



Social Security
Scotland

Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Social Security Scotland
Client Survey
2022-2023



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Short summary

Looking across the survey, respondents were largely positive about their experience with Social Security Scotland. For example, 88% rated their overall experience with Social Security Scotland as 'very good' or 'good'. A large majority were also positive about their interactions with staff, the experience of applying for benefits, and receiving payments.

However, there were specific areas where some respondents were less positive. Around one-in-five respondents who had made an application did not agree that they had received enough updates on the progress of their application(s). A similar proportion did not agree that their application was handled within a reasonable time frame.

There was also some evidence to suggest certain demographic groups had a less positive experience with Social Security Scotland. Respondents aged 16-25 years, as well as those with a communication need, were least positive about their overall experiences with Social Security Scotland. Also, respondents with a long-term physical or mental health condition were more likely to say that they had experienced a barrier, compared to respondents with no such condition.

The sections below provide more information on the headline results from each part of the survey.

1. Executive Summary

1.1. Overall Experience

Around nine-in-ten (88%) respondents rated their overall experience with Social Security Scotland as 'very good' or 'good'. Only 2% described their experience as 'poor' or 'very poor'.

Nearly nine-in-ten respondents believed that they had been treated with dignity (88%), fairness (87%) and respect (89%). A large proportion of respondents also agreed that Social Security Scotland had not wasted their time (84%) and that they understood what Social Security Scotland does (86%).

Marginally fewer respondents agreed that Social Security Scotland is an honest (81%) or open (78%) organisation. However, only 2% of respondents said they disagreed with each of these points. The rest said they 'neither agreed nor disagreed' or answered 'don't know'.

Around 1,450 respondents provided a substantive comment regarding their overall experience. Comments were mostly suggestions for improvement. The rest were general comments about overall experience, of which the majority were positive.

Most suggestions were related to communication. In particular, on the need to increase awareness of eligibility and entitlements. Also, for more regular updates about the progression of applications. The majority of positive comments were reflections of overall experience. A large proportion of responses specifically mention their positive experiences with staff. In negative comments, delays in application processing time and decision making were clear themes.

1.2. Finding out about Social Security Scotland

The survey opened by asking respondents how they had first heard about the Social Security Scotland benefit that they had applied for or received.

The most common means of first finding out about the benefit they received was via 'Word-of-mouth' (22%). Less than one-in-five first found out about the benefit 'online or via social media' (18%), with around one-in-ten being contacted by Social Security Scotland (10%), or through a health service (9%). Respondents were least likely to say that they first found out about the benefit they received via a 'Leaflet, pamphlet or poster' (1%) or a 'Community or social care service' (3%).

1.3. Looking up Social Security Scotland websites

Around three-in-five (60%) respondents said that they had looked up a Social Security Scotland website (including mygov.scot) since 1 April 2022. The majority of respondents who had looked up a Social Security Scotland website agreed that the websites were 'easy to navigate' (83%) and 'easy to understand' (85%). Only a small proportion (5%) of respondents disagreed with these statements.

There was some variation in experience with Social Security Scotland websites by benefit experience. Broadly, those who had applied for, or been Case Transferred to, Adult Disability Payment were least likely to agree that websites were 'easy to navigate' (77% and 78% respectively), and that 'the information was easy to understand' (79% and 78%). Child Winter Heating Assistance and Young Carer Grant applicants were most likely to agree with these statements (89 and 88%, and 91% and 84% respectively).

1.4. Contact with Social Security Scotland

Less than half (43%) of all respondents said that they had tried to contact Social Security Scotland since 1 April 2022. By far the most common type of contact respondents had had with Social Security Scotland was through the phone helpline (76%).

Around seven-in-ten (67%) respondents agreed that 'it was easy to contact Social Security Scotland', whilst just over two-in-ten (22%) disagreed. Just over three quarters of all respondents agreed with the statements 'I received the right level of communication from Social Security Scotland' (76%) and 'I had enough choice about how Social Security Scotland communicated with me' (77%).

1.5. Experiences with staff

Over two-fifths of respondents (41%) said they had been in contact with a member of Social Security Scotland staff. This figure varied notably by benefit experience. More than four-in-ten of those who said they had applied for a Social Security Scotland benefit reported contact with staff (44%), compared to over three-in-ten (34%) of those who had not applied for a benefit.

Nine-in-ten respondents who had been in contact with a member of Social Security Scotland staff said their overall experience with staff was 'very good' or 'good' (90%). Just 3% rated their experience with staff as 'poor' or 'very poor'. 93% of respondents said staff treated them with kindness. Nine-in-ten said staff listened to them (90%) and made them feel comfortable (89%). Funeral Support Payment applicants were particularly likely to reflect favourably on interactions with staff.

Around 2,300 respondents provided a substantive comment regarding their experience with staff. Overall, six-in-ten of these comments were positive. Staff were often described as helpful, empathetic and respectful. However, some respondents received conflicting information from different members of staff, while others did not receive promised updates or follow-up calls. A significant proportion voiced frustration at not receiving, or being able to get updates or information on, applications and decisions from staff.

1.6. Applying for benefits

Nine-in-ten respondents (90%) who had applied for a Social Security Scotland benefit said their experience of the application process overall was 'very good' or 'good'. Just 2%, around one-in-fifty respondents, described their experience of the application process overall as 'very poor' or 'poor'.

Around nine-in-ten respondents who had applied for a benefit said that the application process was clear (87%), and a similar proportion felt that they were only asked relevant questions (85%). Marginally fewer said that filling in and submitting the application(s) did not take too long (81%).

Respondents who had applied for Child Disability Payment or Adult Disability Payment were markedly less likely than other respondents to agree with the statement 'Filling in and submitting the application(s) did not take too long' (55% and 56% respectively, compared to 86-94% among others).

Around 2,350 respondents provided a substantive comment regarding their experience of applying for a benefit. Around two-in-five comments were positive, whilst one-in-three were negative.

In the comments, many respondents negatively mentioned time as a factor, shaping their experience of the application process. This included time spent waiting in helpline and webchat queues. Also, time taken to fill in the application form and time spent waiting for a decision and/or payment.

Some clients had difficulties obtaining the supporting information they needed for their application. Others experienced problems uploading supporting information online. Disability payment applicants notably specified the difficulties they experienced when making an application. This includes the emotional toll of communicating personal experiences of disability, and the omission of specific health conditions listed in the application form.

Of the positive comments, many cited the ease of filling in and submitting the application form. Others mentioned the timeliness of communication with Social Security Scotland. Many expressed gratitude for staff members' help. Others described the role of staff in reducing their experiences of stress when making an application.

1.7. Application decisions

A little under nine-in-ten respondents agreed that the decision(s) on their application(s) was 'explained clearly' (88%). A similar proportion said they 'understood the decision' (89%).

However, just two-thirds (66%) agreed with the statement 'I got enough updates on the progress of my application(s)' and just under seven-in-ten (69%) agreed with the statement 'my application(s) was (were) handled within a reasonable time frame'. 21% and 19% disagreed with these statements respectively.

One-in-ten (10%) respondents who had applied for a benefit said that they had received at least one unsuccessful decision. The most common response to receiving an unsuccessful decision, given by more than half (57%) of respondents, was to take no further action.

Around a third (32%) of Best Start Foods applicants reported being unsuccessful with their application. Of those respondents, the majority (76%) reported taking no further action following their unsuccessful application. Scottish Child Payment had the least reported unsuccessful applications (4%). Again, most of those respondents (65%) reported taking no further action.

Around one-in-six respondents (17%) received a decision since 1 April 2022 which they disagreed with. Almost two-fifths (39%) of those who disagreed with a decision on an application for Adult Disability Payment or Child Disability Payment (36%) then asked Social Security Scotland to look at the decision(s) again, much more than for those who disagreed with decisions for other benefits.

Around 2,000 respondents provided a substantive comment regarding their experience of receiving an application decision. Over half of these were negative and just over a third were positive. The timing around decisions was mentioned consistently in the negative responses. Some felt the overall process took too long.

Issues around timing were compounded for many applicants by a lack of updates. Many felt the communication from Social Security Scotland was poor. Many respondents also found it difficult to get in touch with Social Security Scotland to check on the progress of their application, either through webchat or through the helpline.

Some respondents had issues around payments. Many received their payments before their decision letters which some found confusing. Others said that the lack of payment schedule was making it difficult to plan. Others felt the eligibility criteria should be widened, notably those in receipt of Scottish Child Payment.

Positive responses mainly focused on the overall experience. Many found the process straightforward. Others felt that their experience with Social Security Scotland legitimised their experiences.

1.8. Case Transfer

For the first time responses from clients who had completed a Case Transfer to either Child or Adult Disability Payment are included in a Client Survey annual report.

Of those who had completed a Case Transfer to either Child or Adult Disability Payment, over four-fifths (84%) agreed with the statement 'I felt informed about the process'. Less than half agreed with the statement 'being Case Transferred made me feel anxious' (47%), with around a third (32%) disagreeing with this statement.

Respondents who had Case Transferred to Adult Disability Payment were asked whether they had transferred from Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Working Age Disability Living Allowance (WADLA).

Those who Case Transferred to Child Disability Payment were more likely to agree that they 'felt informed about the process' (87%, compared with Case Transferred from PIP (84%) or WADLA (74%) to Adult Disability Payment).

Those with experience of Case Transfer were also asked about the communication they received from Social Security Scotland about the Case Transfer process. Of those, over four-fifths agreed that: 'the tone was friendly' (84%); and that 'it was clear and easy to understand' (83%).

On communication received about the process, those with experience of being Case Transferred to Child Disability Payment were more likely to agree with the statement 'it was clear and easy to understand' (88%, compared with Case Transferred from PIP (80%) or WADLA (73%) to Adult Disability Payment).

1.9. Receiving payments

The majority of respondents (94%) said that their overall experience of receiving benefit payment(s) from Social Security Scotland was 'very good' or 'good'. Only 1% described their experience as 'poor' or 'very poor'.

Furthermore, a large proportion (97%) of respondents who had received a payment said they got it when Social Security Scotland said they would. A similarly high proportion said that they were paid the right amount 'first time' (97%) and, where relevant, the right amount 'every time' (96%).

On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'a lot', respondents gave the following scores for how much benefit payments:

- Helped to make a difference to their life – 77% gave a rating of 8-10, mean rating of 8.6
- Helped them to control their finances – 67% gave a rating of 8-10, mean rating of 7.9
- Helped them to pay for what they needed – 72% gave a rating of 8-10, mean rating of 8.2

Those who received Child Disability Payment and Funeral Support Payment were most likely to rate highly the impact of payments on their life (8.8 and 8.7 mean rating respectively), their finances (8.1 and 8.0) and for helping to pay for what they needed (both 8.5).

There was a clear association between several demographic groups and the likelihood of giving a high rating (8-10) for each of the three statements relating to the impact of receiving payments. Women, white respondents, and respondents aged 16-54 were all more likely to give a high rating across all three measures.

Around 1,450 respondents provided a substantive comment regarding their experience of receiving a payment from Social Security Scotland. Nearly three-in-five comments were positive and around one-in-five were negative.

The most frequent positive theme was an appreciation for benefit payments, some expressing thanks. Others mentioned the positive impact payments had on their lives. Many mentioned the positive impact that payments had on their children or family. Others related how benefit payments enabled them to live life with greater independence.

Positive comments also often related to the timeliness of payments, i.e., payments always being on time, and of payments being the correct amount. Some also stated they had been well informed by Social Security Scotland of payment dates and amounts.

When comments were negative, they often related to missed payments (including back payments), and inaccurate payment amounts or dates. This is notable for recipients of Scottish Child Payment. Others explained they had not received information about when payments would be made, or how much they would receive. In some cases, this had caused confusion, uncertainty and anxiety for respondents.

1.10. Barriers

17% of respondents said they had faced some sort of barrier getting help from Social Security Scotland. Experience of barriers was similar across most demographic characteristics. However, one-fifth (20%) of men said they had experienced barriers, compared to 16% of women. Furthermore, those with a long-term physical or mental health condition were more likely to say that they had experienced a barrier (20%, compared to 14% of respondents with no such condition).

A third (30%) of those who had faced a barrier said they told Social Security Scotland about them. Around two-fifths of this group agreed that Social Security Scotland 'understood them' (43%) whilst a only a quarter agreed that Social Security Scotland 'supported them in overcoming them' (25%).

Around 1,050 substantive comments were given by respondents about their experience of barriers. Comments elaborated on common barriers faced, the most commented upon being long wait times for the phone helpline. Others explained that they had tried to use the phone helpline and the webchat, but faced challenges or delays with both.

The lack of updates or information on applications was also a barrier, often compounded by delays. Amongst these, several mentioned that this had caused them to try and contact Social Security Scotland, but that when they made contact staff had been unable to resolve the issue.

1.11. Discrimination

A small proportion (4%) of respondents said they had been discriminated against during their experience with Social Security Scotland, with a further 4% selecting 'prefer not to say'.

Respondents who had experienced discrimination were asked who or what they felt was discriminatory towards them. The most chosen source was Social Security Scotland 'processes', selected by almost two-in-five respondents (39%). More than one-in-three (36%) said that the source of the discrimination they experienced was Social Security Scotland 'policies', and just over one-in-five (22%) said Social Security Scotland 'staff'.

More than two-in-five of those who experienced discrimination disagreed with the statements 'it was clear how to challenge it' and 'I felt I could challenge it' (45% and 47% respectively). A little under one-in-three (31% and 32% respectively) agreed with these statements.

Around 500 substantive comments were given by respondents on their experiences of discrimination. Disagreement with eligibility criteria was by far the most common theme throughout the comments, including for qualifying benefits. Some of these comments related to income thresholds. Others mentioned challenging financial situations, notably in relation to maternity leave and those in education. Another prevalent theme related to the degree to which the application process for disability benefits recognised or considered certain disabilities or conditions.

1.12. Change across the year

For the first time, the 2022-23 Client Survey fieldwork was split into three benefit experience strands, which each ran three rounds of fieldwork. This has allowed for comparisons to be generated across the three rounds of fieldwork within each benefit experience group, enabling us to indicatively assess changes in response to key survey measures across the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Findings by benefit experience groups only include groups which received a sufficient volume of responses across each round. Those were: Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, Scottish Child Payment applicants, Child Disability Payment applicants, Child Disability Payment Case Transfer, Adult Disability Payment applicants and Adult Disability Payment Case Transfer.

Across the three rounds respondents were first asked about their overall experience with Social Security Scotland. The overall experience was consistent for all respondents, with 88% giving a rating of 'very good' or 'good' across each of the three rounds. There was, however, some variation in rounds for certain benefits. Child Disability Payment applicants saw a steady decline in overall experience (from 91% rating their experience as 'very good' or 'good' in round 1, 88% in round 2, to 84% in round 3). Conversely, respondents with experience of Scottish Child Payment saw a steady increase in their overall experience (from 88% in round 1, 90% in round 2, to 93% in round 3).

When asked how much they agreed with the statement 'it was easy to contact Social

Security Scotland', agreement dropped for all respondents across the three rounds (76% answered 'strongly agree' or 'agree' in round 1, 69% in round 2, to 62% in round 3).

When asked to rate their overall experiences with staff, ratings remained largely consistent across the three rounds (90% rating overall experience as 'very good' or 'good' in round 1 and 3, and 91% in round 2). Child Disability Payment saw the most noticeable decline across the three rounds (94% in round 1, 89% in round 2, to 86% in round 3). Conversely Scottish Child Payment saw the greatest increase (90% in round 1, 92% in round 2, to 93% in round 3).

