testing Agency was established in 1992 under the Government's Next Steps Initiative in order to undertake all statutory vehicle and driver testing in Northern Ireland. The Agency now has 15 main test centres, two satellite driving test centres and six theory test centres throughout Northern Ireland. On 4 January 2000, a touchscreen theory test was introduced to replace the 'pen and paper' version.

The Agency conducts annual surveys aimed at measuring performance against key targets with regard to booking arrangements and the conduct of tests and also at assessing customer requirements in the operation of services. In 1998 and 2001, large-scale surveys were conducted with sample sizes of 6,200 and 6,084 respectively. In 1999, 2000 and 2002 smaller surveys of 1,600 were carried out.

This document details the findings from the 2003 survey, conducted by MORI MRC.

Research Objectives

The overall objective of the study was defined by the Driver & Vehicle Testing Agency as:

"To ascertain customer satisfaction levels, in particular in the key areas of test booking and overall Agency test procedures"

Research Methodology

Sampling

As in previous years (1997, 1999, 2000 and 2002), a survey was conducted amongst individuals who had participated in a vehicle or driving test. The tests had been taken in July and August 2003.

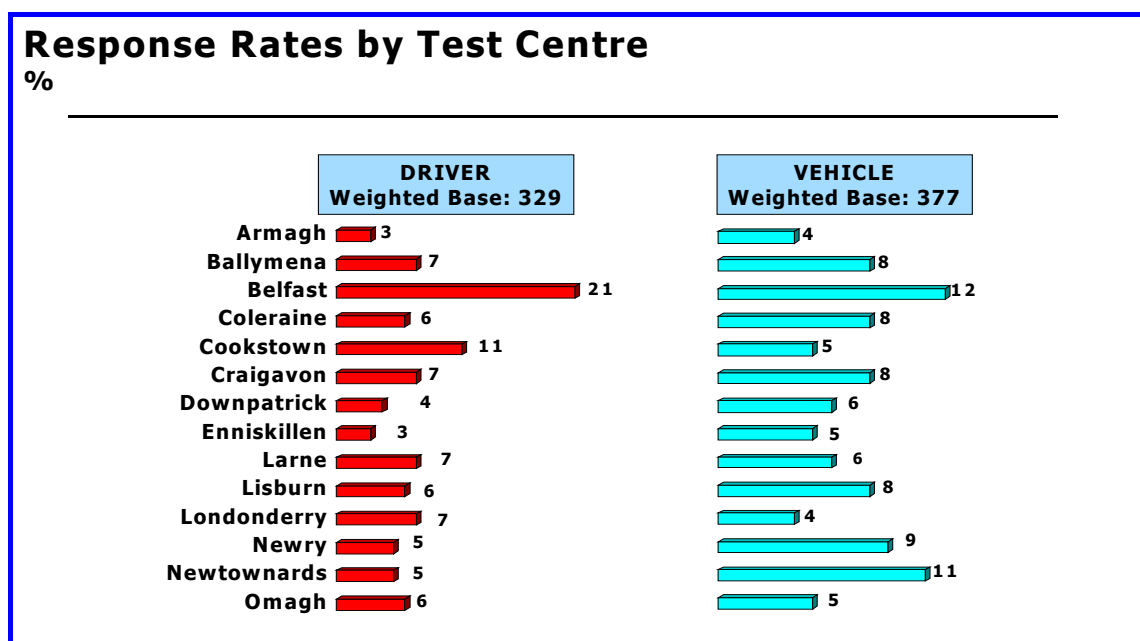
1,600 Agency customers were sent a questionnaire along with a pre-paid return envelope. In total, 800 customers who had taken driver tests and 800 who had taken their vehicle for testing were selected to participate, across all of Northern Ireland's test centres.

Approximately 54 names were selected from each of 14 centres which deal with vehicle tests. Mallusk was not included since it did not open until the end of August and only a limited number of tests were conducted during the sampling period, so 105 names were used from Ballymena which was the back up centre. Approximately 58 names were selected from each of the 14 centres which deal with driving tests.

Batches were despatched over a 4-week period with reminder letters/thank you letters issued 2 weeks later.

Response Rates

Of the 1,600 people surveyed, 733 returned their questionnaires, representing an overall response rate of 46%. 398 of the 800 vehicle test questionnaires were returned representing a 50% response rate. Of those returned, 10 were not used due to very low levels of completion and 11 were late returns. 335 of the 800 driver test questionnaires were returned, representing a 42% response rate. Of those, 6 were not used, again due to low levels of completion. The table below shows the breakdown of returns by test centre.



Statistical Reliability

The sample sizes of each customer survey has allowed for robust data at an aggregate level and for reliable comparisons over time for both driver and vehicle surveys.

The table below shows the statistical reliability at the 95% confidence level, for various sample sizes:

Sample size	Sampling tolerances applicable to results at or near these percentages (based on 95% confidence level)		
	10/90%	30/70%	50%
	±%	±%	±%
2,000	1	2	2
1,000	2	3	3
800	2	3	3
600	2	4	4
500	3	4	5
400	3	4	5
300	3	5	6
200	4	6	7
100	6	9	10

The above illustrates the representative nature of a sample of different sizes. For example, if the results of a survey of 500 people shows that 70% were satisfied with a particular aspect of service, the range within which the true figure would lie, if the whole population had been interviewed, would be $\pm 4\%$ points, 95 times out of 100. In fact, the "true" figure is more likely to lie at the mid-point of the range, rather than at either extreme. Even at a 50% level the range in which the true figure would lie if the whole population had been interviewed would be $\pm 5\%$ points, 95 times out of 100.

Questionnaires

Both vehicle and driver questionnaires are appended to this report. Topics covered were booking arrangements, test procedures, general experiences of the test, information provided, complaints and suggestions for improvement. This year, a further section was added regarding equality data to adhere with Section 75.

Weighting Procedure

The data was weighted according to the proportion of tests carried out in each centre. The total number of driving and vehicle tests conducted in the sampling period was calculated. The proportion each centre contributed to the total was then calculated in order to arrive at the appropriate weighting for that centre. The applied weights are presented in the following table.

Weighting Procedure

- The findings were weighted according to the actual number of tests taken at each centre.

	Vehicle Tests		Driver Tests	
	%	Weight	%	Weight
Armagh	3.77	0.53	2.99	0.42
Ballymena	8.26	1.16	7.45	1.04
Belfast	12.31	1.72	21.36	2.99
Coleraine	7.98	1.12	6.07	0.85
Cookstown	5.43	0.76	10.87	1.52
Craigavon	8.25	1.16	7.38	1.03
Downpatrick	6.49	0.91	4.08	0.57
Enniskillen	4.76	0.67	2.78	0.39
Larne	5.77	0.81	7.10	0.99
Lisburn	7.96	1.11	6.41	0.90
Londonderry	4.49	0.63	7.17	1.00
Mallusk*	-	-	-	-
Newry	8.62	1.21	4.91	0.69
Newtownards	11.40	1.60	5.41	0.76
Omagh	4.51	0.63	6.03	0.84

*only 2 questionnaires were sent out for Mallusk

The survey was based on a sample of customers who had used a centre during July and August of 2003.

Pass/Fail

Overall, 70% of the driver sample had passed their test on the last occasion they took it, while 29% had failed. 1% did not state their response.

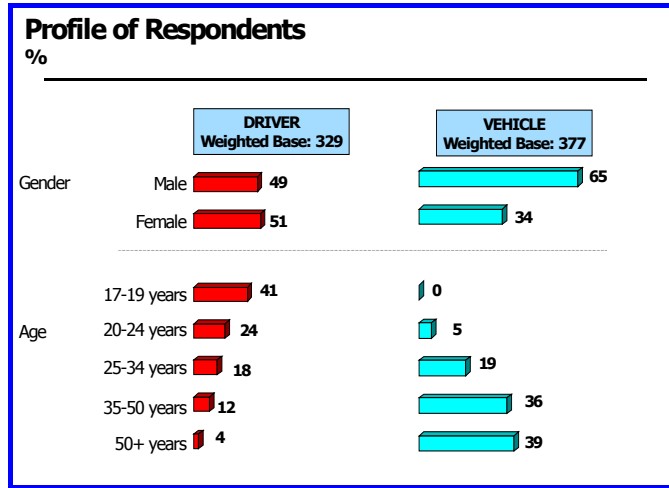
For the vehicle sample, 89% had passed their test while 10% failed. 1% did not state their response.

Driver – Booking System

201 respondents (61%) used the standard booking system compared to 128 respondents (39%) who used the new booking system.

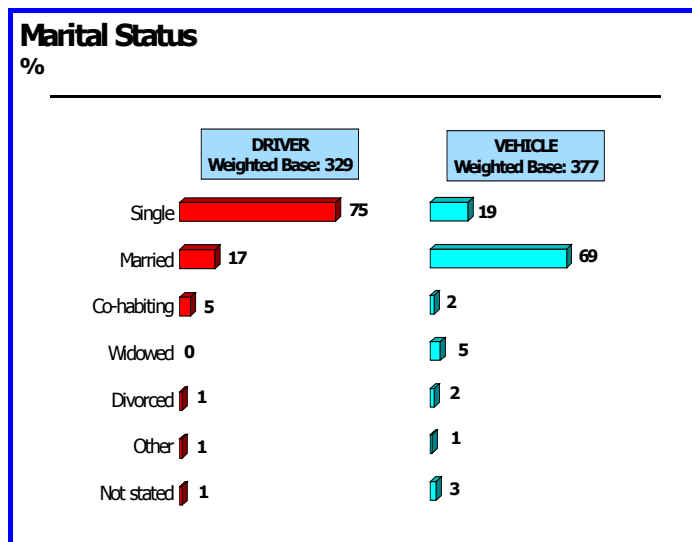
Analysis of Sample

The following charts show the profile of the respondents incorporating the new equality section.

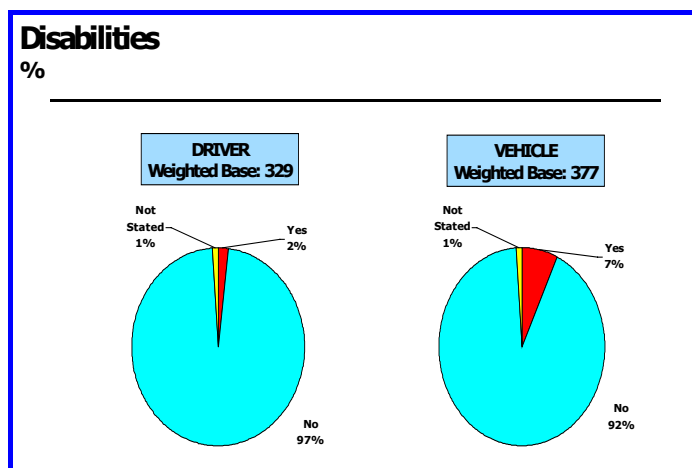


Driver: there was a spread of male and female respondents and a higher percentage of the younger age groups.

Vehicle: Two thirds (65%) of the vehicle test respondents were males compared to 34% females. More vehicle tests were conducted in the older age groups.

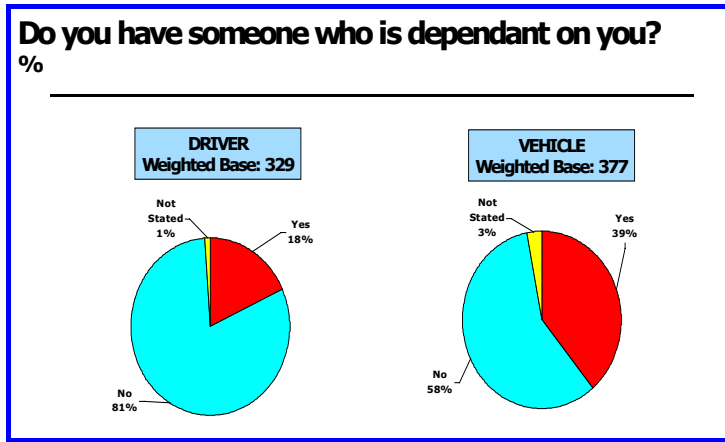


While 75% of the drivers were single, 69% of the vehicle test respondents were married. This reflects the age profiles.



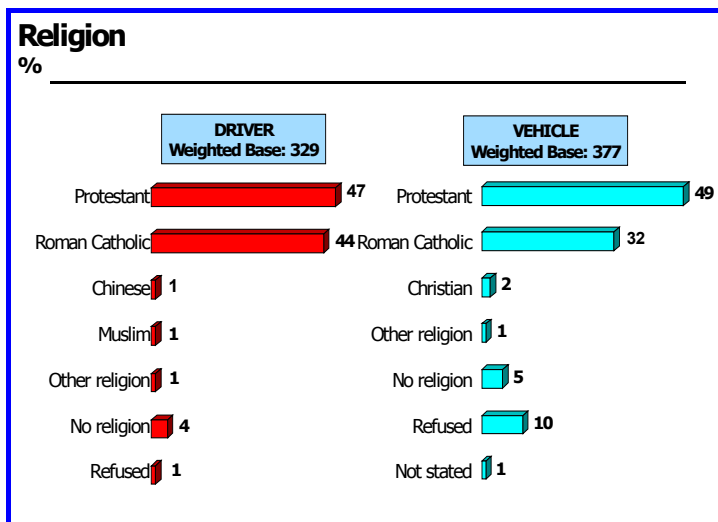
Driver: 2% had a disability. Of these 8 respondents, 3 had hearing difficulties and 2 had sight problems

Vehicle: 7% had disabilities. Of these 26 respondents, 9 had limb impairments, 6 had mobility difficulties or were in wheelchairs, and 4 had hearing difficulties, sight and personal care support problems



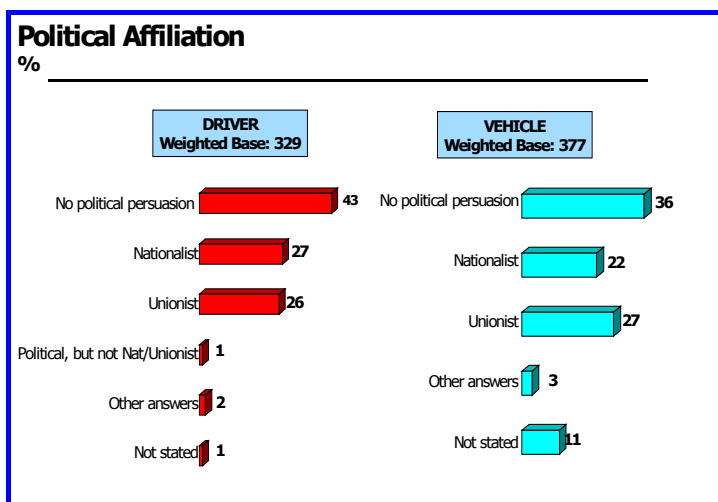
While 18% of the Driver respondents had dependants, 39% - more than twice this proportion of vehicle test respondents had dependants (again reflecting the age profiles).

For both sets of respondents, dependants were most likely to be children. The vast majority of the dependants (87% for each set of respondents) did not need to accompany the respondent to the test.



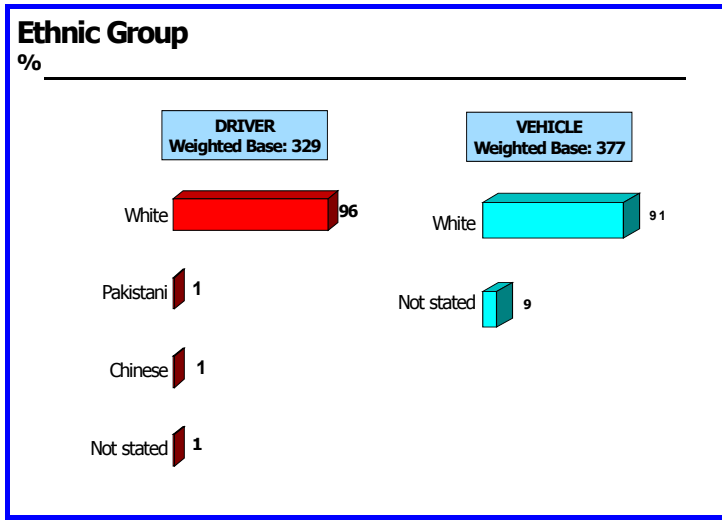
There was an even spread of Protestant and Roman Catholic religions in the Driver sample. The vehicle sample had more Protestant respondents (49%) than Roman Catholic (32%).

More of the respondents in the vehicle sample refused to state their religion.

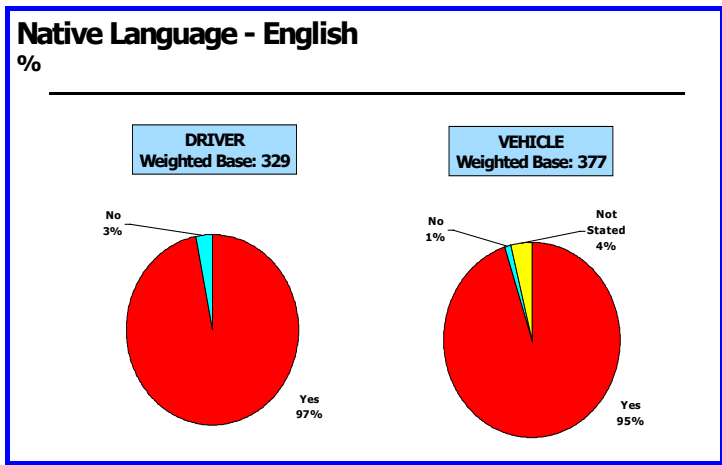


In both groups, the highest percentage of people stated that they were of 'No political persuasion' and there was a fairly even spread between Nationalists and Unionists.

More of the vehicle test respondents did not state their political opinion.



Reflective of the NI Census figures, most respondents (96% Driver, 91% Vehicle) were of white origin.



The majority of the respondents spoke English as their native language.

Driver: of the 8 respondents who spoke other first languages, 4 spoke Chinese and 4 spoke Punjabi/Urdu

Vehicle: of the 4 respondents who spoke other first languages, 2 spoke Irish, 1 Shona (Zimbabwe)

Summary of Main Findings

Driver Survey

- Scores achieved for satisfaction ratings in key performance areas of test booking and test procedures have remained consistently high (although down slightly from last wave). Nine in ten driver test respondents stated they were satisfied with test procedures
- There were differences in terms of satisfaction ratings by gender. Females were more likely to be very satisfied with regard to the experience of the driving theory test while males were more likely to be very satisfied with the experience of the practical driving test.
- The majority of respondents felt the information provided before and after their theory and practical tests fully met their requirements. Of those who would have liked more information, half felt they would have liked more information on where they went wrong.
- Approximately two thirds felt there was something about the service that was particularly good (this is an improvement from 2002 at 32%). They felt that in particular there were clear instructions and the examiner was friendly.
- Almost half of respondents felt there was an aspect of service they could have complained about (this is up from one in 5 last wave). The most common sources of complaints were the cost of the test and time take to receive an appointment date.
- The most important factors for improving customer service are still perceived to be 'a shorter wait for test appointments.' Half of all respondents are not willing to pay extra for service enhancements.
- In comparison to other public services, over half of all respondents in the drivers' survey felt the Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency's performance was 'about the same.' One third (down from over four in ten last wave) felt its performance was either a little better or much better. (Half are making this comparison with Driver & Vehicle Licensing and one third with Roads' Services).

Vehicle Survey

- Satisfaction with vehicle test procedures has decreased slightly from since last wave (although still high at 90% satisfied).
- Satisfaction with booking arrangements, however has dropped from 85% satisfied to 51% satisfied.
- The main reason for dissatisfaction is the time taken to get an appointment (quoted by 94% of those dissatisfied).
- Many respondents felt the information provided before and after their test fully met their requirements.
- Over two thirds of all respondents felt there was something about the service they received that was particularly good. One half of respondents thought their test was dealt with efficiently and the staff were pleasant, professional and informative.
- Overall 41% of all respondents felt they could have complained about the service they received. This has increased from 15% in 2002. Again, the main area worthy of receiving a complaint was the time taken to receive an appointment.