When asked to rate their overall experiences of the application process, ratings remained largely consistent across the three rounds (85% rating their experience as 'very good' or 'good' in round 1, 89% in round 2, and 88% in round 3). Adult Disability Payment saw the most noticeable decline across the three rounds (85% in round 1, 81% in round 2, to 77% in round 3).

When asked how much they agreed with the statement 'the application process was clear', ratings remained largely consistent across the three rounds for all respondents (84% answered 'strongly agree' or 'agree' in round 1, 88% in round 2, and 87% in round 3). There was, however, large variations across benefit experience. Adult Disability Payment saw the most noticeable decline across the three rounds (82% in round 1, 80% in round 2, to 72% in round 3).

When asked how much they agreed with the statement 'filling in and submitting the application did not take too long', ratings increased slightly across the three rounds for all respondents (73% answered 'strongly agree' or 'agree' in round 1, 81% in round 2, and 82% in round 3). Although they remained consistent, Adult Disability Payment and Child Disability Payment are consistently lower than other benefits.

When asked how much they agreed with the statement 'I got enough updates on the progress of my application', agreement increased across the three rounds for all respondents (58% answering 'strongly agree' or 'agree' in round 1, 64% in round 2, and 68% in round 3). There was large variations across benefit experience. Scottish Child Payment saw the most noticeable increase across the three rounds (68% in round 1, 73% in round 2, to 79% in round 3).

When asked how much they agreed with the statement 'my application was handled within a reasonable time frame', ratings of the statement increased across the three rounds for all respondents (61% answering 'strongly agree' or 'agree' in round 1, 68% in round 2, and 70% in round 3). Child Disability Payment saw the most noticeable decline across the three rounds (61% in round 1, 47% in round 2, to 41% in round 3).

When asked if they agreed with their application decision, agreement fluctuated across the three rounds for all respondents (88% agreeing with the decision in round 1, 89% in round 2, and 85% in round 3). Scottish Child Payment showed the only consistent increase across the three rounds (91% in round 1, 93% in round 2, and 96% in round 3).

When asked to rate their overall experience of receiving payments, ratings stayed largely stable across the three rounds for all respondents (92% rating their experience as 'very good' or 'good' in round 1, 94% in round 2, and 94% in round 3). Again, Scottish Child Payment showed the only consistent increase across the three rounds (93% in round 1, 95% in round 2, and 96% in round 3). Adult Disability Payment applicants showed the biggest drop in overall rating between round 2 and round 3 (from 95% to 92%).

When asked how much benefit payments 'help make a difference to your life', overall rating fluctuated somewhat across the three rounds for all respondents (58% gave a rating of 10 out of 10 - 'a lot' in round 1, 62% in round 2, and 61% in round 3). Scottish Child Payment showed the largest increase between rounds 1 and 2 (from 57% to 65%).

When asked whether they faced any barriers getting help from Social Security Scotland, overall rating increased somewhat across the three rounds for all respondents (14% stating 'yes' in round 1, 17% in round 2, and 18% in round 3).

When asked whether they faced any discrimination getting help from Social Security Scotland, overall rating fluctuated across the three rounds for all respondents (4% stating 'yes' in round 1, 3% in round 2, and 4% in round 3). Best Start Foods saw a steady decrease across all three rounds (7% in round 1, 6% in round 2, and 2% in round 3). Child Disability Payment Case Transfer saw a steady increase across the three rounds (2% in round 1, 3% in round 2, and 4% in round 3).

1.13. Next steps

The survey results provide rich insight into some of the experiences of Social Security Scotland clients. The results will be used alongside other evidence to populate the [Charter Measurement Framework](#) which reports on Social Security Scotland's performance. The findings will also support Social Security Scotland's continuous improvement. They have highlighted areas where more research may be useful to further explore clients' experiences, views and expectations.

We are also planning for the future of the survey. The financial year 2023-2024 will see the client survey will continue to be delivered as three benefit-specific surveys, each covering a specific cluster of benefits that Social Security Scotland deliver. The intention, from Spring 2024 onward, is for the survey to be issued on a rolling basis to all applicants following a decision on an application. Invites will also be sent annually to people receiving recurring benefits. These updates will not only improve the reliability of the data, but will also expand its usability as a resource for policy and operational work within Social Security Scotland.

[Please get in touch](#) with any feedback, comments or suggestions you have on this report or any aspect of the survey.

2. Background and methodology

2.1. Background

This report presents the findings from the 2022-2023 Social Security Scotland Client Survey.

The survey was open to everyone who had received a decision on an application for at least one of: Best Start Grant and/or Best Start Foods, Funeral Support Payment, Young Carer Grant, Scottish Child Payment, Job Start Payment, Child Disability Payment or Adult Disability Payment between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023. A survey invite was also sent to anyone who had received Carer's Allowance Supplement or Child Winter Heating Assistance for the first time, or who had completed a Child Disability Payment or Adult Disability Payment Case Transfer during this time.

Any client who completed the survey before subsequently applying for or receiving another benefit was potentially invited to take part in a subsequent round of fieldwork. It was therefore possible for a single client to complete the 2022-2023 survey more than once, but data suggests this was very rare.

The survey asked about key aspects of respondents' experience with Social Security Scotland. The results are a key source for measuring how well Social Security Scotland is performing and where it can improve. In particular it gives data for the [Charter Measurement Framework](#).

A total of 34,070 responses were received for the 2022-2023 Social Security Scotland Client Survey. This equates to around 12% of the 285,013 invites sent. Of clients who completed the survey:

- 4% had received Carer's Allowance Supplement (n=1,449)
- 15% had experience of Best Start Grant (n=4,976)
- 13% had experience of Best Start Foods (n=4,371)
- 48% had experience of Scottish Child Payment (n=16,455)
- 1% had experience of Funeral Support Payment (n=468)
- 0.3% had experience of Young Carer Grant (n=113)
- 2% had received Child Winter Heating Assistance (n=750)
- 5% had applied for Child Disability Payment (n=1,711)
- 7% had Case Transferred to Child Disability Payment (n=2,478)
- 15% had applied for Adult Disability Payment (n=5,012)
- 8% had Case Transferred to Adult Disability Payment (n=2,826)

Fewer than 25 respondents told us that they had experience of Job Start Payment, and so as a mitigation for risk of disclosure findings are not presented by experience of Job Start Payment. Responses from these respondents are included though in those presented as "All respondents", "All applicants", and if applicable "All payment recipients".

The majority of respondents (83%) had experience of one benefit, around one-in-twenty (5%) of two benefits and more than one-in-ten (12%) of three benefits.

2.2. Survey purpose

Social Security Scotland was established in 2018. It is an executive agency of the Scottish Government. Its purpose is to deliver benefits which the Scottish Government has responsibility for.

In 2018, [Our Charter](#) was co-designed by the Scottish Government and people with lived experience of social security. It informs the work and culture of Social Security Scotland:

- how Social Security Scotland will uphold the Principles in the [Social Security\(Scotland\) Act 2018](#)
- what people should expect from the social security system
- how Social Security Scotland will make sure it is taking a human rights-based approach
- how Social Security Scotland will demonstrate dignity, fairness and respect in all its actions

The Scottish Government, Social Security Scotland and a diverse group of people with lived experience of the social security system then co-designed the [Charter Measurement Framework](#) (the framework). The framework consists of measures to monitor how well Social Security Scotland and the Scottish Government are meeting the commitments of Our Charter.

The Social Security Scotland Client Survey (the Survey) was designed in 2019/20. Its purpose is to inform the Charter Measurement Framework and learn about the overall experiences and needs of Social Security Scotland's clients.

The survey sits alongside and complements other research activities which aim to capture the views and experiences of those who use (or will use) the social security system in Scotland. This includes short surveys at the end of application forms and phone calls. It also includes the work of the Social Security Experience Panels, set up by Scottish Government researchers in 2017.

Additionally, as part of the survey, respondents were offered the opportunity to sign-up for Social Security Scotland's Client Panels. The Client Panels are made up of Social Security Scotland clients from across Scotland. Panel members will be invited to participate in research and asked to share their experiences and opinions on how Social Security Scotland should work. The Client Panels provide another route to ensure user voices inform how Social Security Scotland operates.

All clients are eligible to join the Client Panels and joining is completely voluntary. Around 6,700 respondents to the 2022-2023 round of the Social Security Scotland Client Survey chose to sign up for Client Panels. Further information on the characteristics of those who signed up is provided in Annex A. The invitation to get involved in the Client Panels will also

be included in future rounds of the survey. This will help to ensure the Panels continue to evolve as Social Security Scotland's live benefits and client base grow further.

2.3. Structure of this report and supporting materials available

The main body of the report is structured as follows:

- the remainder of Section 2 (this section) provides information on the survey methodology and factors to be aware of when interpreting results
- Sections 3 to 13 outline the main findings across the survey, grouped into themes as structured in the questionnaire
- Section 14 looks at changes across the year, making comparisons across the three benefit groups across the three periods of survey fieldwork
- Section 15 briefly outlines how the results will be used and the future of the survey
- Annex A provides further information on the characteristics of those who signed up to the Client Panels

A [Summary report](#) which presents the key findings from across this report in a more concise and accessible format is also available.

More detailed information on the characteristics of respondents is provided in the [Supplementary document: tables and methods](#) published alongside this report. This also contains findings for the headline question from each section of the survey, broken down by respondents' benefit experience and a range of demographic characteristics for readers looking for more detailed results.

2.4. Survey design and distribution

2.4.1 Survey content

The survey was first designed in 2019, with the aim to understand and report on Social Security Scotland clients' experiences and needs. In particular, reporting requirements as part of the [Charter Measurement Framework](#) were taken into account when the survey content was developed.

The survey sought to capture the most important aspects of client experience without being too long and inaccessible. To achieve this, it underwent extensive review prior to the content being finalised before the first round of fieldwork. This included:

- quality review by Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland officials responsible for the design and delivery of Social Security in Scotland
- review by Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland officials specialising in content design and communications
- cognitive testing with a range of Social Security Experience Panels members across various locations (Dundee, Edinburgh, Kirkcaldy, Oban, Inverness, Aberdeen).

This helped to ensure questions were relevant and fit for purpose. Once finalised, the survey contained questions designed to gather:

- clients' overall views on their experiences of dealing with Social Security Scotland
- information on particular and specific aspects of client experience, such as their experience of submitting an application, views on contact with staff, and feedback on receiving benefit payments.

A review of the survey content was undertaken prior to the 2022-23 iteration (the findings from which are presented in this report). This review led to new questions covering the use of Social Security Scotland websites, including supporting information in an application, and an expansion of the questions on experiencing barriers. These questions underwent consultation and cognitive testing.

2.4.2 Survey structure

The 2022/23 Client Survey adopted a slightly different structure to previous years. This year the survey was split into three strands, each targeted at respondents with experience of particular groups of benefits. The three benefit experience groups included:

- Five Family Payments – experience of Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods and/ or Scottish Child Payment
- Disability Payment – applied for, or Case Transferred onto, Adult or Child Disability Payment
- Other Low Income and Carer – applied for Funeral Support Payment, Young Carer Grant or Job Start Payment, or received Carer’s Allowance Supplement or Child Winter Heating Assistance

The purpose of this new approach was that it allowed particular strands of the survey to include bespoke questions related to the corresponding benefits, as well as allowing communication with clients about the survey to be more relevant to their experience. Despite the inclusion of additional benefit specific questions, each strand of the survey retained all of the overarching survey measures presented in this report.

The structure of the survey reflects the key ways in which a client would interact with Social Security Scotland, in loose order. Table 2.1 below provides an overview of the structure of the survey by its main themes.

Table 2.1: Overview of survey questionnaire sections

Survey sections
1. Finding out about Social Security Scotland
2. Looking up Social Security Scotland websites
3. Contact with Social Security Scotland
4. Experiences with staff
5. Experience of a Case Transfer
6. Applying for Social Security Scotland benefits
7. Application decisions
8. Receiving payments
9. Barriers
10. Discrimination
11. Overall experience
12. Taking part in future research (Client Panels sign-up)
13. More about you (standardised demographic characteristics/equalities questions)

A number of questions were filtered based on previous answers so that respondents only completed questions relevant to them. For example, respondents who had not been in contact with staff were not asked follow up questions about how staff had treated them. A copy of the questionnaire can be provided on request. Please send requests to our [research mailbox](#).

Section 12 of the questionnaire offered respondents the chance to sign up for the Client Panels (discussed above). Section 13 gathered a range of demographic information from respondents. This helps us understand who took part in the survey in terms of broad characteristics and spread across the population. It also allows us to explore whether views and experiences vary among different population groups.

Section 2.3 outlines the structure of this report which follows the same order as the survey, with the exception that the findings on respondents' overall experiences of dealing with Social Security Scotland (Section 11 of the questionnaire) are presented first, as these represent the survey's headline results. It then reverts to following the order of the questionnaire from start to end – i.e. from Section 1 to Section 10.

2.4.3 Eligibility

Everyone who received a decision on an application for a Social Security Scotland benefit, or who received a payment for a Social Security Scotland benefit where an application is not

required¹, between April 1 2022 and 31 March 2023 was eligible to take part in the survey.

2.4.4 Fieldwork

Distribution of survey invites and fieldwork period

Eligible clients were invited to take part in the survey via email², text message, or letter. Each form of invite included a link to the online survey, and a Freephone number which could be called to request a paper survey or to complete the survey over the phone (with a translator if required). Respondents who received their invitation via letter were also sent a paper survey, along with a pre-paid return envelope.

The invitation explained the purpose of the survey and the ways in which it was possible to complete the survey, as well as information on data protection. All clients were sent a reminder (email, text or letter) 7 days after they received their invite, and a second reminder 14 days after they received their invite. Many of the clients who did not have an email address or mobile number on record (and thus received an invite letter) had not applied for a benefit. Therefore, a ‘non-application’ version of the survey was developed and sent to these clients. This version omitted the ‘application’ and ‘decision’ sections of the survey, which reduced unnecessary burden for these respondents and reduced paper use.

Data was collected during nine rounds of fieldwork. Each of the three strands of the survey (see Section 2.4.2) included three rounds of fieldwork. Table 2.2 shows the fieldwork dates (i.e. the date when survey invites were received through to the closing date of fieldwork) for each round of the survey in 2022-23.

Table 2.2: 2022-23 survey fieldwork dates
By strand

Benefit Experience strand	Fieldwork Round 1	Fieldwork Round 2	Fieldwork Round 3
Five Family Payments	12/9/22 – 9/10/22	16/1/23 – 12/2/23	10/5/23 – 7/5/23
Disability Payments	10/10/22 – 6/11/22	13/2/23 – 12/3/23	24/4/23 – 21/5/23
Other Low income and Carer	14/11/22 – 18/12/22	13/3/23 – 9/4/23	24/4/23 – 21/5/23

A total of 285,013 invites were sent for the Client Survey 2022-23. 209,126 (73%) were sent via an email, 54,364 (19%) via a text invite, and 21,523 (8%) via a letter invite.

¹ This includes those who received Carer’s Allowance Supplement, Child Winter Heating Assistance, or Child or Adult Disability Payment after completing a Case Transfer.

² Those who had provided a valid email address as part of their benefit application were sent an email invite, those who had not provided an email but had provided a valid mobile number were sent a text. Those who had provided neither were sent a letter invite.

Number of responses

A total of 34,070 responses were received once the data had been cleaned and duplicate checks performed. This represents 12% of the number of invites issued.