- The most important factor for improving customer service was perceived to be a shorter wait for test appointments. The perceived least important factor was for Agency staff to improve their approach. Three in five would not be prepared to pay extra for service enhancements.
- In comparison to other public services, one half of respondents felt the Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency's performance was 'about the same.' Just under 4 in 10 felt the DVTA performed either 'a little better' or 'much better' (again this represents a decline from 2002 at 55%). (Once again, more than one half are making this comparison with Driver & Vehicle Licensing and one third with Roads' Services).

Combined satisfaction ratings for driver and vehicle tests have been calculated using unweighted data. In terms of satisfaction with booking arrangements, almost seven in ten (68%) of respondents were satisfied. 91% and 88% satisfaction was achieved for satisfaction with test procedures and the experience of the test respectively. Year on year the Driver & Vehicle Testing Agency's satisfaction scores are consistently high, but this year there has been a considerable drop in satisfaction with booking arrangements (a fall of 22% from 2002 at 90% satisfaction). Based on sampling tolerances for random sampling of 800 vehicle and driver test respondents at the 95% confidence level, the range within which the true figure would lie, if the whole population had been interviewed, would be +/- 2% points, 95 times out of 100. This is illustrated in the table below:

	Overall 2003 Driver & Vehicle (unweighted data) Base: 706	Sampling Tolerance (95 times/100)
Satisfaction with booking arrangements	68%	+/- 2%
Satisfaction with test procedures	91%	+/- 2%
The experience of the test*	88%	+/- 2%

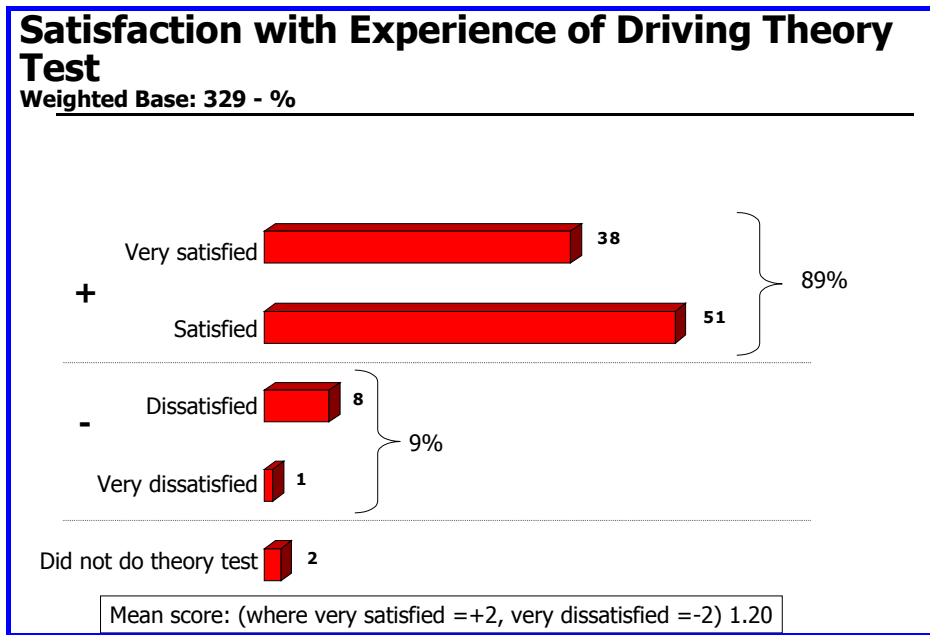
*For Driver, an average was taken of satisfaction ratings for experience of the practical and theory driving tests.

Driver Test

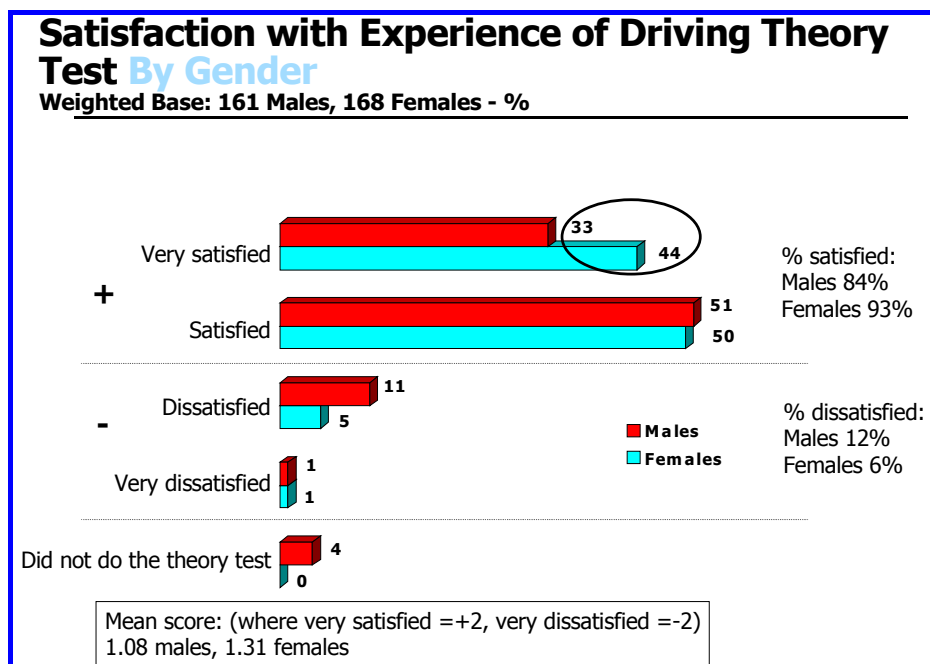
Satisfaction Ratings

1. Theory Test

Overall, satisfaction with the driving theory test remains high. 89% of driver test respondents had been satisfied or very satisfied with the theory test.

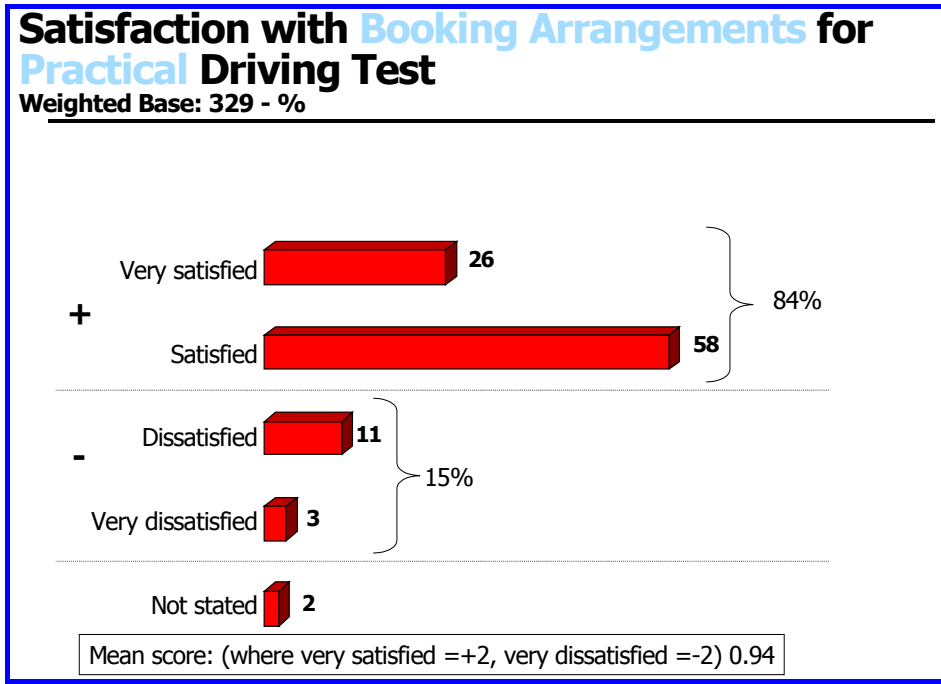


Overall, females were more likely to be *very satisfied* with the experience of the driving theory test than males (44% of females were *very satisfied* compared with 33% of males). The main reason for dissatisfaction was the cost of the test.

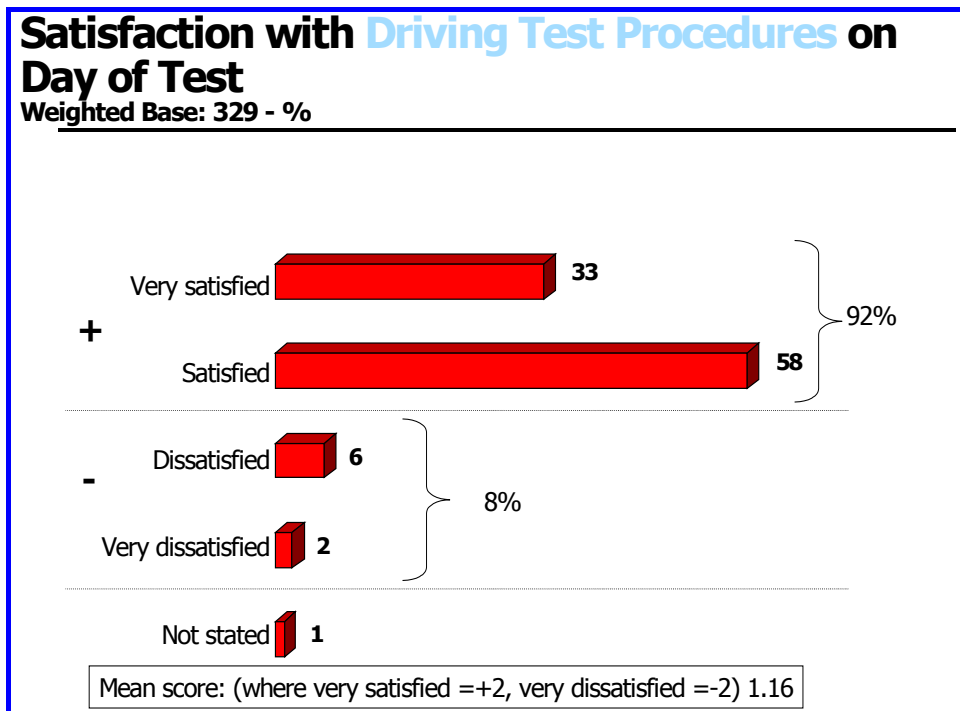


2. Practical Test

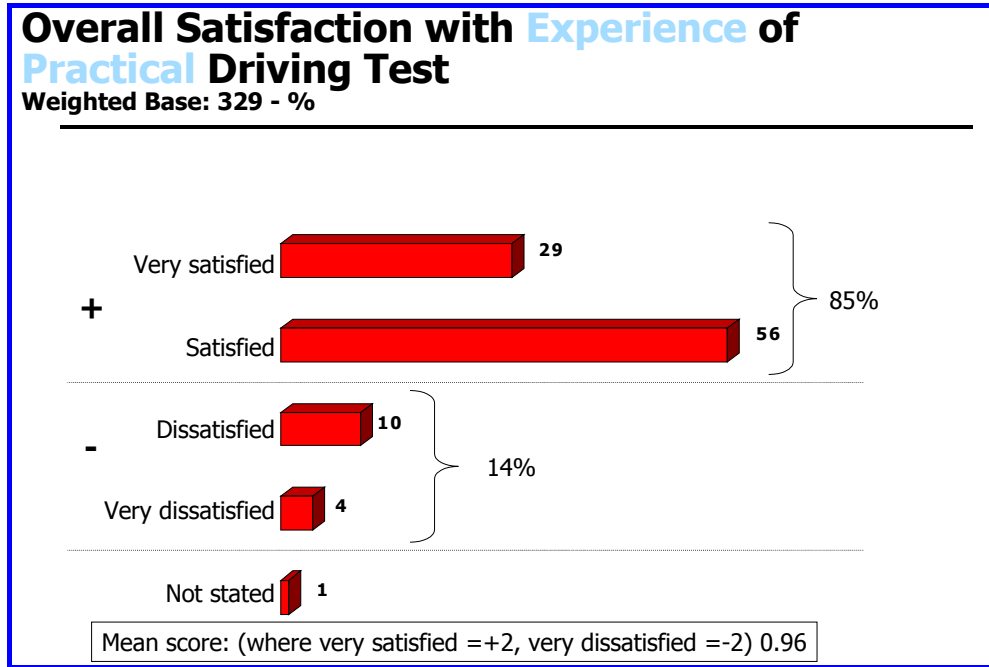
Satisfaction ratings with the booking arrangements for the practical driving test remain high (84%).



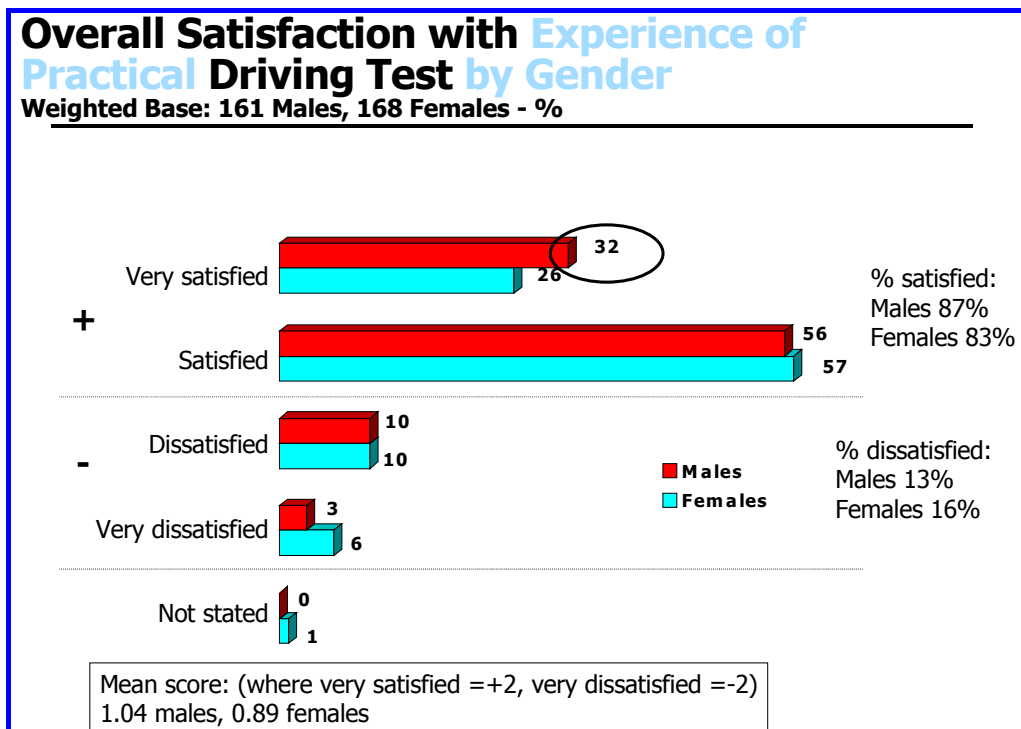
92% of respondents claimed to be satisfied with the driving test procedures on the day of the test itself.



Satisfaction levels were still high for the experience of the practical driving test with 85% of respondents being *very satisfied* or *satisfied*. 89% of those who used the standard booking methods were satisfied compared to 80% of those using the new booking method. 93% of those who passed their test were satisfied, compared to 66% of those who failed.



Once again, gender differences were noted with regard to satisfaction with the practical test. However, this time, males were more likely to be *very satisfied* (32%) than females (26%).

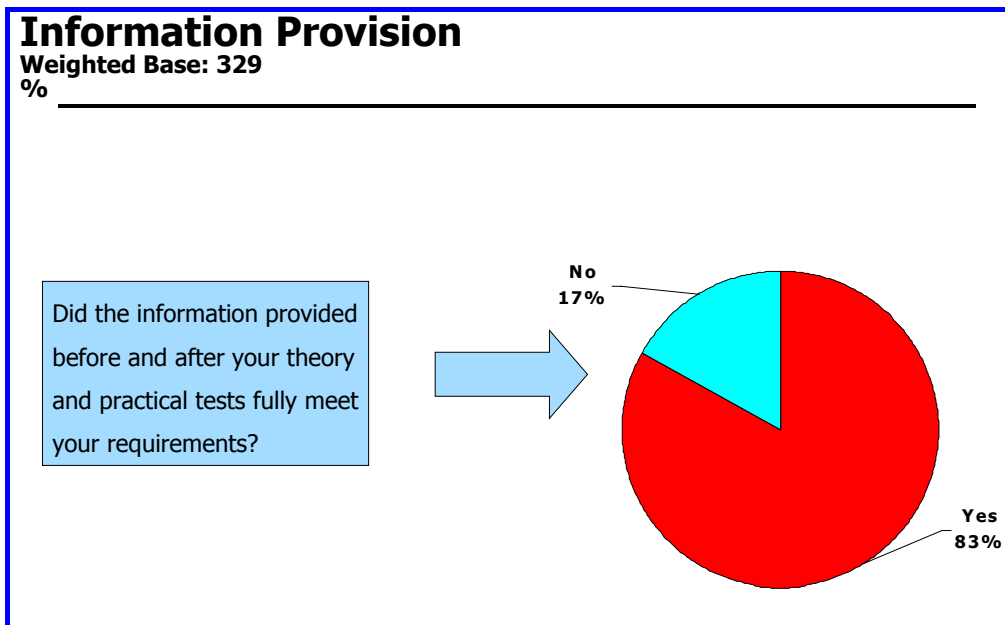


The following chart illustrates the moving annual trends (MATs) for satisfaction over the past five years. The ratings have remained consistently high with the most significant fluctuation occurring within booking arrangements for the practical test.

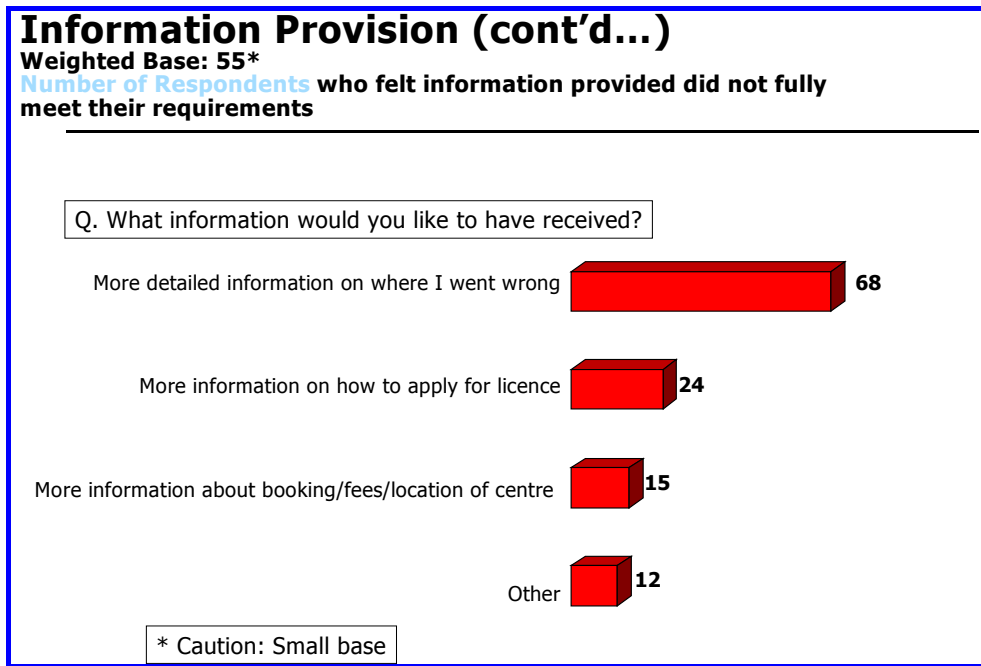
Results Comparisons - Driver					
% Satisfied					
<i>Questionnaire Dispatch</i>	1998 <i>6,200</i>	2000 <i>1,600</i>	2001 <i>6,084</i>	2002 <i>1,600</i>	2003 <i>1,600</i>
Satisfaction with booking arrangements for theory test	95	93	95*	94	-
Satisfaction with theory test procedures on day of test	95	91	99	95	-
Satisfaction with touchscreen driving theory test	-	79	95	95	-
Satisfaction with experience of driving theory test	97	94	98	93	89
Satisfaction with booking arrangements for practical test	91	90	93	90	84
Satisfaction with test procedures on day of test	96	92	93	90	92
Overall satisfaction with experience of practical driving test	-	88	-	85	85
Overall satisfaction with experience of driving test (both theory and practical)	-	92	90	87	-

Information Provision

The majority (83%) of respondents felt that the information provided before and after the theory and practical test fully met requirements. However, this marks a drop from 94% in 2002.