Nearly nine-in-ten respondents completed the survey online (89%), one-in-ten did so via a paper survey (10%). A very small proportion (1%) completed the survey over the phone.

2.5. Data cleaning and analysis

2.5.1 Closed questions

The majority of the survey questions were closed questions, meaning they had answer options for respondents to choose from. Responses to these questions were analysed alongside the demographic information provided by respondents. All personal identifiable information is held in a separate secure file.

Data was cleaned and analysed by Social Security Scotland researchers. A non-response weight cannot be developed for this data as all questions are optional, and thus some respondents chose not to provide geographic or demographic information (for example their postcode and date of birth).

Results from the closed questions are generally presented for all respondents who answered the question, then broken down by benefit experience. Key results across the survey were also examined for differences across selected geographic and demographic characteristics.³ The geographic and demographic characteristics used in analysis include:

- gender identity
- age
- ethnicity
- whether respondent had a long-term physical or mental health condition
- whether respondent lived in an urban or rural area (2-fold classification)
- deprivation (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation)
- whether respondent had any communication needs
- main language
- whether respondent could speak, understand, read and write English 'very well'.

³ A minimum base of 25 was required for a benefit experience or demographic characteristic to be used a break down.

Notable differences between groups are highlighted in the report. A complete outline of the derivation and parameters for these groups, as well as further demographic breakdowns, are provided in the [Supplementary document: tables and methods](#) published alongside this report.

For a small selection of key questions, the report also includes analysis assessing the difference in views between respondents who had received a successful decision or benefit, compared to those who had been unsuccessful with their application. Around 10% of all respondents had only been unsuccessful with Social Security Scotland benefit applications and had not received any benefit not requiring an application.

2.5.2 Open text questions

Most sections of the survey ended with a chance to provide comments. Respondents were asked if they would like to say anything more about the subject of that section (i.e. applying, staff, discrimination, and so on). For the 'Overall' section the open text question asked the respondent if they would like to make suggestions for improvement or provide any further comments.

Responses were categorised as positive, negative, neutral, mixed, unclear and suggestion, before undergoing further thematic analysis. During this analysis stage, the open text responses (quotes) were not linked to the respondent's demographic information or responses to other questions.

After themes had been identified and quotes selected to best reflect these themes, the gender identity, age, and benefit experience of the corresponding respondent was included with each quote. This means that no effort was made to present quotes for each theme from a wide range of sub-groups within the respondent sample. Rather, that the contextual information included with the quotes may be indicative of whether the themes identified were raised by a wide range of groups, or more commonly amongst particular groups. Caution must be given here to the fact that certain characteristics (e.g. being a woman) were more prevalent within the sample. A detailed analysis of who took part in the survey is provided in the [Supplementary document: tables and methods](#).

Comments were coded as unclear when they could not be understood by the researcher or were generally unclear. Some comments evidently did not relate to Social Security Scotland. Most of these described experiences with the Department for Work and Pensions or other outside agencies including Citizens Advice, Jobcentre, local council or NHS. These comments were not included in the analysis. It is likely that more comments, without explicit indicators, were also about experiences not related to Social Security Scotland. However, only those comments explicitly about other organisations or experiences were coded as such, and therefore excluded. Also of note, respondents sometimes provided information unrelated to the question asked in the survey. Where this was evident, these comments were not reported on.

2.6. Understanding and interpreting survey results

2.6.1 Summary of who responded and implications for findings

The survey results provide rich insight into some of the experiences of Social Security Scotland clients. However, we cannot assume that the results represent the views of Social Security Scotland's clients as a whole. It is reasonable though, given the number of responses, to treat the findings as indicative of the general view of clients. This includes when results are shown by benefit experience and demographic group.

Information on the benefit experience and demographic characteristics of respondents does help us further understand the results contained in this report and view them in context. A detailed analysis of who took part in the survey is provided in the [Supplementary document: tables and methods](#).

The demographic background of respondents did differ across each benefit group. For example, we know that respondents with experience of Adult Disability Payment or Funeral Support Payment were more likely to be older and living with a long-term health condition. Demographic trends within benefit groups may be a factor behind some differences in results seen across the benefit groups.

2.6.2 Comparing findings the 2021-22 annual publication

Caution should be applied when comparing findings from 'all respondents' between the 2021-22 and 2022-23 annual Client Survey publications, for example: across all respondents in 2021-22 89% rated their overall experience as 'very good' or 'good', compared with 88% in 2022-23. The reason being that applying for, or receiving certain benefits, is associated with higher or lower levels of satisfaction across a range of survey measures, and the proportion of respondents who applied for or received each benefit differs across the two publications. Furthermore, the 2022-23 findings include experiences of Adult Disability Payment for the first time.

Sounder comparisons can be made across the two publications between benefit experience groups. For example, of those who received Carer's Allowance Supplement in 2021-22, 90% rated their overall experience as 'very good' or 'good', compared with 87% in 2022-23. However, when comparing by benefit experience consideration should be given to changes to the delivery of said benefit across the comparison period which may have influenced satisfaction, for example the increase in the value of Scottish Child Payment payments and the expansion of eligibility.

2.6.3 Understanding results and quotations presented in the report

Other key factors to be aware of when interpreting the findings in this report are:

- Results for the closed questions presented in this report are rounded to whole numbers. As such, results included in charts and tables figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding. This may also mean that if the report text presents a finding which is a sum of two response options, rounding may cause the summed value to be 1 percentage point higher or lower than the sum of the two constituent values.
- Results for each question shown in the report exclude any respondents who either skipped the question, said 'not applicable' or were filtered out of the relevant question, unless otherwise stated. 'Don't know', 'Can't remember', and 'Prefer not to say' responses are included as valid responses.
- Some percentages quoted in the report relate to questions that allowed respondents to choose more than one response. These percentages will not sum to 100%.
- All quotes presented under the 'Comments about...' sections throughout this report are contained within coloured text boxes to separate them from the analytical commentary. The quotes included in the report serve as examples that illustrate or represent key themes or points raised in client comments. Quotes are presented in a manner that reflects the comments received as accurately as possible. This includes where capitalised text may have been used by respondents for emphasis, but does not include text that's been entirely capitalised (block capitals). Such text has been rewritten in lower case for better readability. Any potentially identifying information has been omitted.
- Themes are generally presented in order of prominence in the 'Comments about...' sections. This means that, in each subsection where quotes supporting a theme are presented, the theme with the most numerous responses overall is presented first, then the second-most numerous and so on until the theme with the least numerous responses. It should be noted, however, that this is generally how themes are presented; despite some themes containing only a few responses does not mean that that theme is less important or insightful.
- '#' indicates that a value is suppressed due to a small number of respondents in a group. To reduce risk of disclosure, the minimum base size for a variable to be included in a cross break was set at 25. The minimum base size for a response within the cross break was set at 5.
- Some base sizes greater than 25 (for example the 112 respondents who applied for Young carer Grant) are included but should be interpreted with caution.
- Results are presented to zero decimal places. '0%' should therefore be interpreted to mean <0.5%. If no responses were given then this is denoted by '-'.
- Many closed questions within the survey provide respondents with response options in a 5 point Likert scale format, for example: 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'disagree', 'strongly disagree', or alternatively: 'very good', 'good', 'neither poor nor good', 'poor', 'very poor'. When analysed these responses were combined into, for example, agree (including 'strongly agree', 'agree'), neither agree nor disagree, and disagree (including 'disagree', 'strongly disagree'). No guidance was given to

respondents as to how they should interpret these response options, they were allowed to interpret at their discretion.

- Report Tables include a 'Total' row or column. Where a Table presents findings from 'All respondents', the 'Total' is the number of respondents who answered the corresponding question. Where a Table includes a cross break, for example 'by benefit experience', the 'Total' outlines the number of respondents within each sub-group, for example the number of respondents who had experience of Scottish Child Payment.
- Some findings are broken down by benefit. This can be by 'experience of the benefit' (experience of applying for or receiving each benefit), 'experience of benefit application' (experience of applying for each benefit), or 'experience of receiving benefit' (experience of receiving each benefit). Each table which includes benefit break downs will specify the category of benefit experience included.

3. Overall experience

This section presents findings from the survey's headline questions which asked respondents for their views of their overall experience with Social Security Scotland.

3.1. Overall rating of experience

The survey's highest level question asked respondents how they would rate their overall experience with Social Security Scotland. The majority of respondents (88%) said that their overall experience was 'very good' or 'good'. Just 2% said their experience was 'poor' or 'very poor' (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Overall rating of experience with Social Security Scotland
All respondents; Column percentages

Response options	All respondents ⁴
Very good or good	88%
Neither poor nor good	9%
Poor or very poor	2%
Total	32,945

Respondents were also asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of more specific statements about their experience. Again, respondents generally indicated a positive experience, with a clear majority agreeing) with each of the statements (see Table 3.2).

Notably, nearly nine-in-ten believed that they had been treated with dignity (88%), fairness (87%) and respect (89%). A majority of respondents also agreed that Social Security Scotland had not wasted their time (84%) and that they understood what Social Security Scotland does (86%).

Few respondents actively disagreed with each of the statements, as Table 3.2 shows. Instead, respondents who did not give a positive response to each statement tended to say 'neither agree nor disagree'. The statement which produced the highest level of disagreement was 'Social Security Scotland did not waste my time' (6%).

⁴ In this table, and all other tables and figures, the sample size does not include respondents who skipped the question, or (with some other questions) were routed around the question.

Table 3.2: Views on overall experience with Social Security Scotland

All respondents; Row percentages

Thinking about your overall experience with Social Security Scotland...	Strongly agree or agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree or strongly disagree	Total
Social Security Scotland treated me with dignity	88%	10%	2%	31,619
Social Security Scotland treated me fairly	87%	9%	4%	31,536
Social Security Scotland treated me with respect	89%	9%	2%	31,708
Social Security Scotland did not waste my time	84%	11%	6%	32,212
I understand what Social Security Scotland does	86%	11%	3%	32,483
I feel I can trust Social Security Scotland	80%	16%	3%	32,220
Social Security Scotland is an honest organisation	81%	17%	2%	31,760
Social Security Scotland is an open organisation	78%	20%	2%	29,691

3.2. Overall rating of experience by benefit experience

It is also possible to examine views on Social Security Scotland based on the benefit experience of respondents. Section 2.5 provides key information to consider when looking at findings presented in this way throughout the report. The key consideration to note is that almost four-in-ten (38%) respondents had experience of more than one benefit. When, for example, respondents rate their overall experience, their response will be presented against each of the individual benefits they said they had experience of. There is therefore some overlap, as well as generalisation, between respondents' evaluation of specific benefits and their presentation in this report.

As shown in Table 3.3, the proportion who rated their experience as 'very good' or 'good' was lowest amongst respondents with experience of Adult Disability Payment Case Transfer (82%) and highest for those with experience of Scottish Child Payment, Child Winter Heating Assistance, and Child Disability Payment Case Transfer (92% respectively). The rating of overall experience was broadly similar across benefit groups. Again, few respondents in each group answered 'poor' or 'very poor'.

Table 3.3: Overall rating of experience with Social Security Scotland, by benefit experience

All respondents with experience of each benefit; Row percentages

Benefit experience	Very good or good	Neither poor nor good	Poor or very poor	Total
Carer's Allowance Supplement	87%	11%	2%	1,096
Best Start Grant	89%	8%	3%	4,793
Best Start Foods	88%	9%	3%	4,197 ⁵
Funeral Support Payment	88%	9%	3%	450
Young Carer Grant	83%	#	#	109
Scottish Child Payment	92%	6%	2%	16,112
Child Winter Heating Assistance	92%	#	#	234
Child Disability Payment	88%	9%	2%	1,658
Child Disability Payment Case Transfer	92%	7%	2%	2,411
Adult Disability Payment	85%	11%	4%	4,790
Adult Disability Payment Case Transfer	82%	15%	3%	2,704

Table 3.4 shows results for the more detailed questions on respondents' overall experience by benefit experience. Broadly, respondents with experience of Scottish Child Payment, Funeral Support Payment or Child Winter Heating Assistance were most likely to agree with the statements.

Agreement with almost all statements was lowest among respondents with experience of Adult Disability Case Transfer, including Social Security Scotland 'treated me fairly' and 'did not waste my time' (79% and 80% respectively).

Respondents with experience of Child Winter Heating Assistance were most likely to agree that they had been treated with dignity (92%), fairness (93%), or respect (94%), followed closely by those with experience of Scottish Child Payment (91%, 91% and 92% respectively).

⁵ Discrepancy in number for Best Start Grant / Best Start Foods is likely driven by respondents answering 'Don't know' to the question regarding application type.

Table 3.4: Views on overall experience with Social Security Scotland, by benefit experience

All respondents with any experience of each benefit; Row percentages

Strongly agree or agree that ... (Social Security Scotland)	treated me with dignity	treated me fairly	treated me with respect	did not waste my time	I understand what Social Security Scotland does	I feel I can trust Social Security Scotland	is an honest organisation	is an open organisation	Total
Carer's Allowance Supplement	84%	85%	85%	84%	83%	75%	76%	71%	1,015
Best Start Grant	89%	87%	91%	83%	89%	85%	86%	85%	4,666
Best Start Foods	89%	86%	90%	82%	89%	84%	85%	85%	4,099
Funeral Support Payment	92%	89%	92%	86%	85%	81%	83%	78%	450
Young Carer Grant	88%	90%	93%	83%	90%	81%	83%	86%	108
Scottish Child Payment	91%	91%	92%	88%	90%	85%	86%	84%	15,557
Child Winter Heating Assistance	92%	93%	94%	87%	88%	86%	85%	83%	226
Child Disability Payment applicants	89%	88%	90%	87%	77%	81%	81%	82%	1,659
Child Disability Payment Case Transfer	87%	89%	88%	88%	75%	81%	84%	80%	2,253
Adult Disability Payment applicants	85%	82%	86%	83%	72%	76%	78%	76%	4,845
Adult Disability Payment Case Transfer	81%	79%	82%	80%	67%	71%	76%	71%	2,526

3.3. Overall rating of experience by demographic characteristics

Some variation was evident when assessing respondents' overall rating of their experience with Social Security Scotland by some demographic characteristics. As shown in Table 3.5, some groups who were more likely to give a higher rating of overall experience included:

- Female respondents (89%), compared to male (85%)
- Respondents with no long-term physical or mental health condition (91%) compared to those with such a condition (86%)
- Respondents aged between 25-34, 35-44 and 45-54 (89-90-89%) compared to those aged 16-24 (83%) and those aged 55 and older (84-85%)
- Those with no communication needs (89%), compared to those with a communication need (85%)

Table 3.5: Overall rating of experience with Social Security Scotland, by demographic and geographic breakdowns

All respondents

Demographic/Geographic group	Proportion who said that their overall experience was very good or good	Total
Gender identity		
Man	85%	5,903
Woman	89%	25,825
Answered in another way	76%	552
Prefer not to say	82%	94
Long-term health condition		
With long-term physical/mental health condition	86%	15,411
No long-term physical or mental health condition	91%	14,827
Prefer not to say	85%	2,035
Ethnicity		
White	88%	28,537
Minority ethnic	94%	2,494
Prefer not to say	83%	780
Age		
16-24	83%	977
25-34	89%	5,507
35-44	90%	11,146
45-54	89%	7,625
55-64	85%	5,426
65+	84%	1,145
Urban-rural classification		
Urban	89%	22,708
Rural	88%	3,481
Communication needs		
Had communication needs	85%	5,309
Had no communication needs	89%	26,528
Main language		
English	88%	24,138
Other	90%	8,262
Speaking, writing, understanding, and reading English		
Could speak, write, understand, and read English 'very well'	89%	19,010
Others	87%	13,935

Results for the set of more detailed questions exploring respondents' overall experience were also generally positive across the range of demographic groups. However, differences were again evident between some groups.