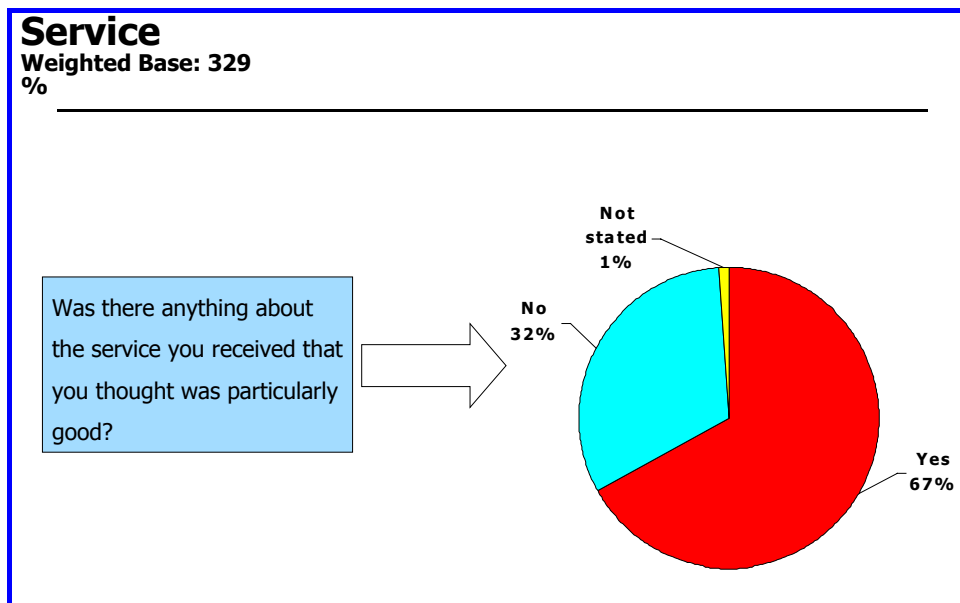


Fifty five respondents in total felt that the information provided was inadequate (compared to only 16 respondents last time), the main issue being lack of detailed feedback on where they went wrong in the test.

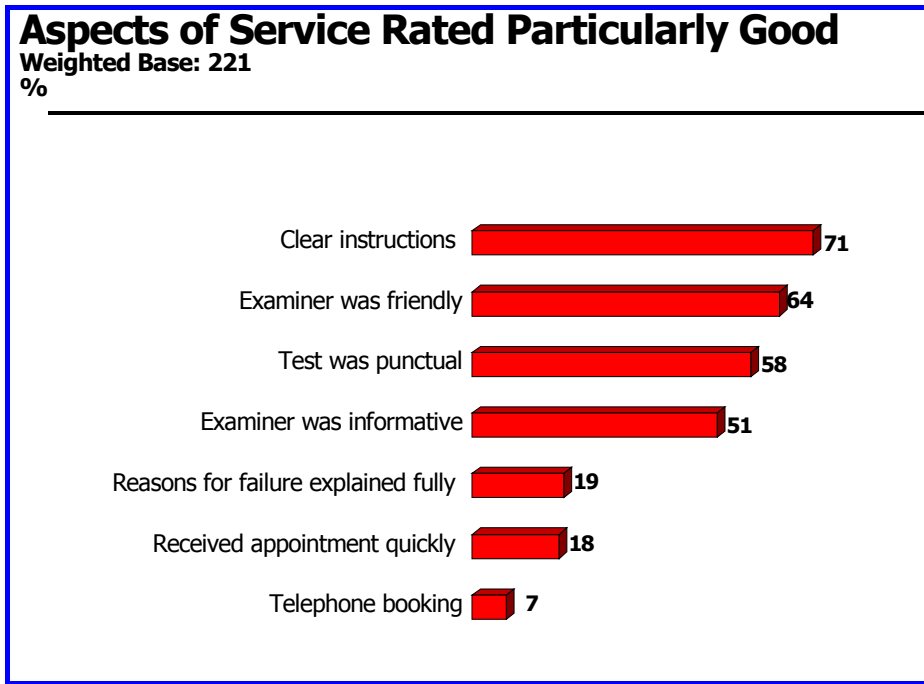


Service

All respondents were given the opportunity to comment on the service and were asked if there was anything they felt was particularly good about the service. There has been an increase in the number who felt that there was something particularly good, from approximately one third (32%) who felt this in 2002, to 67% now (in 2002 it was the reverse).

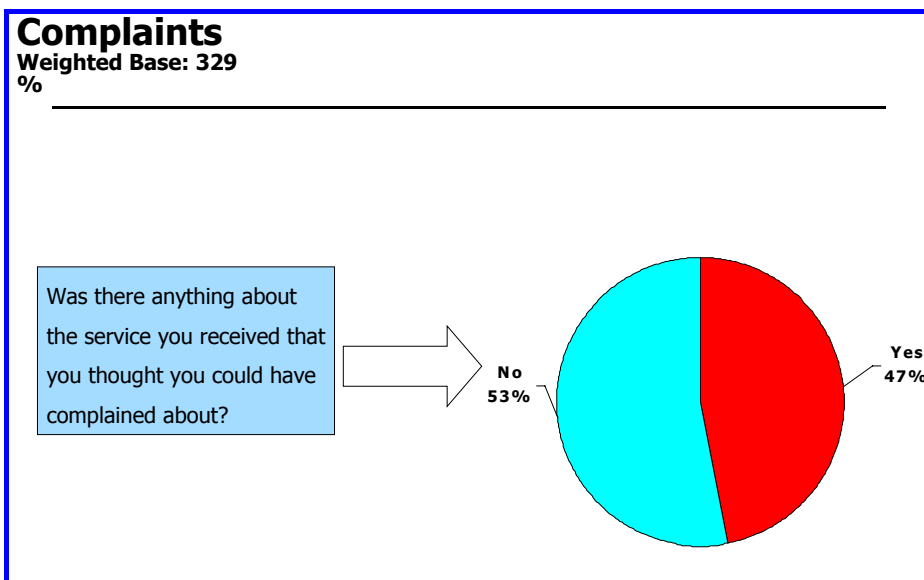


The main areas rated as particularly good were clear instructions (71%), a friendly/pleasant examiner (64%) and a punctual test (58%).

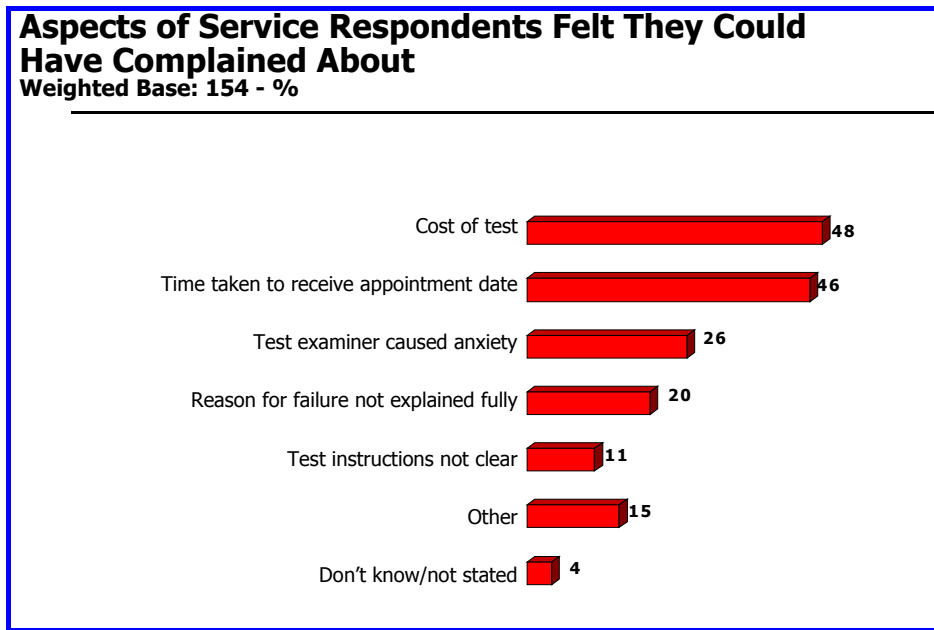


Complaints

There has been a rise in the level of complaints about the service, with almost half the respondents (47%) saying that there had been something about the service received that they could have complained about. This compares to approximately one in five respondents (21%) who felt they could have complained in 2002.



The main issues were 'cost of test' (mentioned by 48% of respondents), 'time taken to received appointment date' (46%) and 'test instructor caused anxiety' (26%). It is noteworthy that satisfaction with staff has improved: none of the top reasons for complaints related to staff.



Of all respondents who felt they could have complained about the service they received, only 5% had actually made a complaint.