For example, respondents living with a long-term health condition were less likely than people without such a condition to agree with each of the statements, as shown in Table 3.6. Other breakdowns are provided in the [Supplementary document: tables and methods](#).

Table 3.6: Views on overall experience with Social Security Scotland, by whether respondent had a long-term health condition
All respondents

Proportion who strongly agree or agree that:	With long-term physical/mental health condition	No long-term physical/mental health condition	Prefer not to say
Social Security Scotland treated me fairly	86%	90%	84%
Social Security Scotland treated me with respect	85%	90%	84%
Social Security Scotland treated me with dignity	87%	91%	85%
Social Security Scotland did not waste my time	81%	87%	80%
I understand what Social Security Scotland does	84%	89%	81%
I feel I can trust Social Security Scotland	74%	83%	72%
Social Security Scotland is an honest organisation	77%	85%	75%
Social Security Scotland is an open organisation	77%	85%	75%
Total	14,943	14,184	1,855

Respondents who had applied for a benefit and received a no award decision were decidedly less positive about their experience with Social Security Scotland⁶. Within this group 66% rated their overall experience as 'very good' or 'good', compared to 90% of those who had been successful with an application. Applicants who had not received a successful decision were also less likely to say that they had been treated with dignity (70%), fairness (61%), or respect (72%), compared to those who had been successful with an application (89%, 89%, and 90% respectively).

⁶ Based on responses given in the survey, 10% of applicants had received a no award decision.

3.4. Comments about overall experience and general suggestions

The survey's final question invited all respondents to offer suggestions for improvement or make further comments about their overall experience with Social Security Scotland⁷.

1,450 respondents provided a substantive comment⁸. Around three-fifths of these comments were suggestions for improvements. The rest were general comments about overall experience, of which around a tenth were negative and two-fifths were positive.

Most suggestions were related to communication, particularly aspects of eligibility and information on entitlements:

“Create more awareness to vulnerable families sooner of what support is available so no one suffers in crisis.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“More information about organisation (what they do etc) more information on different media. I have found it during hundreds of hours searches in internet about extra help for children so it is not well informed to people”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Overall experience is very good. A little bit improvement is required regarding availability of information when applying online.”

Woman, aged 35-44

“yes make it clearer who is eligible and make the application form easier to complete.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“With case transfers, more information from DWP would also help. Was unsure who best to contact while the payments were erratic in April and May.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of child moving from DLA for Children to Child Disability Payment

There was a consistent suggestion of updates about applications. These findings also occur in Sections 8.5 and 9.6:

“Better communication when updates are given. An acknowledgement of receipt and any action taken”

Woman, aged 55-64, experience of child moving from DLA for Children to Child Disability Payment

⁷ ‘Would you like to make any suggestions for improvement or further comments about your overall experience?’

⁸ Responses such as “N/A”, “no comment” etc. are not included in this figure.

“More updates on applications I don’t think social security Scotland realises how much of a difference this grant would make and waiting on the postman to come every day only to be disappointed. It could be easily fixed just by more regular texts and updates so that you’re not waiting for what seems to be a long time after submitting all my information promptly.”

Man, aged 16-24, experience of Young Carer Grant

“More updates and communication”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods

“Maybe a text or letter to confirm receipt of your application and maybe an update every 4 weeks.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment

“Tracking of application and accurate processing times -i was told 6 weeks and it took 18 WEEKS with zero updates.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment

Many suggestions focused on waiting times and how these were communicated. This was both in terms of the time it took to receive a decision, as well as in contacting Social Security Scotland by phone or web chat. These findings also occur in Sections 8.5 and 9.6:

“Just giving people a rough idea of how long they need to wait for payment.”

Woman, aged 35-44

“Improve on the waiting times and let people know that they need to send in supporting information to fast track your application”

Woman, aged 35-44, Experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Improve the waiting time for the webchat.”

Woman, aged 55-64, experience of Carer’s Allowance Supplement

“A reasonable time frame to get a decision would be good rather than having to wait for months to get a decision”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods

“Please make it easier to speak to someone on chat or phone hours to wait is no good maybe find a way so people can book a slot to speak to someone?”

Woman, aged 45-54

There were also comments related to speeding up the time taken to receive a decision. This included suggestions on employing more decision makers, to being clearer on how long it would take to receive a decision:

“Try and reduce waiting times on phone and applications.”

Man, aged 65+, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“The length of time from when the application is submitted and the time the Decision is made should be reviewed. It took me over 12 weeks before I could hear from the staff.”
Man, aged 45-54, experience of Child Disability Payment

“Only the waiting time for decision, but I understand it might be difficult.”
Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Try to cut the waiting time for decisions, it is very stressful time for parents with ASN kids on top of their daily struggles”
Woman, aged 45-44, experience of Child Disability Payment

“have more staff to answer the phones as well as more staff to deal with back log of assessments waiting to be assessed.”
Woman

“If it was possible to try cut waiting times for decisions or even give an estimate how long it will take.”
Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Scottish Child Payment

Most negative comments related to our service and our processes, specifically relating to processing and wait times. As above, communication remained a feature in a lot of these comments. Many negative comments feature elements of suggestions as well:

“The only thing I could maybe say is the timeline for waiting for a decision.... I'm 8 weeks in after applying for adult disability and still haven't heard anything, .. and was given a 4/6 timescale ??”
Woman, aged 45-54, experience of child moving from DLA for Children to Child Disability Payment

“on hold for too long. Webchat didn't work. Please give more updates on application.”
Man, aged 45-54, experience of moving from Working Age DLA to Adult Disability Payment

“Phoned to query Scottish child payments, asked about any updates on child disability payments as hadn't heard anything after 4 months of applying - was told I would need to be passed through to another department and wait in a queue all over again. I had already waited an hour to speak to that person. They couldn't discuss the child disability aspect. Staff should be able to discuss anything rather than expect you to keep waiting an hour to speak to someone else. Nobody has time for that”
Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment

“Would have appreciated callbacks as promised. Worried for 3 months until letter arrived.”
Woman, aged 35-44, experience of child moving from DLA for Children to Child Disability Payment

“The telephone lines are a nightmare to navigate & I spent a very long time on hold. Please get more telecommunications staff.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of child moving from DLA for Children to Child Disability Payment

“There should be some way of checking that all applications have bn dealt with as mine seems to have bn lost in limbo”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

The majority of positive comments were reflections of overall experience. As with Sections 7.4 and 9.6, a large proportion of responses specifically mention their positive experiences with staff:

“I could not make any improvements at all. It runs brilliantly.”

Man, aged 45-54, experience of Funeral Support Payment

“I have found staff compassionate and respectful in supporting me at that time”

Woman, experience of Funeral Support Payment

“I would just like to say thank you so much for the help received on the resent passing of my Mum. The lady on the phone that day was very helpful and kind. I can't thank you all enough especially at such at hard time in my life”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Funeral Support Payment

“It did not matter which staff member I got when I called , they were all very easy to talk to and so helpful and caring”

Woman, aged 65+, experience of Funeral Support Payment

“Overall I am satisfied with my dealings with Social Security and am grateful for the support I have received.”

Woman, aged 65+, experience of Funeral Support Payment

“Navigating the system was easy and making contact far easier than dealing with dwp so no changes needed in my opinion”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Carer's Allowance Supplement

Respondents also referred to communication with Social Security Scotland. Specifically, some referred to adjustments in communication that they were able to access when engaging with Social Security Scotland:

“I have poor eyesight and sss print my letter out om large print I really appreciate that totally above and beyond”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Carer's Allowance Supplement

“No, overall it has been a good experience, the blip with getting an award letter is a small

thing really, the fact is I was treated like a real person with respect and dignity which is what was promised and all I ask for when dealing with them.”

Man, aged 35-44, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“No, the letters I received about the change were straightforward”

Woman, aged 55-64, experience of moving from PIP to Adult Disability Payment

“Have only received letters from them but have always been clear and easy to understand”

Woman, aged 35-44

“Keep up good work. The letters are so plain and simple to understand I don't get in panic with them”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of child moving from DLA for Children to Child Disability Payment

“I have received letters with a lot of information about changes and I felt I knew what was going to change.

Thank you for your help and support.”

Man, aged 55-64

4. Finding out about Social Security Scotland benefits

4.1. Finding out about Social Security Scotland

The survey opened by asking respondents how they had first heard about the Social Security Scotland benefit that they had applied for or received.

The most common means of first finding out about a benefit was via ‘word-of-mouth’ (22%), which was the case for more than one-in-five respondents. Slightly fewer than one-in-five (18%) first found out about Social Security Scotland ‘online or via social media (for example, Twitter, Facebook)’. Around one-in-ten first heard through being contacted by Social Security Scotland or through a health service (10% and 9% respectively). Respondents were least likely to say that they first found out about Social Security Scotland via a ‘Leaflet, pamphlet or poster’ (1%) or a ‘Community or social care service’ (3%), as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: How respondents first heard about the benefit that they had applied for or received

All respondents

Response options	All respondents
Social Security Scotland contacted me (for example, phone call or letter)	10%
Advert (for example, TV, radio, newspaper)	7%
Online or social media (for example, Twitter, Facebook)	18%
News article or programme (including radio)	4%
Word-of-mouth	22%
Citizens Advice	4%
Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), including Jobcentre Plus	6%
Health service (eg NHS worker, GP, Health Practitioner, Psychologist)	9%
Community or social care service	3%
Leaflet, pamphlet or poster	1%
Child’s nursery or school	6%
Can’t remember / don’t know	6%
Other	5%
Total	24,866

4.2. Finding out about Social Security Scotland – by benefit experience

Table 4.2 shows how respondents first found out about the benefit that they had applied for or received, broken down by benefit experience. There were clear differences among those with experience of different benefits. More than half (54%) of Child Winter Heating Assistance recipients said they first heard about Social Security Scotland through being contacted by us, as did around a third (34%) of those who Case Transferred to Adult Disability Payment.

Those who applied for, or were Case Transferred to, Child Disability Payment were most likely to have found out about this from a 'Health service' (37% and 30% respectively). Respondents who had applied for Scottish Child Payment were most likely to have first heard about Scottish Child Payment from either 'online or via social media' (24%) or 'word-of-mouth' (22%). Those who had applied for Adult Disability Payment were most likely to have first heard about it from either 'word-of-mouth' (24%) or from a 'health service' (21%).

Nearly two-in-five (38%) of those who applied for Funeral Support Payment first found out about Funeral Support Payment from a Funeral Director, included within 'other' in Table 4.2. Of those who applied for Young Carer Grant, around one-in-five first heard about it from either 'school or college' (19%) or 'young carer support group' (20%).

Table 4.2: How respondents first heard about the benefit that they had applied for or received, by benefit experience

All respondents with any experience of each benefit; Column percentages

First heard...	Carer's Allowance Supplement	Best Start Grant	Best Start Foods	Funeral Support Payment	Young Carer Grant	Scottish Child Payment	Child Winter Heating Assistance	Child Disability Payment applicant	Child Disability Payment Case Transfer	Adult Disability Payment applicant	Adult Disability Payment Case Transfer
Social Security Scotland contacted me	14%	11%	11%	5%	2%	8%	54%	7%	24%	8%	34%
Advert	2%	4%	#	#	1%	9%	3%	2%	#	3%	1%
Online or social media	6%	16%	15%	#	-	24%	-	4%	6%	8%	2%
News article or programme	2%	2%	1%	-	-	5%	3%	#	#	2%	1%
Word-of-mouth	32%	19%	19%	27%	17%	22%	7%	19%	6%	24%	8%
Citizens Advice	6%	4%	5%	2%	-	3%	#	5%	#	6%	5%
Department for Work and Pensions	10%	6%	6%	10%	#	4%	4%	5%	6%	11%	16%
Health service	#	18%	19%	-	#	6%	2%	37%	30%	21%	12%
Community or social care service	7%	3%	3%	2%	#	2%	2%	4%	3%	3%	3%
Leaflet, pamphlet or poster	#	1%	#	1%	#	1%	#	#	#	1%	0%
Can't remember / don't know	8%	6%	5%	6%	5%	5%	12%	5%	10%	6%	11%
Other	12%	11%	10%	43%	69%	11%	13%	10%	10%	7%	6%
Total	1,177	4,971	4,365	465	112	16,436	312	328	192	2,310	1,367

5. Looking up Social Security Scotland websites

This section explores respondents' experiences of looking up Social Security Scotland websites. Three-in-five (60%) of all respondents said that they had looked up a Social Security Scotland website (including mygov.scot).

5.1. Were websites easy to navigate, understand and make eligibility clear?

The majority of respondents who had looked up a Social Security Scotland website agreed that the websites were 'easy to navigate' (83%), 'easy to understand' (85%) and 'made it clear whether I was eligible or not' (80%) (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Experience of Social Security Scotland websites

All respondents who had looked up a Social Security Scotland website; Row percentages

Thinking about when you looked up our websites...	Strongly agree or agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree or strongly disagree	Don't know	Total
It was easy to navigate the website(s)	83%	11%	5%	1%	20,093
The information was easy to understand	85%	10%	5%	1%	19,421
Made it clear whether I was eligible or not	80%	12%	7%	1%	19,690

There was some variation in experience with Social Security Scotland websites by benefit experience, as set out in Table 5.2. Those who had completed a Case Transfer to Adult Disability Payment were least likely to have looked up Social Security Scotland websites (44%), whereas those who had applied for Child Disability Payment (75%) and Adult Disability Payment (73%) were most likely.

Broadly, those who had applied for or been Case Transferred to Adult Disability Payment were least likely to agree that websites were 'easy to navigate', 'easy to understand' and 'made it clear whether I was eligible or not'. Those who had applied for Young Carer Grant or received Child Winter Heating Assistance were most likely to agree with each of the three statements.

Experience of Social Security Scotland websites differed by some respondent characteristics. Certain groups were less likely to strongly agree or agree that the websites were 'easy to navigate', 'easy to understand' and 'made it clear whether [they were] eligible or not', including:

- Male respondents (80%, 80% and 75% respectively, compared to 84%, 86% and 81% among female respondents)
- Respondent with a long term health condition (80%, 82%, and 77%, compared to 87%, 89% and 84% among respondents with no such condition)
- White respondents (83%, 84%, and 80%, compared to 89%, 91% and 87% among minority ethnic respondents)
- Respondents with a communication need (77%, 77%, and 75%, compared to 87%, 89% and 85% among respondents with no communication needs)
- Respondents aged 55 and older (78%, 79%, and 74%, compared to 84%, 86% and 81% among respondents aged 16-54).

Table 5.2: Experience of Social Security Scotland websites, by benefit experience
All respondents who had looked up a Social Security Scotland website

Benefit experience	Looked up a Social Security Scotland website	Proportion who strongly agree or agree that:		Made it clear whether I was eligible or not	Total
		It was easy to navigate the website(s)	The information was easy to understand		
All respondents	60%	83%	85%	80%	33,402
Carer's Allowance Supplement	52%	84%	84%	83%	1,305
Best Start Grant	70%	85%	86%	81%	4,936
Best Start Foods	71%	85%	86%	80%	4,333
Funeral Support Payment	49%	86%	85%	82%	424
Young Carer Grant	61%	88%	84%	91%	93
Scottish Child Payment	62%	86%	88%	85%	16,347
Child Winter Heating Assistance	55%	89%	91%	88%	283
Child Disability Payment applicants	75%	81%	85%	76%	1,699
Child Disability Payment Case Transfer	56%	88%	90%	85%	2,385
Adult Disability Payment applicants	73%	77%	79%	70%	4,956
Adult Disability Payment Case Transfer	44%	78%	78%	77%	2,779

6. Contact with Social Security Scotland

This section explores respondents' experience of their contact with Social Security Scotland. This includes when respondents contacted Social Security Scotland, and when Social Security Scotland contacted them.