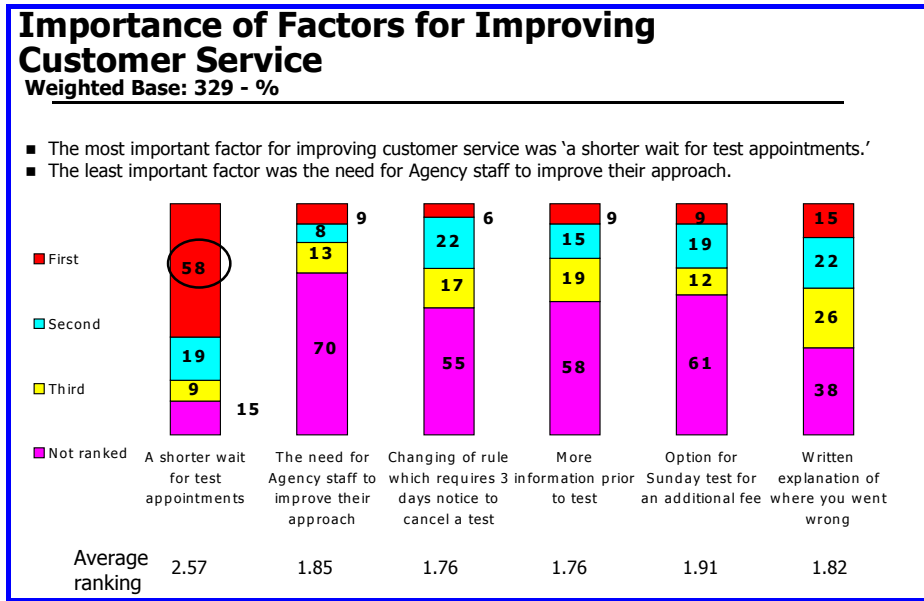
Of the seven respondents who complained, five respondents were satisfied with the way in which the complaint was dealt. Two respondents were dissatisfied.

Of all those (146 respondents) who felt they could have complained about the service received, but did not complain, one third stated they didn't see any point at the time. A further fifth did not want to make a fuss. 14% of respondents were unaware of the complaints procedure.

Improvements to Service

All respondents were asked to consider four different aspects of the test experience and to rank the top 3 in order of importance.

- A shorter wait for test appointments
- An internet booking service
- The need for Agency staff to improve their approach
- Changing of the rule which requires 3 days notice to cancel a test



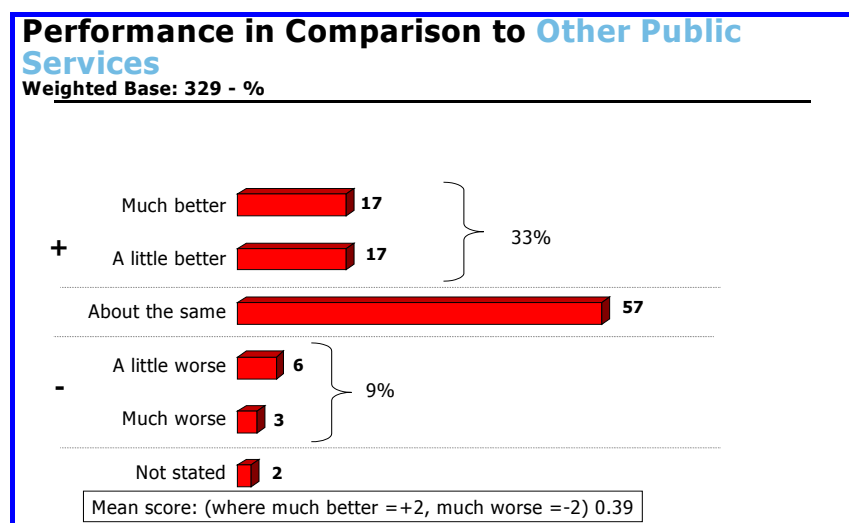
The most important factor for improving customer service was 'shorter wait for test appointments'. The least important was 'the need for Agency staff to improve their approach'.

When asked what they would be willing to pay for these service enhancements, 52% of respondents stated that they would pay nothing more. 18% said they would pay between £3.00 and £4.49 while 13% stated that they would pay £1.50 to £2.99.

Women were less willing to pay for these service enhancements (56%) compared to men (47%).

Comparison to Other Public Services

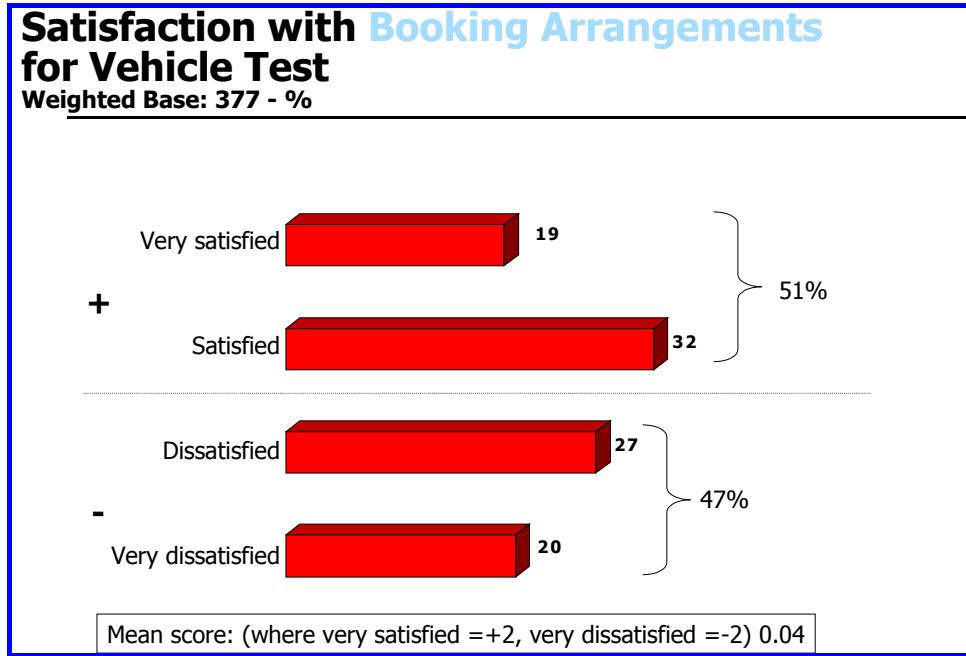
When asked how the Driver & Vehicle Testing Agency performs in comparison to other Public Services, over half of the respondents rated DVTA as 'about the same', while 33% rated it as better.



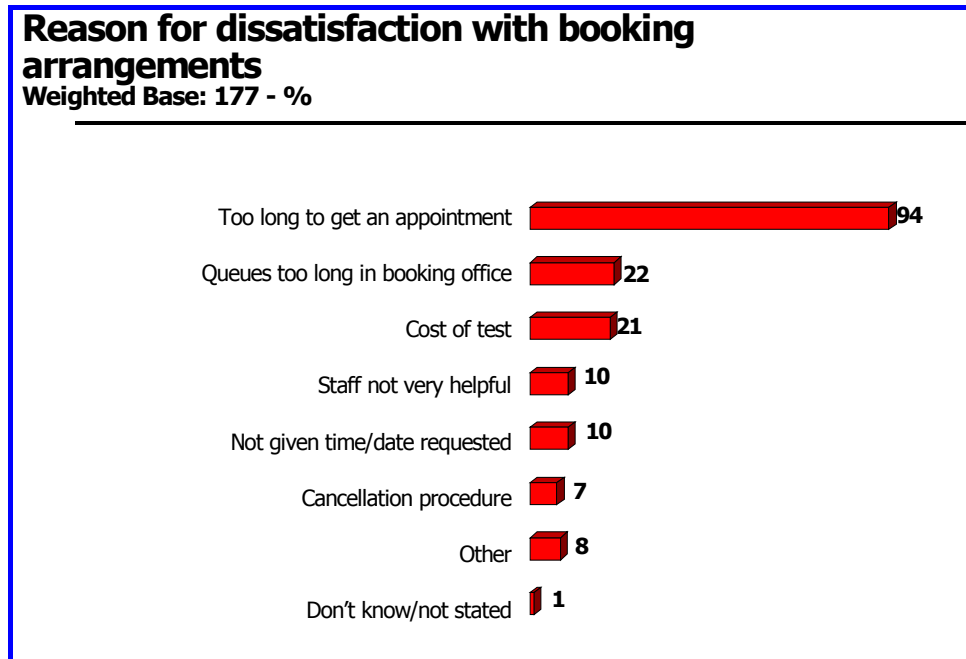
Respondents were most likely to compare the DVTA with DVLA and the Roads' Service.

Vehicle Test

Satisfaction with booking arrangements for the Vehicle test has dropped from 85% in 2002 to 51%. 47% of vehicle test respondents stated they had been dissatisfied with the booking arrangements for the test.

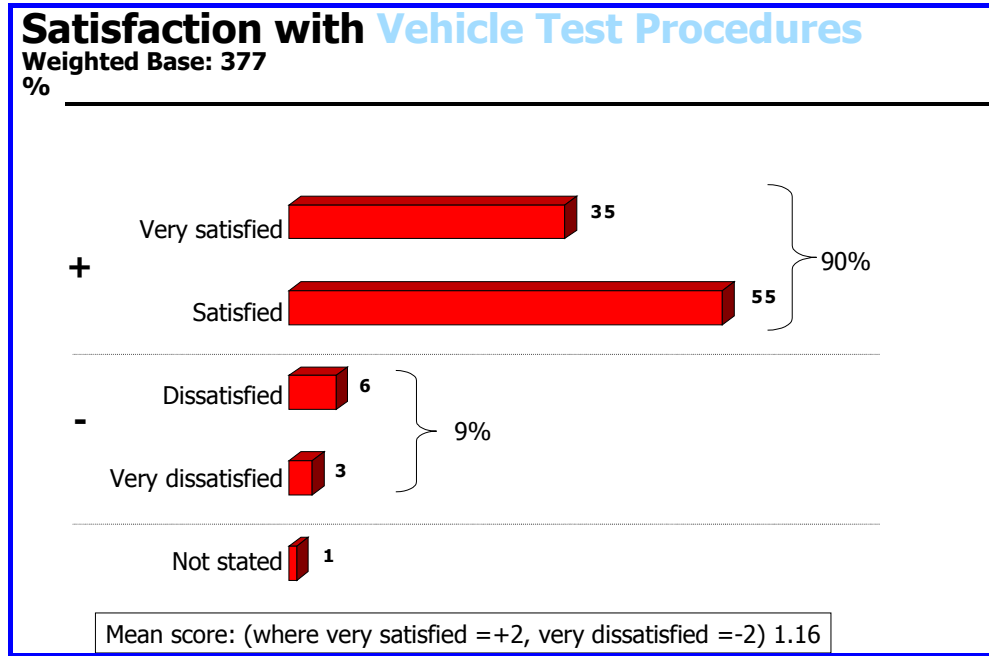


The main reason for dissatisfaction was the time taken to get an appointment, mentioned by 94% of those dissatisfied with booking arrangements.