6.1. Making contact with Social Security Scotland

Over two-fifths (43%) of all respondents said that they had tried to contact Social Security Scotland at some point since 1 April 2022. Those with a long-term physical or mental health condition were more likely to have tried to contact Social Security Scotland (48% compared to 38% of respondents with no such condition).

Table 6.1 sets out the type(s) of contact respondents had with Social Security Scotland. Respondents could select more than one option. By far the most common was through the phone helpline (76%). Very few respondents had contact with Social Security Scotland in person (at an arranged venue or at home), or via a video call appointment.

Table 6.1: Type(s) of contact with Social Security Scotland

All respondents who had tried to contact Social Security Scotland

Response options	All respondents
Phone helpline	76%
In person - at an arranged venue	2%
In person - home visit	3%
Video call appointment	3%
Phone appointment	12%
Webchat (through mygov.scot or the Social Security Scotland website)	21%
Letter	22%
Other	4%
Total	14,290

6.2. Experience of contact with Social Security Scotland

Those who had tried to contact Social Security Scotland were generally positive about their experience of doing so. Most respondents agreed with the statements, 'I had enough choice about how I communicated with Social Security Scotland' (79%) and 'I got the support (information or advice) I needed' (76%). Slightly fewer agreed that 'It was easy to contact Social Security Scotland' (67%), whilst one-in-ten (22%) disagreed with this, as Table 6.2 shows.

Table 6.2: Views on communication choices and support received

All respondents who had tried to contact Social Security Scotland; Row percentages

Thinking about your experience contacting Social Security Scotland, how much do you agree or disagree...	Strongly agree or agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree or strongly disagree	Can't remember/ Don't know	Total
I had enough choice about how I communicated with Social Security Scotland	79%	11%	9%	1%	14,125
It was easy to contact Social Security Scotland	67%	10%	22%	1%	13,976
I got the support (information or advice) I needed	76%	9%	14%	1%	14,013

Some divergence was seen between benefit experience and views on communication choices and support received, as shown in Table 6.3. Respondents with experience of Adult Disability Payment Case Transfer were less likely to agree with each of the statements regarding communication choices and support received, whereas agreement was highest among Funeral Support Payment applicants.

Table 6.3: Views on communication choices and support received, by benefit experience

All respondents who had tried to contact Social Security Scotland

Benefit experience	I had enough choice about how I communicated with Social Security Scotland	It was easy to contact Social Security Scotland	I got the support (information or advice) I needed	Total
Carer's Allowance Supplement	79%	69%	79%	323
Best Start Grant	79%	64%	76%	2,626
Best Start Foods	78%	64%	75%	2,372
Funeral Support Payment	82%	78%	82%	238
Young Carer Grant	82%	68%	71%	85
Scottish Child Payment	79%	66%	77%	6,223
Child Winter Heating Assistance	79%	64%	82%	192
Child Disability Payment	79%	65%	78%	1,136
Child Disability Payment Case transfer	83%	75%	79%	942
Adult Disability Payment	80%	70%	76%	3,069
Adult Disability Payment Case transfer	78%	64%	72%	1,101

Ethnicity was associated with a lower level of agreement with the statements relating to communication choices and support received. White respondents were less likely to agree with the statements: 'I had enough choice about how I communicated with Social Security Scotland' (79%, compared to 85% of minority ethnic respondents), 'it was easy to contact Social Security Scotland' (66%, compared to 77% of minority ethnic respondents), and 'I got the support (information or advice) I needed' (75%, compared to 87% of minority ethnic respondents).

Respondents with a communication need were also less likely to agree with the statements: 'I had enough choice about how I communicated with Social Security Scotland' (74%, compared to 80% of respondents with no communication needs), and 'it was easy to contact Social Security Scotland' (59%, compared to 74% of respondents with no communication

needs), and 'I got the support (information or advice) I needed' (73%, compared to 78% of minority ethnic respondents).

Just over three quarters of all respondents agreed with the statements: 'I received the right level of communication from Social Security Scotland' (76%) and 'I had enough choice about how Social Security Scotland communicated with me' (77%).

Those with experience of Carer's Allowance Supplement and Adult Disability Payment Case Transfer were less likely to agree with these statements, whereas those with experience of Funeral Support Payment and Child Winter Heating Assistance were more likely, as set out in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4: Views on amount and choice of communication received from Social Security Scotland, by benefit experience

All respondents with any experience of each benefit

Benefit experience	I received the right level of communication from Social Security Scotland	I had enough choice about how Social Security Scotland communicated with me	Total
All respondents	76%	77%	32,565
Carer's Allowance Supplement	75%	72%	1,275
Best Start Grant	74%	80%	4,872
Best Start Foods	74%	79%	4,280
Funeral Support Payment	83%	83%	440
Young Carer Grant	75%	82%	102
Scottish Child Payment	79%	81%	15,978
Child Winter Heating Assistance	85%	80%	296
Child Disability Payment	74%	79%	1,677
Child Disability Payment Case Transfer	81%	74%	2,315
Adult Disability Payment	73%	78%	4,906
Adult Disability Payment Case Transfer	72%	70%	2,680

Respondents with a communication need were also less likely to agree with the statements: 'I received the right level of communication from Social Security Scotland' (71%, compared to 79% of respondents with no communication needs), and 'I had enough choice about how Social Security Scotland communicated with me' (72%, compared to 81% of respondents with no communication needs).

Those with a long-term physical or mental health condition were less likely to agree with the statements: 'I received the right level of communication from Social Security Scotland' (74%, compared to 79% of respondents with no such condition), and 'I had enough choice about how Social Security Scotland communicated with me' (76%, compared to 80% of respondents with no such condition).

Ethnicity was also associated with lower agreement with the statements. White respondents were less likely to agree with the statements: 'I received the right level of communication from Social Security Scotland' (76%, compared to 85% of minority ethnic respondents) and 'I had enough choice about how Social Security Scotland communicated with me' (77%, compared to 81% of minority ethnic respondents).

7. Experiences with staff

This section presents findings on how respondents who had been in contact with Social Security Scotland staff felt about their experience.

7.1. Whether respondents had been in contact with staff

Respondents were asked if they had been in contact with a member of Social Security Scotland staff, in-person, over the phone, or through an interpreter, at any point since 1 April 2022.

Over two-fifths of respondents (41%) said they had been in contact with a member of staff. This figure varied notably by benefit experience. More than four-in-ten of those who said they had applied for a Social Security Scotland benefit reported contact with staff (44%), compared to over three-in-ten (34%) of those who had not applied for a benefit.

Looking at individual benefits, respondents with experience of Funeral Support Payment or Adult Disability Payment were most likely to have been in contact with staff (both 63%), followed by those with experience of Child Disability Payment (61%). There was little difference between respondents with experience of Best Start Grant (49%) or Best Start Foods (51%). There was no difference between respondents with experience of Young Carer Grant (36%), Scottish Child Payment (36%), Child Disability Payment Case Transfer (36%) or Child Winter Heating Assistance (36%). Clients with experience of Carer's Allowance Supplement were least likely to have been in contact with staff (23%).

Those with a long-term physical or mental health condition were more likely to have been in contact with a member of staff (46%, compared to 36% of respondents with no such condition). Respondents with a communication need were also more likely to have been in contact with a member of staff (46%, compared to 34% of respondents with no communication needs).

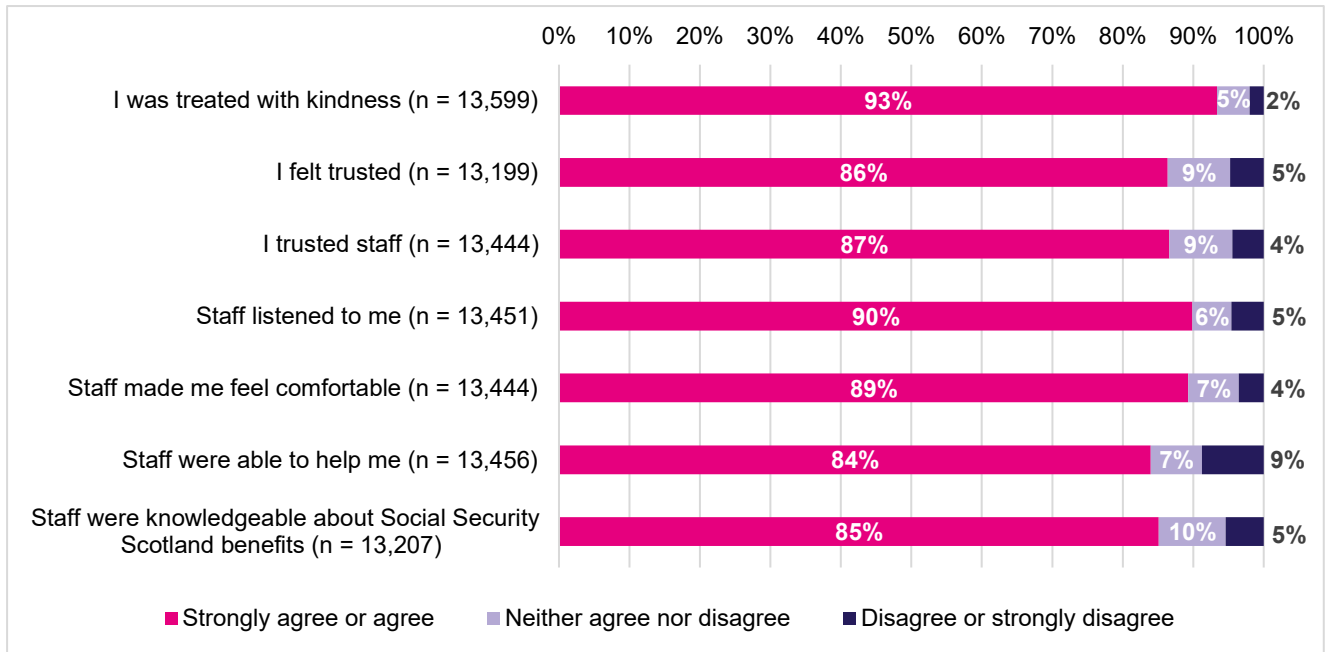
7.2. Views on contact with staff

Nine-in-ten respondents who had been in contact said their overall experience with staff was 'very good' or 'good' (90%). Just 3% rated their experience with staff as 'poor' or 'very poor'.

Nine-in-ten respondents said staff listened to them (90%) and made them feel comfortable (89%), while 93% of respondents said staff treated them with kindness, as set out in Figure 7.1.

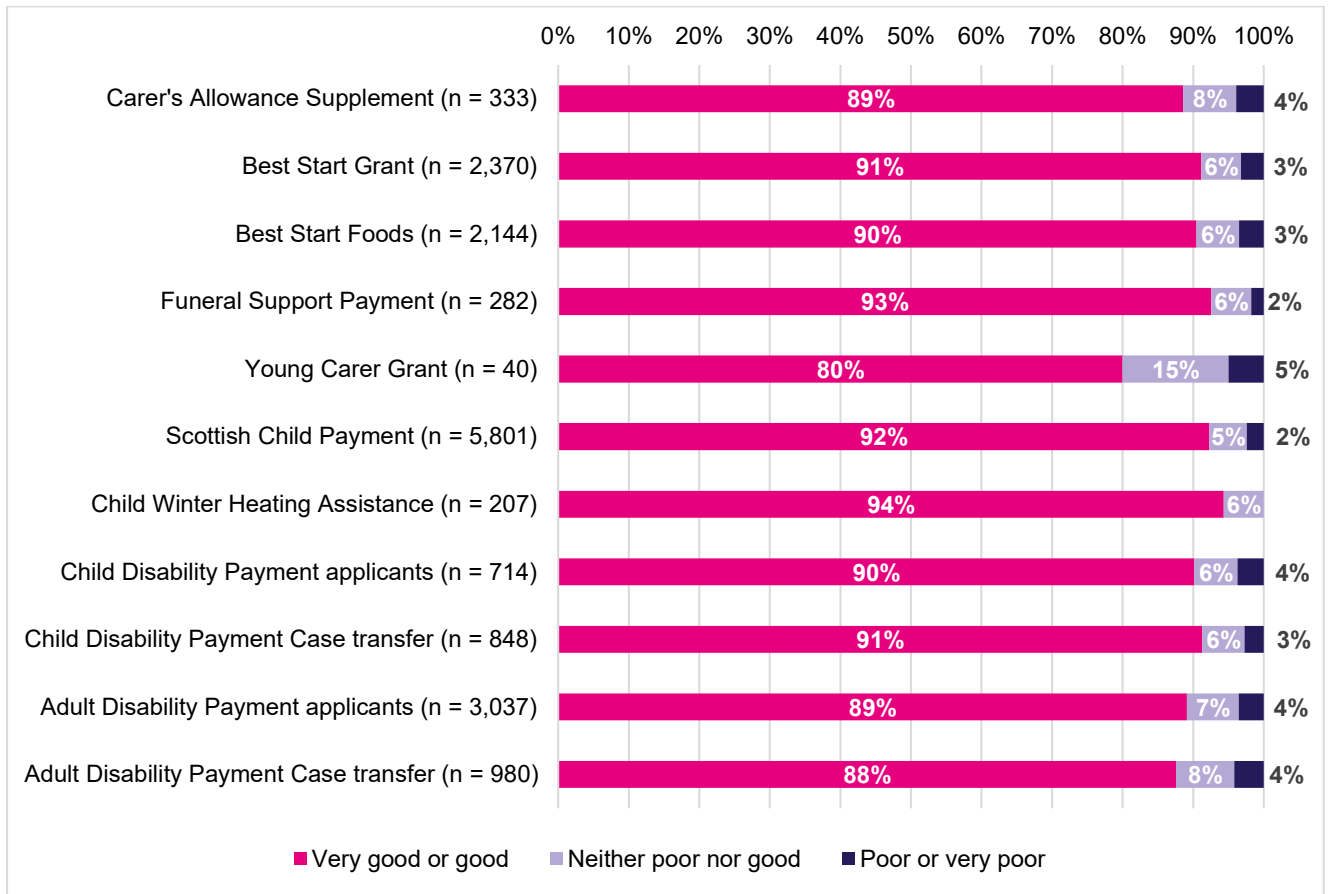
Figure 7.1: Views on interactions with Social Security Scotland staff

All respondents who had been in contact with Social Security Scotland staff



Respondents were very positive about staff regardless of their benefit experience. For instance, 93% of those with experience of Funeral Support Payment rated their experience with staff as ‘very good’ or ‘good’, as did 92% of those with experience of Scottish Child Payment (see Figure 7.2).

Figure 7.2: Overall rating of experience with staff, by benefit experience
 All respondents with any experience of each benefit who had been in contact with staff



Responses to follow up questions were also similar across benefit experiences (see Table 7.1). Funeral Support Payment applicants were particularly likely to reflect favourably on interactions with staff, and conversely Adult Disability Payment Case Transfer respondents were generally less favourable.