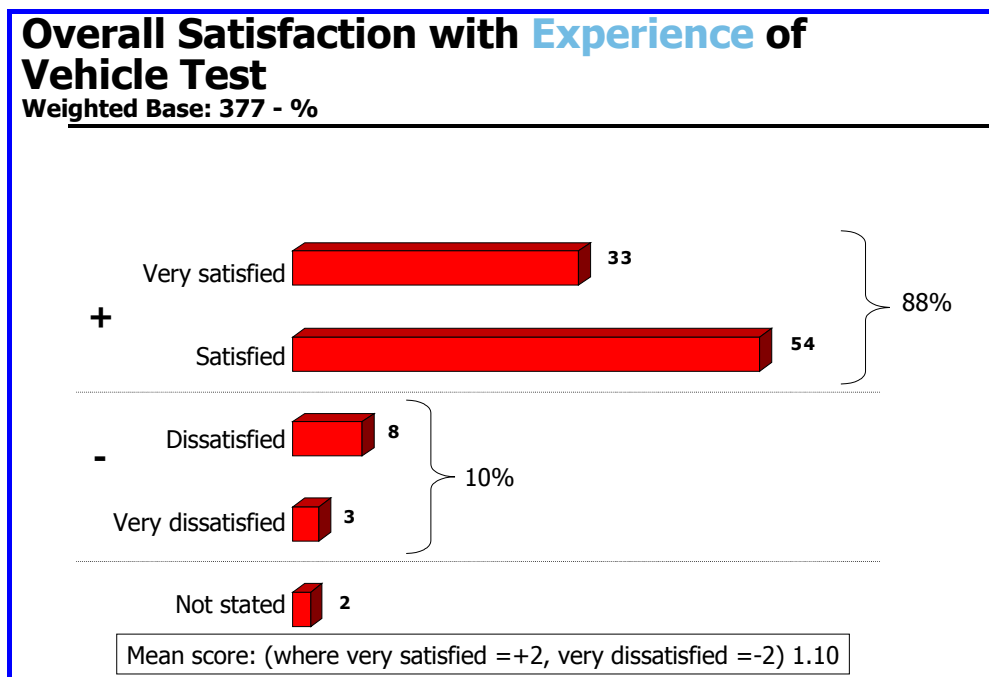


Satisfaction ratings of the vehicle test procedures were high, with 90% stating that they were either *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with the procedures.

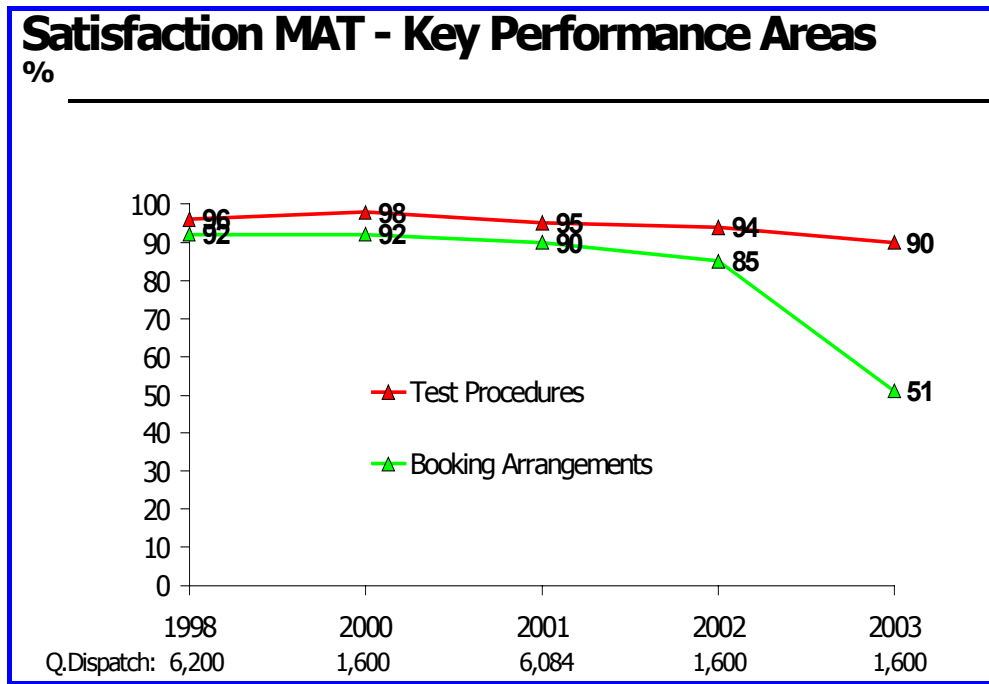
Of those who were dissatisfied (33 respondents), 9 felt that the examiner was rude, 8 that the procedure was not explained, and 5 thought that the reason for failure was not explained and 3 stated that damage was caused during the test.



Again high levels of satisfaction were reported regarding the general experience of the vehicle test, with 88% claiming to be *satisfied* or *very satisfied*. No major differences with regard to the outcome of the test (pass or fail) were observed.



The following charts illustrate the moving annual trends (MATs) for satisfaction of the vehicle test over the past five years. There has been a large decrease in satisfaction in 2003 with the booking arrangements, with the main reason for dissatisfaction being the time to arrange appointments.



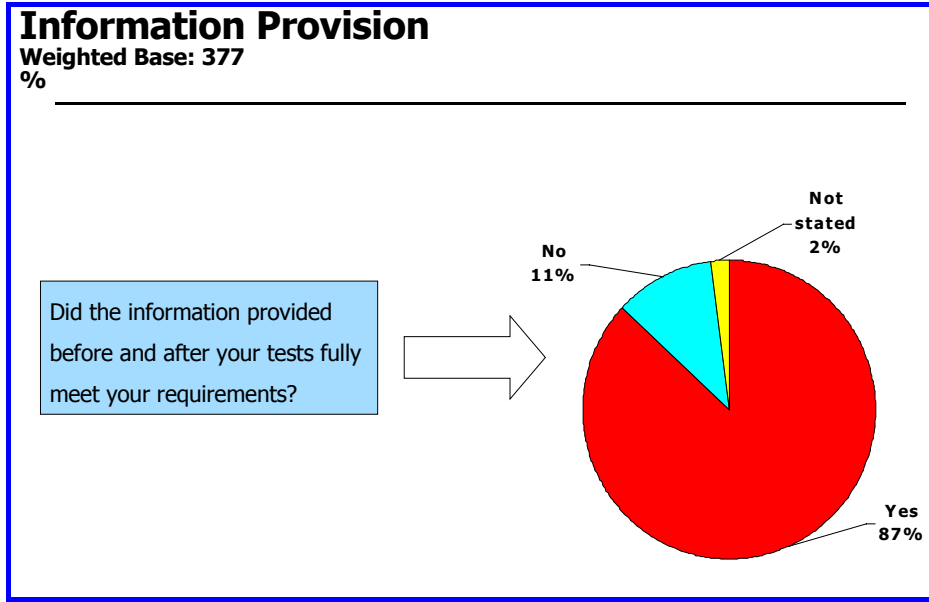
Results Comparisons - Vehicle

% Satisfied

Questionnaire Dispatch	1998 6,200	2000 1,600	2001 6,084	2002 1,600	2003 1,600
Satisfaction with booking arrangements for vehicle test	92	92	90	85	51
Satisfaction with vehicle test procedures	96	98	95	94	90
Overall satisfaction with experience of vehicle test	-	98	-	95	88

Information Provision

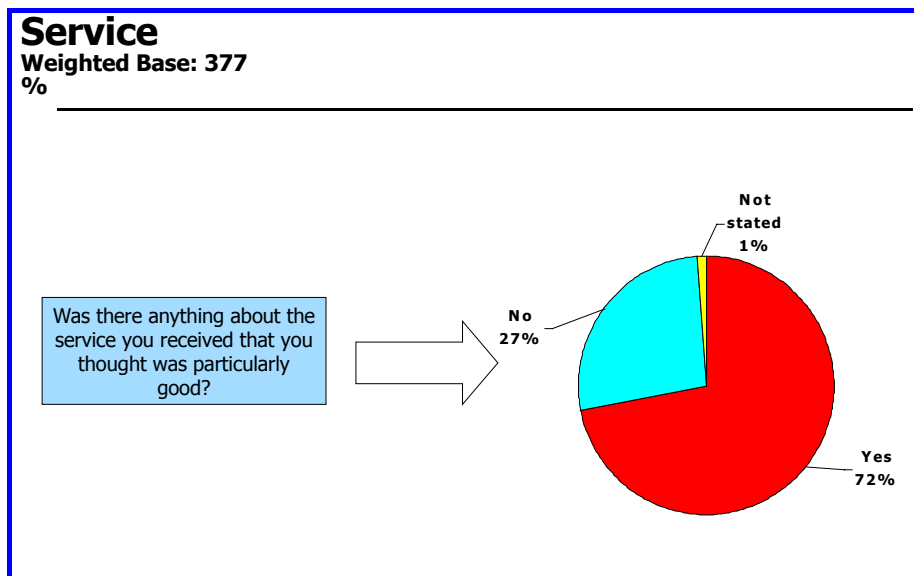
The majority (87%) of respondents felt that the information provided before and after the theory and practical test fully met requirements.