Table 7.1: Views on interactions with Social Security Scotland staff by benefit experience

All respondents with any experience of each benefit who had been in contact with Social Security Scotland staff

Proportion agreeing with statement:	I was treated with kindness	I felt trusted	I trusted staff	Staff listened to me	Staff made me feel comfortable	Staff were able to help me	Staff were knowledgeable about Social Security Scotland benefits	Total
Carer's Allowance Supplement	90%	82%	82%	89%	84%	85%	84%	331
Best Start Grant	94%	87%	87%	90%	90%	83%	86%	2,398
Best Start Foods	93%	87%	86%	89%	89%	83%	86%	2,178
Funeral Support Payment	94%	89%	92%	93%	92%	86%	91%	282
Young Carer Grant	89%	82%	81%	84%	82%	72%	82%	38
Scottish Child Payment	94%	88%	89%	91%	91%	86%	87%	5,840
Child Winter Heating Assistance	91%	87%	89%	92%	93%	87%	93%	109
Child Disability Payment applicants	94%	88%	86%	89%	90%	81%	86%	1,027
Child Disability Payment Case Transfer	95%	89%	88%	92%	92%	86%	86%	871
Adult Disability Payment applicants	93%	84%	85%	88%	88%	83%	84%	3,125
Adult Disability Payment Case Transfer	92%	84%	83%	89%	88%	81%	81%	1,008

White respondents were slightly less likely to rate their experience with staff as 'very good' or 'good' (90%) compared with minority ethnic respondents (95%). A similar proportion of white respondents also agreed with the statement "I felt trusted" by staff (86%, compared to 91% of minority ethnic respondents). This group were also less likely to agree with the statements:

- I was treated with kindness (93%, compared to 97% of minority ethnic respondents)
- I trusted staff (86%, compared to 93% of minority ethnic respondents)
- Staff listened to me (90%, compared to 96% of minority ethnic respondents)
- Staff made me feel comfortable (89%, compared to 95% of minority ethnic respondents)
- Staff were able to help me (84%, compared to 92% of minority ethnic respondents)
- Staff were knowledgeable about Social Security Scotland benefits (85%, compared to 93% of minority ethnic respondents).

Respondents with communication needs were less likely to rate their overall experience with staff as 'very good' or 'good' (88%, compared to 92% of respondents with no communication needs). This group were also more likely to agree with the statements:

- I felt trusted (84%, compared to 88% of those with no communication needs)
- I trusted staff (84%, compared to 89% of those with no communication needs)
- Staff made me feel comfortable (86%, compared to 91% of those with no communication needs)
- Staff were able to help me (82%, compared to 86% of those with no communication needs)
- Staff were knowledgeable about Social Security Scotland benefits (82%, compared to 87% of those with no communication needs).

7.3. Information and advice provided by staff

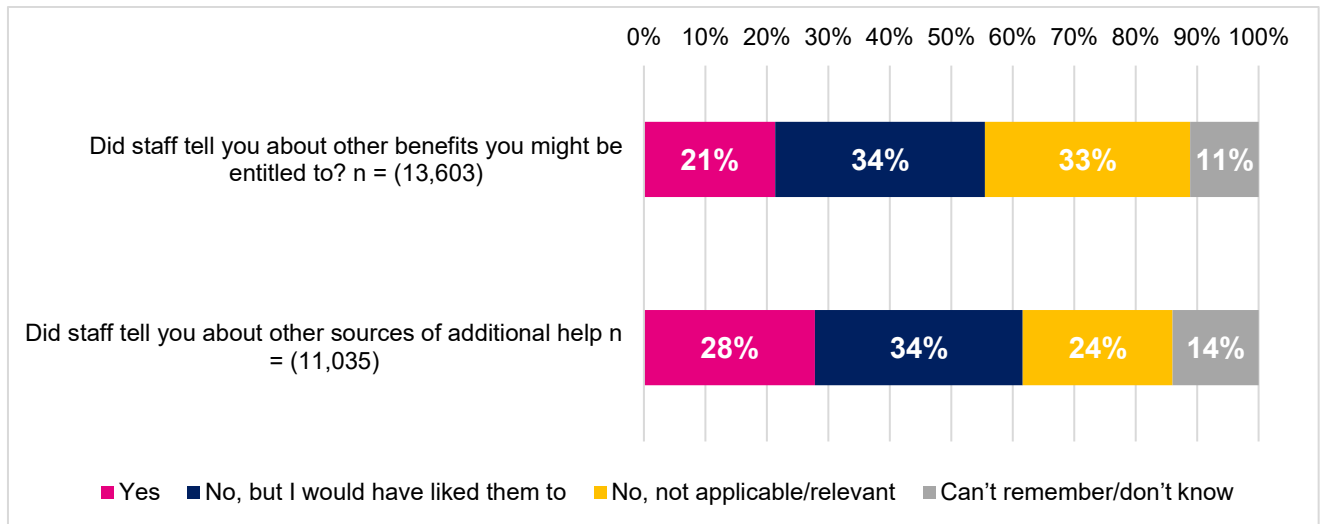
Respondents who had been in contact with a member of staff were asked whether they were told about other benefits they might have been entitled to. Around a fifth (21%) of respondents said this was the case⁹. However, a larger proportion (34%) said that they would have liked to have been told about other benefits by staff but were not. This was also raised in some of the open-text comments in this part of the survey. These results do not tell us whether staff considered likely eligibility or other factors when choosing whether to provide further advice.

A similar pattern also emerged when respondents were asked if staff told them about other sources of help that might be available, as outlined in Figure 7.3. Of those who were told by

⁹ This excludes respondents who answered 'No, not applicable' in regard to whether staff told them about other benefits or sources of additional help.

staff about other sources of additional help, the most common were: Citizens Advice Bureau (63%), welfare rights (such as the local council) (30%), money help (for example Money Advice Service) (25%), bereavement support (21%), housing support (20%), and foodbanks or similar services (14%).

Figure 7.3: Whether respondents were told about other benefits or sources of help
All respondents who had been in contact with staff



Respondents who said they were told about other benefits or sources of additional help were much more likely to rate their overall experience with staff positively. Almost all (98%) of those who were told about other benefits they might be entitled to described their experience with staff as 'very good' or 'good'. This figure fell to 81% for respondents who said they would have liked to have been told about other benefits but were not (see Table 7.2). A similar disparity was also evident with regard to being told about sources of additional help.

Table 7.2: Relationship between being told about other benefits/sources of help and overall rating of experience with staff

All respondents who had been in contact with Social Security Scotland staff;
Row percentages

Whether told about benefits or other sources of support	Very good or good	Neither poor nor good	Poor or very poor	Total
Staff told about other benefits	98%	1%	0%	2,890
Would have liked to have been told by staff about other benefits but were not	81%	13%	6%	4,376
Staff told about other sources of additional help	97%	2%	1%	3,050
Would have liked to have been told by staff about other sources of additional help but were not	78%	14%	8%	3,483

7.4. Comments about experiences with staff

Respondents who had been in contact with a member of staff had the chance to provide further comment on their experience¹⁰.

Around 2,300 substantive responses were given. Slightly less than three-in-five of these comments were positive and around a quarter were negative. Over one-tenth of responses were coded as mixed (containing positive and negative content), and less than one-in-twenty responses were suggestions.

Most positive comments raised staff manner and the help received from staff:

“Every time I have had to call in every single one of the advisors I have spoken to were kind, compassionate, friendly and understanding of why I was calling. They each helped in more ways than they know and made any application easy.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“The lady I spoke to was very kind, understanding and treated me with respect.”

Woman, aged 55-64, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“At times I have been unsure about what to apply for and when but social security Scotland have always kept me informed usually by mail, email or txt. Staff have always been very pleasant and helpful and on every occasion have asked if there was anymore they could help me with.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“I have always found that social security staff can't be more helpful whenever I have had dealings with them. I get the impression that the service is really there to benefit people like myself and am very grateful for it.”

Woman, aged 35-44

“Nice and helpful staff”

Man, aged 25-34, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“My experience has been brilliant. Staff was extremely polite, helpful and knowledgeable.”

Man, aged 35-44, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“The whole process was explained so i understood it. My case manager was friendly, understanding and professional. This was made very easy for me. They didnt judge me at

¹⁰ 'Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience with our staff?'

all. Amazing service with lovely staff”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Adult Disability Payment

Related to manner, many respondents said staff helped to make them comfortable and at ease (also reported in Sections 3.4 and 8.5). Some of these comments related to Local Delivery home visits:

“Everybody who I had contact with was very kind and helpful. I found that very reassuring because when you have recently become disabled you feel vulnerable and emotional at times. I didn’t feel I was being judged unfairly for applying for help.”

Woman, aged 65+, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“I feel the staff at Social Security Scotland are not only friendly but I’ve always felt comfortable chatting with ease.. my issues have always been dealt with fast and any problems I may have had were explained to me till I understood and was completely sorted I am happy that it’s easy to contact them and I know I can call and speak with them at any time .. thank you for all the help . I believe it’s a amazing service”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“Staff are amazing I think at the time I was on the phone my son who is autistic was making a lot of background noise and I had to keep asking the staff member to repeat themselves and they did and were extremely patient with me and told me Not to worry and they did not mind repeating themselves if needed went out there way to make me feel extremely comfortable and grateful.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“When the lady came out to visit, she was really nice made my son comfortable and didn’t press him to much explained everything really well and was very informative.”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of child moving from DLA for Children to Child Disability Payment

“The staff where absolutely great even when I got upset the staff member calmed me down, I was treated like a human being and I felt at ease with the member of your staff I can’t thank you enough for the kindness your member of staff had given me.”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Adult Disability Payment

Beyond manner and general helpfulness, respondents spoke positively of staff according to a range of other factors, including staff being knowledgeable and informative, responding in a timely and/or comprehensive fashion, and providing follow-ups or updates:

“Staff were easy to speak to and knowledgeable in my questions asked I didn’t feel like staff were keeping anything from me I felt they were upfront and honest and made everything very clear for me to understand”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“I was contacted promptly by phone and advice given was relevant. The person from Social Security Scotland was very knowledgeable about the process .”

Woman, aged 65+, experience of Adult Disability Payment and of moving from PIP to Adult Disability Payment

“Staff at SSC were extremely helpful and knowledgeable. They ensured that I was aware of the help available to me and spoke to me with respect.”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“I was kept in the loop, I also applied for Scottish child disability payment & had numerous phone calls and was made to feel believed & i felt so relieved. The Scottish child payment was easy, and very straight forward when I contacted them, they were pleasant & assured me.”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Summarizing all the questions that were passed to me, I always had the grace to talk to employees who were informed on the subject and I always had solutions and clarifications for everything I needed, whenever I happened to have an area other than the one I needed it was always transferred to another area, and I was always well attended, thank you very much for the affection and respect that you have with the population Many thanks staff.”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods

“I would like an excellent option. Every person I spoke with at Social Security Scotland was helpful, respectful and extremely understanding of my health and wellbeing. When my case was allocated to a case officer he was incredible. I was in need of help and advice which my case officer was able to provide without exception. He offered to be there if I had any questions or concerns and I called on multiple occasions and he took my calls every single time. He made promises to call me with updates and stuck to his word. Throughout the application process I felt cared for, respected and treated with compassion at all times which made the process so much easier than I had anticipated. Upon the final decision my case officer called me to let me know what would happen in the future and what other services could be available to me. He was a shining example of how to treat people who have disabilities which affect their every day lives and I actually felt validated after. He helped me so much and changed my life, he changed my perspective giving me hope for the future. You cannot put a price on that and I'll be eternally grateful for his assistance. Other Government Agencies could learn a lot from Social Security Scotland.”

Man, aged 45-54, experience of Adult Disability Payment

Some respondents mentioned having a favourable experience with Social Security Scotland compared to the Department for Work and Pensions. This finding can also be found in Section 8.5:

“Excellent service from start to finish. It was so refreshing to talk to real people who treated you with respect and as a human being. I hope people appreciate this excellent level of service and don’t abuse it or try take advantage. The contrast between SSS and the DWP is night and day. I can not rate SSS highly enough. Thank you for treating me like a human being.”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“I would just like to say that after previously having to deal with DWP for my disabled child’s benefit (which was disastrous and distressing) I was very pleasantly surprised by the professionalism, knowledge and empathy of the Social Security Scotland staff.”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Child Disability Payment

“Wonderful, complete opposite of DWP. Friendly, clear, patient, not robotic or overly formal but professional. Actually very proud of them.”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“I can’t sing my praises enough. Having previously gone through child DLA a few years ago and left feeling so let down and judged. The ease of application. The case worker phoned me and was so kind and understanding I came off the phone and had a cry. I would give any amount of money for my children not to be going through what they are going through and when previously phoning/dealing with DLA I was made to feel like I was at it and using my children for money. It was humiliating. I was met with care and kindness with SSS case manager. Also the web chat was a great function too!”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Child Disability Payment

Although not specifically related to staff interactions, a large portion of the negative comments related to difficulties trying to communicate with Social Security Scotland. The biggest issue was helpline waiting times, but, as reported in Section 3.4, frequent mention was also made of webchat wait times, and not receiving call-backs:

“The phone wait time need to be cut down 45 minutes to an hour and half is disappointing”

Man, aged 35-44, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“It’s difficult to communicate with any assistants, phone lines are impossible, no live chat available. I have missed several months of payments due to the lack of adequate communication and providing information”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Far too long a waiting time to make decisions! Far too long waiting on the phone to be answered! Web chat is terrible far too long to be waiting on a web chat to be answered overall the waiting time for everything is horrendous! Puts people of wanting to contact you”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment

“It's the hours of waiting on the phone lines and even more on Web chat for example I waited 5hrs in Web chat and ended up phoning and was in a que for 2hrs”
Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Difficult to get through, get cut off not sure if accidental or on purpose. Advise you will get a call back but don't. Overall communication is poor, webchat is very slow too.”
Woman, aged 45-54, experience of child moving from DLA for Children to Child Disability Payment

“Absolute nightmare trying to get through to anyone via phone or Web chat alot of the time the advisers say that they weren't getting calls put through to them and they were sat all day doing nothing without any calls it's a shocking service really bad to the point I complained nearly 3 hours waiting on someone to answer the phonenumber and I gave up after 4 hours with nobody answering on the Web chat, the Web chat is useless when you get through to anyone they can't help and tell you to call so no point in having that at all, it's hard enough for disabled people without all the long wait times, I've applied for a change in my sons circumstances and not heard a thing back at all worst service I've ever known.”
Woman, aged 55-64, experience of Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment

Other negative comments mentioned being given inaccurate or inconsistent information from staff. This finding also arose in Section 9.6. Where elaborated upon, respondents told of different staff giving different information, of not receiving from staff promised updates or follow-ups, and staff making errors:

“There was a mistake made by staff on my claim and every time I phoned I got wrong information”
Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Carer's Allowance Supplement

“I called your line four times about the supplement support for carers. But none of your officers answered me correctly, only answered me that I had to wait to receive my supplement money for Dec 2021, June 2022. The last one officer only she was enough competent and told me why I won't receive those money. I'm thankful to her. That is why I gave my answers so. I didn't receive any supplement payment up till now.”
Woman, aged 55-64

“The staff I spoke to had no idea about the new benefit and couldn't get there head around my issues. I still don't have an answer. I suffer from anxiety and the beginning period of the change over was horrendous and I ended up at the doctors a few times with panic attacks. Staff said they'd call back and never. I waited on the phone for hours and was passed from department to department. The lack of knowledge from staff was obvious and it's not really acceptable. I received letters saying I'd not sent back forms I never received. The letters came in the wrong order. Overall it was chaotic”
Woman, aged 25-34

“Some of them need a new job because are hopeless at the one they have the now. I've

been on the social since I was 16 now 39 and some of the times your left telling them what to do. Joke sometimes”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“I was told on 16th of January my child payment claim was out of the queue and being worked on, it would be prompted after my call, then on 18th was told it was still waiting to be worked on. Total disaapointment”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“There is a real communication issue. Different information given on all phone calls. It's upsetting”

Man, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment

“Had to contact 4 times by various means due to staff incompetency. I was told over the phone my application had been updated to include my newborns birth date and add him to Scottish child payment application. I was then told over web chat that there was no record of this so had to complete the process again. A further time I was told he couldn't be added without proof of him being added to my benefit claim. I have not received any letter or documentation regarding any of this so it is difficult to know if the staff have now actioned it.”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“Social security staff were repeatedly a source of misinformation about the application process and procedures, offering conflicting information on several different occasions.”

Aged 45-54, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“I get told I will hear from someone and they don't call back.”

Woman, aged 25-34

A significant proportion voiced frustration at not receiving, or being able to get updates or information on, applications and decisions from staff. This aspect might not have always been within staff control:

“It's so hard to contact social security Scotland. I phoned several times, staying on the line for 30 minutes + and never had my call answered. Eventually got to communicate with someone through online chat, again after trying several times and waiting for long periods of time to be connected with an adviser. Was not given all the info I needed as adviser stated they didn't have knowledge of the details my application or how long it would be to be processed. Still haven't had a decision made about my application 2 months on and don't feel there is any way I can affectively contact social security scotland for this information..”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Unable to give out basic information such as whether an award has been made. Even

though I've sent all my information via online. Been awaiting a letter for 3 weeks. Called to request another after two weeks and was told they couldn't send another. So in limbo and been waiting since March when I first applied..”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment

“They were unable to help and don't raise it to a manager so my claim has been awaiting an decision for more then 6 months and it's stuck with a IT issue that no one seems to resolve. It's a disgrace and the staff do nothing to support or help! Just simply tell me to wait!”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“When I called to find out about progress of my application (early of October - application was sent in middle of June) i was told that you do not have my application and that 'investigation' will be done to find out what had happened.. On a few more calls eventually application was found and I got your apology . It as a bit frustrating experience .”

Man, aged 55-64, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“Staff on live chat give differing information and tell you one thing and next time tell you something completely different and cannot advise when to expect a decision. Tel you one day a decision shouldn't be long, next time it will be a while and awaiting information then say the have received the information then tell you awaiting further information from the gp and no contact whatsoever with an update on claim”

Woman, aged 45-55, experience of child moving from DLA for Children to Child Disability Payment

“Still not been told whether accepted or not applied in december with no update and cannot get one. Updates should be provided”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

Mixed comments tended to reflect a combination of the major positive with negative themes illustrated above. For instance, respondents praised staff manner but were not happy with waiting times (helpline or applications) or felt some staff were more helpful and/or had a better manner than others. Several respondents also felt like staff were doing their best against poor processes and high pressure:

“The staff were all friendly and helpful however they didn't exactly address my issue and further communication about what was going on was poor. I kept having to phone to see what was happening. Each phone call tiook nearly up to an hour to connect with someone”

Woman, aged 45-54

“The problem trying to speak to someone it takes very long to get through. However when I get through the staff are excellent very kind & informative with what I am enquiring”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment

“Overall, my experience was positive. This applies particularly when speaking tk staff who were always helpful, knowledgeable and friendly. One thing I did not like was, it took a long time for any decisions to be made, around 12 weeks. And any time I spoke to someone, the timescale for when I could expect to hear back changed. This was frustrating.”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“I had issues with the chat when I was first applying. The advisor was very condescending , which as an anxiety and depression sufferer really effected me and upset me. I had to call and speak to someone else to rectify my issue because the person on chat was so rude. I think people working on the chat should be trained that it is mainly vulnerable people contacting them and they need to remember you cannot tell tone over a texted message. When on calls with staff , they were very helpful and rectified the situation for me.”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“Staff were very kind and helpful but I felt they were under a lot of pressure with being so busy”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

8. Applying for Social Security Scotland benefits

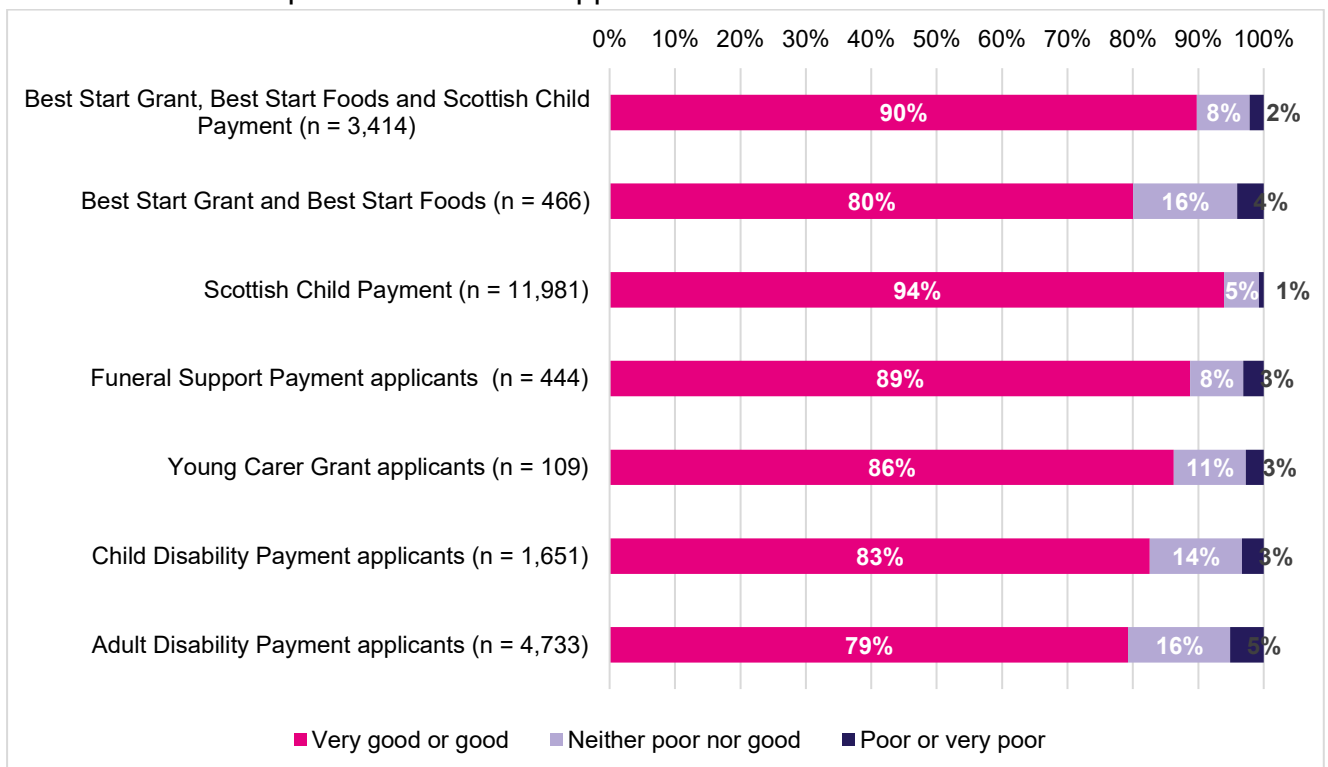
This section presents findings on respondents' experience of applying for Social Security Scotland benefits. The findings presented in the section below relate only to respondents who had applied for a benefit. Anyone who had not applied for a benefit did not answer these questions.¹¹ The [Supplementary document: tables and methods](#) outlines the benefit experience of survey respondents in more detail.

8.1. Views on application process

Around nine-in-ten respondents (90%) who had applied for a Social Security Scotland benefit said their experience of the application process overall was 'very good' or 'good'. Just 2%, around one-in-fifty respondents, described their experience of the application process overall as 'very poor' or 'poor'.

Figure 8.1 presents the findings broken down by benefit experience. Broadly, it shows a positive experience across the board, though those with experience of applying for Scottish Child Payment provided particularly positive feedback. Conversely, Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, and Adult Disability Payment applicants were less positive.

Figure 8.1: Overall rating of the application process, by benefit experience
All respondents who had applied for each benefit



¹¹ This applies to those who only received Carer's Allowance Supplement, Child Winter Heating Assistance, or who were Case Transferred onto Child or Adult Disability Benefit.

There was divergence in the overall experience of the application process across some demographic characteristics. Men were less likely to rate the application experience as 'very good' or 'good' (83%, compared with 90% of women). White respondents were also less likely to rate the application experience as 'very good' or 'good' (88%, compared with 94% of minority ethnic respondents), as were respondents with a long-term physical or mental health condition (85% compared to 92% of respondents with no such condition), and respondents with a communication need (85%, compared to 93% of those without communication needs). These results can be seen fully in the [Supplementary document: tables and methods](#).

Furthermore, those who had only been unsuccessful with their application(s) were much less likely to rate the experience as 'very good' or 'good' (69%, compared 90% among those who had had a successful application).

Around nine-in-ten respondents who had applied for a benefit said that the application process was clear (87%), and a similar proportion felt that they were only asked relevant questions (85%) (see Table 8.1). A slightly smaller proportion of respondents said that filling in and submitting the application(s) did not take too long (81%).

Table 8.1: Views on the application process

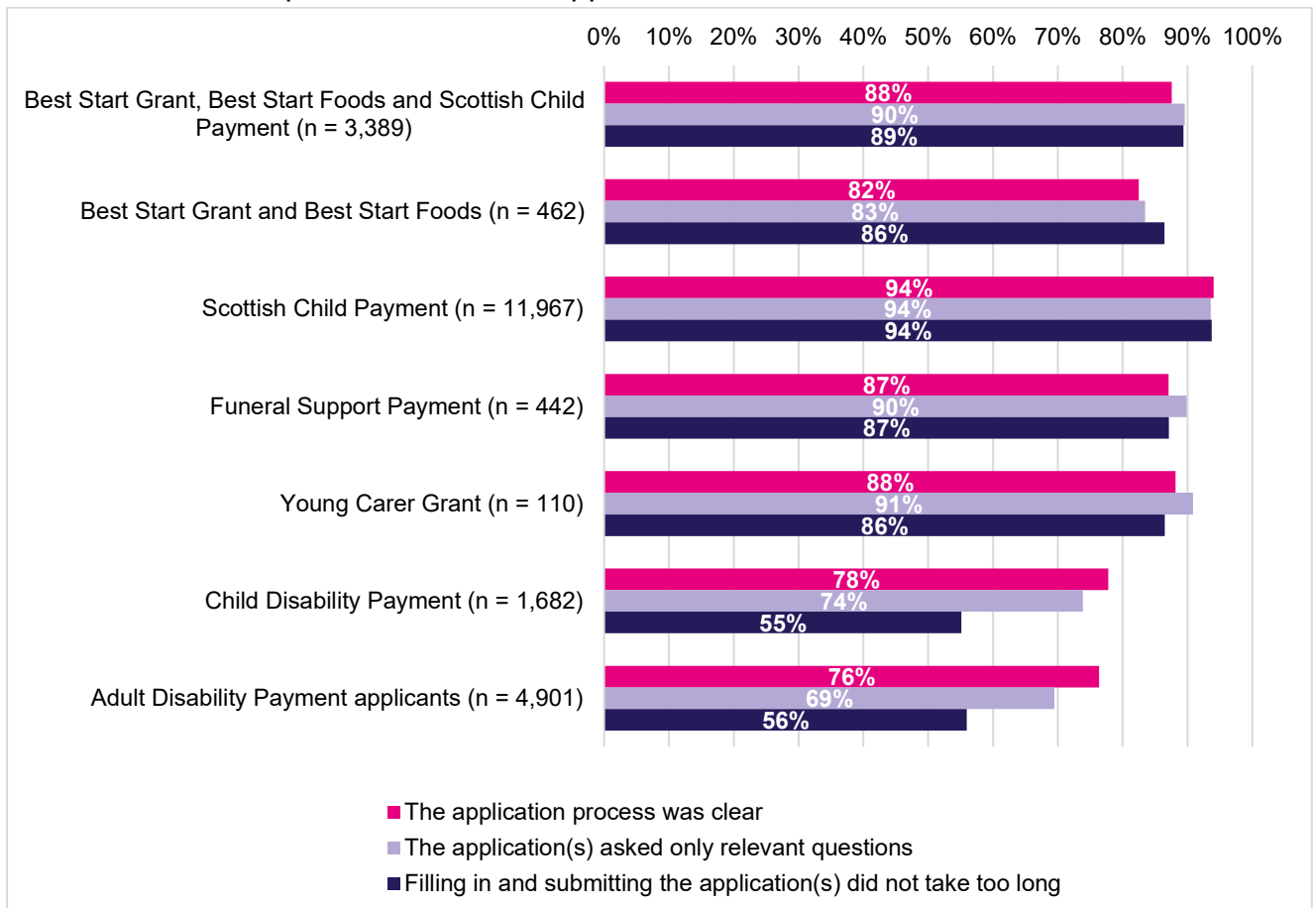
All respondents who had applied for at least one benefit; Row percentages

Thinking about when you applied...	Strongly agree or agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree or strongly disagree	Can't remember / Don't know	Total
The application process was clear	87%	7%	5%	1%	24,990
The application asked only relevant questions	85%	8%	5%	1%	24,212
Filling in and submitting the application(s) did not take too long	81%	8%	10%	1%	24,717

Respondents who had applied for Child Disability Payment or Adult Disability Payment were markedly less likely than other respondents to agree with the statement 'filling in and submitting the application(s) did not take too long' (55% and 56% respectively, compared to 86-94% among others). Those who applied for Adult Disability Payment were also least likely to agree that 'the application(s) asked only relevant questions' (69%). Scottish Child Payment applicants gave the highest level of agreement with each of the three statements, as shown in Figure 8.2.

Figure 8.2: Views on application process, by benefit experience

All respondents who had applied for each benefit



Respondents aged 55 or over were less likely to agree with the statements: ‘the application process was clear’ (80%, compared to 89% of respondents aged 16-54), ‘asked only relevant questions’ (75%, compared to 88% of respondents aged 16-54), and ‘did not take too long’ (64%, compared to 84% of respondents aged 16-54).

Those with a long-term physical or mental health condition were also less likely to agree that: their application was clear (83%, compared to 91% of respondents with no such condition), their application asked only relevant questions (80%, compared to 91% of respondents with no such condition), and their application did not take too long (73%, compared to 90% of respondents with no such condition).

Women were more likely to say: their application was clear (89%, compared to 82% of men), asked only relevant questions (88%, compared to 77% of men), and did not take too long (84%, compared to 71% of men). Minority ethnic respondents were also more likely to say: their application was clear (91%, compared to 87% of white respondents), asked only relevant questions (91%, compared to 85% of white respondents), and did not take too long (87%, compared to 81% of white respondents).

Those with a communication need were less likely to agree that: their application process was clear (83%, compared to 93% of respondents with no communication needs), asked

only relevant questions (82%, compared to 93% of respondents with no communication needs), and did not take too long (77%, compared to 93% of respondents with no communication needs).

8.2. Comments about applying for Social Security Scotland benefits

Anyone who had made an application was given the chance to comment on their experience¹².

Around 2350 responses were given. Around two-in-five comments were positive, whilst one-in-three were negative. One-in-ten comments were mixed, while a similar amount contained suggestions for improvements.