Of the 42 respondents who would have liked further information, more than half stated that they needed more detail on areas where problems occurred. Fourteen respondents commented that more information was needed on how to get a cancellation.

Service

All vehicle test respondents were given the opportunity to comment on the service they had received and were asked if there was anything they felt was particularly good about the service. There has been a rise in the percentage who thought that there was something particularly good from 46% in 2002 to 72% in 2003.

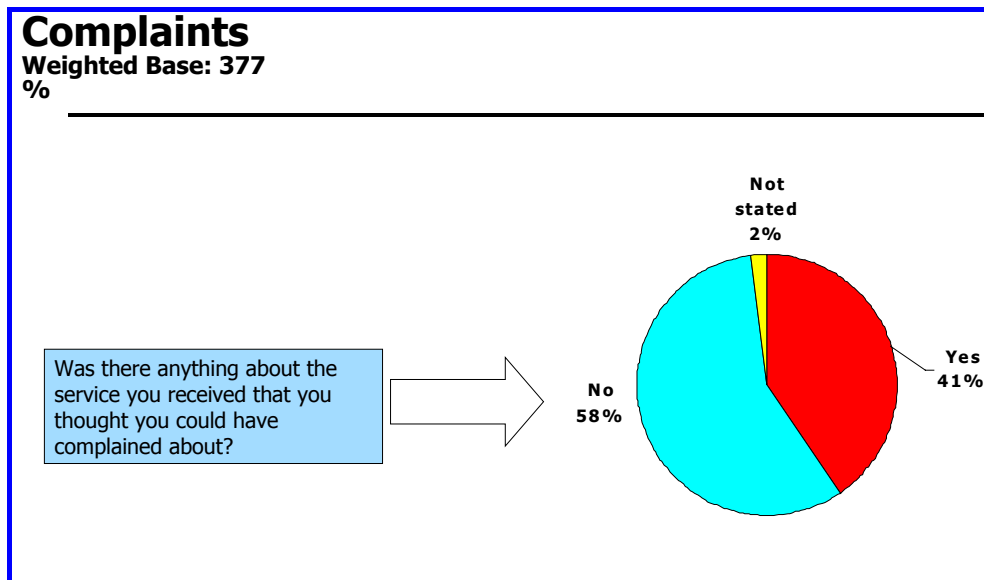


The main areas of satisfaction included: efficient test procedures (58%), pleasant, helpful and informative staff (53%), punctuality of tests (49%), and thorough examination (44%).

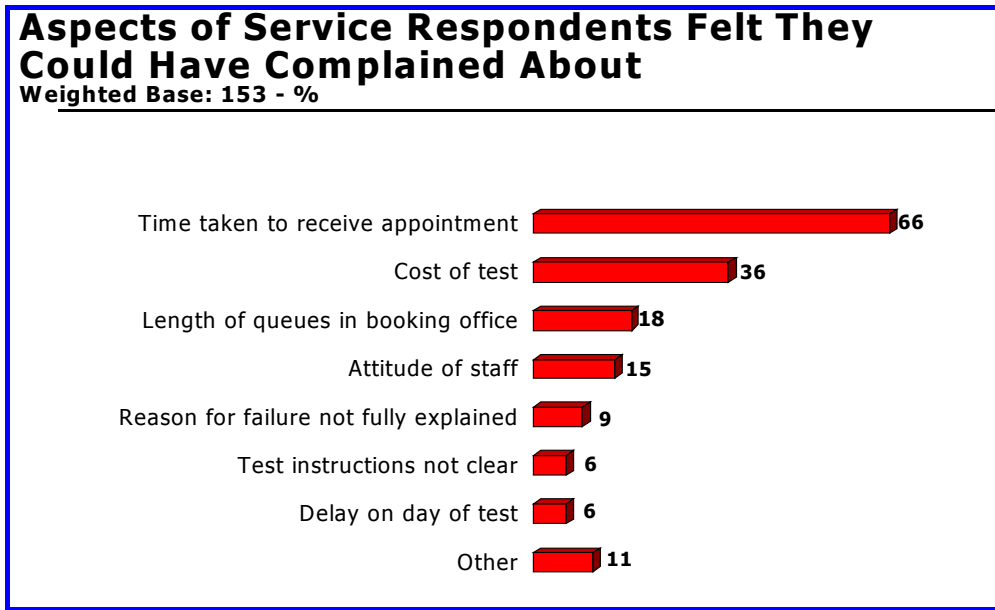


Complaints

Similar to the Driver sample, there has been a rise in reasons to complain from 15% in 2002 to 41% of respondents in 2003 who said that there had been something about the service received that they could have complained about.



The main issues were 'time taken to receive appointment (mentioned by 66%) and 'cost of test' (36%).



Of all respondents (153) who felt they could have complained about the service received, 6% (nine respondents) actually made a complaint.

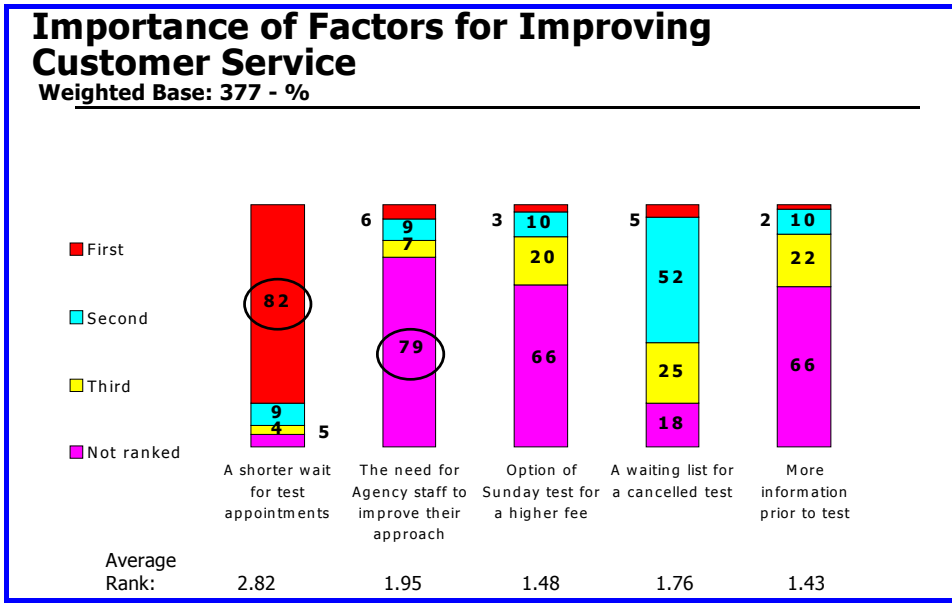
Of those nine respondents who complained, half were satisfied with the way in which the complaint was dealt.

Of those respondents (144) who felt they could have complained but did not complain, three in five (59%) stated they 'didn't see any point' and 30% were 'unaware of the complaints procedure'. One in five (20%) did not want to make a fuss and 13% were afraid of the repercussions.

Improvements to Service

All respondents were asked to consider four different aspects of the test experience and to rank the top 3 in order of importance.

- A shorter wait for test appointments
- An internet booking service
- The need for Agency staff to improve their approach
- Option of Sunday test for a higher fee

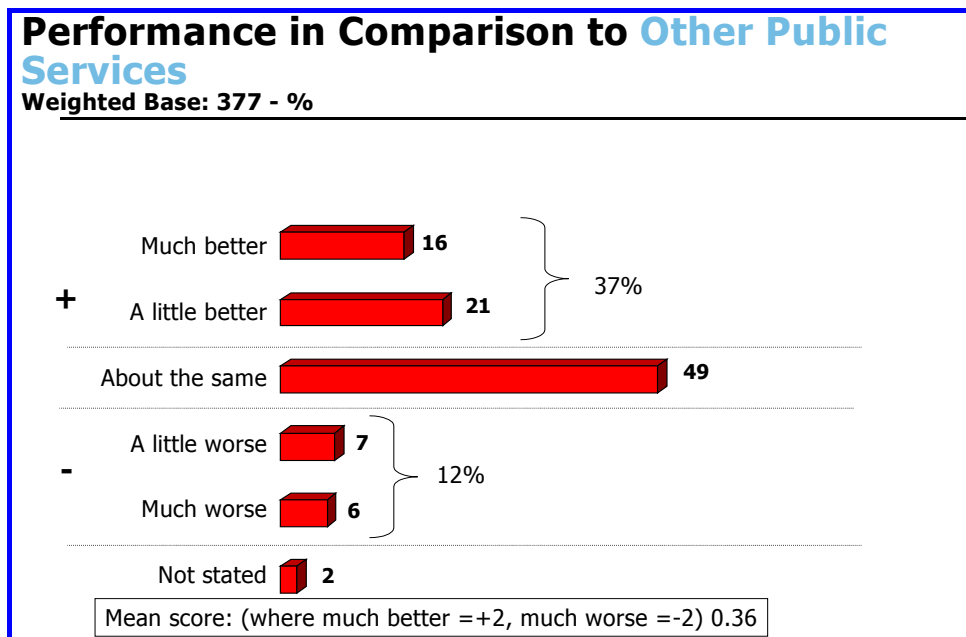


The most important factor was a shorter wait for test appointments while the least important factor was for 'agency staff to improve their approach'.

When asked what they would be willing to pay for these service enhancements, 60% of respondents stated that they would pay nothing more. 15% stated that they would pay £1.50 to £2.99 and 10% said they would pay between £3.00 and £4.49.

Comparison to Other Public Services

When asked how the Driver & Vehicle Testing Agency performs in comparison to other Public Services, two in five respondents (49%) rated DVTA as 'about the same', while over a third (37%) rate it as better.



Respondents were much more likely to compare DVTA with DVLA and the Roads' Service.