Three significant themes emerged from the comments around the topics of a) time, b) ease of process, c) role of staff and d) suggestions. These are reported on below.

Many respondents mentioned time as a factor, shaping their experience of the application process. As reported in Sections 3.4 and 7.4, this included time spent waiting in helpline and webchat queues. Other common issues experienced by respondents were time taken to fill in the application form and, as also reported in Sections 3.4 and 9.6, time spent waiting for a decision and/or payment. Overall, comments on the factor of time were three times more likely to be negative than positive.

Time spent waiting in helpline and webchat queues was most often cited negatively:

“The phones were awful. I waited for hours. I was leaving the Royal Infirmary and I walked to KFC in Buchanan Street, ate a meal. Then walked down Sauchiehall Street to the Costa where I found a socket to plug in my phone and charge it. And waited purchased a coffee. Was halfway through that when the phone was answered.”

Man, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

Respondents were much more likely to comment negatively on time taken to receive a decision. As touched upon in Section 3.4, negative comments on the topic of time were often coupled with statements noting a lack of communication from Social Security Scotland:

“Applications disappear into the void and you hear nothing for months on end. [...]”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment

Some respondents reasoned that a prolonged processing time, combined with a lack of communication, heightened feelings of stress and anxiety:

“I applied for DLA on the 18th of Dec, I have had zero communication what is happening. My anxiety is debilitating as it is. And not knowing if I'm getting help or not is making it worse.”

Experience of Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods

¹² ‘Thinking about when you applied for *Benefit*, please tell us in your own words what you liked about the process, or what you think could be improved.

Some also felt processing times were unfair, with friends or colleagues receiving application decisions in shorter time periods than themselves:

“I’ve waited over 2 months since my application and still haven’t heard if it’s been accepted or not. [...] I understand you are busy but I have a friend who applied a week after I did and she was accepted within a week. Why have I fallen through the cracks?”
Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods

“Yes 16 weeks I would like an answer again I have 2 disabled kids, friends who have applied after me has had 12 weeks off payments”
Man, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

Those with caring responsibilities most often detailed the negative impacts they experienced due to the factor of time:

“It’s a very long and stressful process, especially on parents of disabled kids who already have so much to do, so much to fight for, and spend so much emotional and physical energy elsewhere.”
Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment

“[...] It takes a lot of time to fill out the form which can take away from the person caring for a child with additional need. I had to arrange childcare in order to complete this.”
Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment

“It’s just such a shame that the process takes such a long time, it puts too much stress on parents with ASN kids, you always doubt if you have explained enough about your situation and if the person dealing with your claim understands the everyday struggles we go through. 6-8 months is a long time to hear the outcome and so much can change in the child’s condition between the application and decision”
Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment

“The application process is complicated, long and arduous considering applications will be done after the persons applying have given birth and are handling life with a newborn. Time and concentration are limited in the first few months of becoming a parent.[...]”
Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“I would like someone to get back to me about my best start application. 6 months is a ridiculous time to leave people waiting. I was forced to return to work early because I couldn’t afford to feed my baby. You need to hire more staff and not put people further into poverty”
Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“Just give us a decision so we can move on in our lives knowing if we will get the support needed for my son. Without knowing the level of disability we cannot get any assistance from certain groups.”

Man, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment

Comments on the time taken to fill in an application form were, however, evenly split between positive and negative:

“I was pleasantly surprised at how quick and easy the application process was there did not seem to be repeated questions or seemingly unnecessary questions”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“It took me over 30 hours to fill in the form and in the end I stopped saying things were wrong and said that I had no problem with things just to make it stop.”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Adult Disability Payment

When comments were mixed, many felt the process was time consuming. However, they understood and agreed with the reasons behind lengthy application forms and processing times:

“Although the online application took some time to complete I felt the questions were necessary to allow Social Security Scotland to identify what my specific needs are [..]”

Man, aged 45-54, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“[...] as a disabled person I found the application to be extremely long, time-consuming, and physically painful to complete, while simultaneously missing questions on some key aspects of daily living (detailed previously). However if the length and depth of the application is what is needed in order to avoid a more draconian assessment process, then I accept the trade-off.”

Man, aged 25-34, experience of Adult Disability Payment

Other mixed comments expressed more satisfaction, during long processing times, when Social Security Scotland had kept them up to date with the status of their application:

“I submitted my application on 29th November. I still don't have an outcome but i have been kept in the loop and have been receiving texts that my application was received and the delays that have occurred in December. Therefore, although nothing happened yet, I am glad I am informed every step of the way. I know it's being processed and that's a relief.”

Man, aged 45-54, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

When comments on time were positive, these often related to the length of application forms and the timeliness of communication from Social Security Scotland. Others commented on the length of time between submission of an application and receipt of a

decision and / or first payment:

“It didn’t take long from completing the form to receiving first payment”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“I would just like to say, that all correspondence from Social Security Scotland was in a great timely matter. And I also heard back from them a lot quicker than I was expecting and my claim was very quickly processed.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

One respondent, who described the timeliness of the service in positive terms, explained how the speed of the application process enabled them to access other sources of support, reduced their stress and made them feel valued and cared for:

“For me I applied under special rules. From application to receipt of first back dated payment this happened in around 7 working days. This was an extraordinary and helpful thing to happen. With a terminal diagnosis the last thing you want is complicated systems. My experience was so so good and the staff should be commended. They were quick to contact my oncologist and took an initial telephone confirmation to support application prior to biras form. ADP has opened up support for blue badge and bus pass and the simple process under the special rules has made life so much easier and less stressful for me. I want to thank social security Scotland for This. Of course the financial side is important but it also the recognition that support is needed and the speed of response that makes you feel cared for and that your situation is important to others.”

Man, aged 45-54, experience of Adult Disability Payment

Another significant theme commented on was the ease and/or difficulty of the application process.

Many positive comments simply described the process of filling in and submitting an application form as ‘quick and easy’:

“Quick and easy.”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Child Disability Payment

Others went into detail about the ease of the application process. This includes filling out and submitting application forms online (including the functionality of websites):

“Online form well set out and easy to follow. I liked that I could complete one section, save, and come back at a later time to complete”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment

I liked how easy it was for me to apply for the Scottish Child Payment, and that I didn't need to upload any pictures of documents, I only had to give my National Insurance Number, this made the whole thing a lot easier as I simply applied while on the bus taking my daughter to school. Took me all of 10 minutes [...]

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“It was easy to do as the questions were easy to understand and you could scan the supporting documents straight onto the application form”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Child Disability Payment

Also, the clarity, simplicity and conciseness of language and guidance (including visual components) used within application forms was credited as making the application process easier to complete:

“i thought applications were very good, it gave u examples at side where it can be more simplified to what they were needing to know and for u to provide [...] the colours and design of the application for me made it less daunting to do and more friendly and supportive on how to complete it”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“I think the way it is set out is fantastic it’s not one big long application it’s just a few clicks this makes it easier for people like myself with dyslexia to navigate without writing to much and having to look up spelling”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Scottish Child Payment. Very easy to apply. Very clear instructions and took little time. [...] Probably the most efficient and easiest online application I have ever made [...]”

Respondent with experience of Scottish Child Payment

“I have worked in social care for 29 years and this by far is the best application process I have experienced. It was clear, as concise as is possible and the staff treated me with dignity and respect.”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Adult Disability Payment

Some also commented on the role of Social Security Scotland staff in enabling an easy application process:

“[...] the application was made by the phone for social security guy who was really really keen! He makes things so easy with lots of jokes laugh's,so was so comfortable to be honest”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Scottish Child Payment

Other comments expressed surprise at how easy the application process was:

“Would just like to say I was pleasantly surprised how straightforward and easy it was to complete and submit from beginning to end, no problems at all.”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“I felt the process was good and easier than I anticipated”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Child Disability Payment

As mentioned in Section 7.4, others compared the ease of the process favourably to previous experiences of filling in application forms. Notably with the Department for Work and Pensions:

“So much easier than DWP thank you”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Excellent and knowledgeable, makes it quiet clear what you need to do and why so much easier now with SSS than with the old child disability which was stressing so well do for making it easier”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Child Disability Payment and child moving from DLA for Children to Child Disability Payment

“Was the easiest thing I've applied for. Usually as a kinship carer it's complicated. I had anxieties about getting the information across as I've struggled elsewhere. This was simple and sorted swiftly”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

Conversely, for respondents who found aspects of the application process difficult, several common themes were identified. These include problems obtaining supporting information, problems uploading supporting information online, and confusion around joint applications for Best Start Grant payments.

For those who had problems obtaining supporting information, this could include a lack of access to paper forms of information, such as bank statements and medical appointments:

“The bank and post office in my area are close and sue to security can't sceenshot bank statements with everything been paperless these days. Also due to covid some letter where our of date from note seen specialist but same about getting letters to keep once appiont has been the hospital where keeping them that you would use for evidence”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“[...] It's hard to get supporting info as most notes are kept on computers and not posted out.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment

‘If 16 or over it is difficult to obtain proof of address as doctor or dentist appointments don't state address and young people font get utility bills”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Young Carer Grant

“As a parent I get limited information that is received on letterheaded paper. I cannot access the information easily and have to hold files for my disabled son so I can copy when requested. It's additional work for me as a carer”

Respondent who described their gender as 'in another way', aged 45-54, experience of Child Disability Payment

Also, overstretched and time poor medical services responding slowly, or not at all, to requests for supporting information were identified as contributing factors:

“CAHMS staff appeared to be overstretched and overworked so it took a while to obtain the supporting information.”

Man, aged 55-64, experience of Child Disability Payment

“I struggled badly with supporting evidence / section 2 . I didn't know where to turn for this, my local GP practice were very unhelpful. I wrote to consultant who treated me in hospital but time passed with no reply. It became to much calling the hospital,my GP and the physio who had helped looking for " supporting evidence that would help my application" I gave up . It was later I then received a letter informing me my application was closed / failed.”

Man, aged 55-64, experience of Adult Disability Payment

For those who found it difficult to upload supporting information, some reported they were limited to the number of items that could be uploaded. For others, there was a lack of clarity/options for when/where/how to provide information:

“it was difficult to upload more than 5 items to support my claim as it wouldn't allow me to upload more”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“[...] There seemed to be an issue adding multiple page documents. I got help on the phone but it didnt work so I posted the paperwork.”

Man, aged 45-54, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“It was not clear when supporting information was to be provided. There was no option to include it within first application and had to be sent separately which I felt caused an unnecessary delay.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

For those who found the process of making a joint application for Best Start Grant payments difficult, reasons given include the process being confusing and unclear. Others felt it was a waste of time and resource:

‘It was difficult for me to pick only the child grant for my child starting school, I had to apply for everything initially as I could not find an option for that application only. I found the application confusing in comparison to when my child was younger and I was applying for the best start food grant etc.’

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“The best start grant is confusing to apply for. You basically apply for best start foods again for it which is strange to me and very confusing.”

Woman, aged 16-24

“[...] I was put forward for best start/ food grants even though my children are way older than the qualifying age so it seems a waste of resources to make an application for me only to then have the my local council tell me I didn't qualify-something I knew already! I only wanted to apply for Scottish Child Payment.”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

Disability payment applicants notably specified the difficulties they experienced when making an application. This includes the emotional toll of communicating personal experiences of disability. Also, of feeling embarrassment or shame:

“[...] I found it difficult to explain what both my child and the family go through on a daily basis trying to manage his needs. Found it very depressing and I became angry seeing our daily struggle laid out on paper for others to judge us. Also made me question where I'd gone wrong in trying to manage the situation and left me depressed.”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Child Disability Payment

“It was traumatic for me as a parent to do this and at one point, I genuinely didn't feel I could continue with it all. It was very stressful and unnecessary [...]”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Child Disability Payment

“I found the process very negative as the information needs to be deficit based and describing my child's care needs in their worst moments. It was not a pleasant experience detailing my child's needs in that way. [...]”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment

“With autistic children - they often mask - so asking for statements from schools/other settings as much as I can understand why, can be unsettling as those places often can't tell anything and think children who blow up at home and need inordinate amount of support are absolutely fine which is not fair.[...]”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment

“it was arranged for a home visit for me to reapply . A young gentleman came to my house to help me reapply on his laptop, a bit daunting for a 59 year old woman with a prolapse and bladder incontinence !”

Woman, aged 55-64, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“My child's condition is a long term condition managed at home [...] The nature of her condition is that it relates to her bodily functions and as she is a young girl this can be

extremely embarrassing and distressing for her to have others know about what is going on [...] I felt as a result of this it was hard to get supporting information from her headteacher as my daughter is very good at concealing how bad her condition is due to the embarrassing nature of her condition [...]"

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment and child moving from DLA for Children to Child Disability Payment

Other difficulties for disability applicants include gathering supporting information without a diagnosis and / or for 'invisible' health conditions. Also, the omission of specific health conditions listed in the application form.

"I do not feel the information asked for fully covers the needs of un diagnosed illness"

Man, aged 35-44, experience of Adult Disability Payment

'[...] I have a serious illness and cannot work and got advice to apply, but found the questions weren't quite geared towards me , it was more general, just feel there should be sections for like cancer as it's a different kind of disability'

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Adult Disability Payment

'I found it difficult to describe my disability in the format given. I have periods when i am totally disabled and unable to speak, cook, understand what people are saying, take medication, etc. But this passes gradually over 4 or 5 days and I'm fine until another attack happens.'

Woman, aged 55-64, experience of Adult Disability Payment

"[...] If your child is ND the bath process itself can be typical or even short- but there's going to be days of laying the ground for it and providing the emotional comfort blanket so they can make that transition- filling out the form I had a very strong feeling it does not capture the ND experience at all well."

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment

"Crohn's disease is a disability!"

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Adult Disability Payment

Some felt the application form did not adequately enable them to communicate, or to measure, fluctuating symptoms of ill-health. Others found it difficult to communicate how pain affects daily life and mobility:

"I found this booklet difficult to full in because I have taken a Holistic approach to my condition and though I am living in constant pain I felt the booklet was very focused on how much pain relief and how far you can walk etc. It doesn't say ' How far can you walk without analgesia ' or How does it feel walking with pain?"

Woman, aged 55-64, experience of Adult Disability Payment

"When I said I walked from the car park to my work location you took this as my being able to do so easily, rather than the fact I have no choice but to walk to the venue and the

amount of pain and discomfort that entails. I do not believe you have fully accepted that chronic pain is there all the time and that it is extremely tiring to be in pain all the time.”
Respondent who described their gender as ‘in another way’, aged 55-64, experience of Adult Disability Payment

The third significant theme to emerge from the comments was the role of Social Security Scotland staff in shaping applicants’ experiences. As with Section 7.4, the role of staff in helping respondents submit an application was often commented on. Comments were overwhelmingly positive. Positive comments notably described staff treating respondents with kindness, dignity and respect:

“I felt like I was treated with dignity and respect throughout the whole process. It very much felt like the staff were doing their best to help and support me and were keen to award me a payment level that reflected my needs.”
Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“From the first call to social security Scotland I felt respected and i was comfortable with all the people who were involved in my application. I thank everyone for their support and help.”
Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“My case worker was absolutely lovely and supportive especially as I was in the hospital with my son during the time I made my claim she was just so understanding and helpful”
Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment

“As no English spoken i was very happy with one of the staff whom helped me to fill my application ,thank you for that lady she was kind and understandable.”
Respondent who described their gender as ‘in another way’, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“The staff member alison was very nice spoke clearly and understandable also spoke to me like a human being”
Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

Others, as reported in Section 7.4, complemented staff on their knowledge of the benefits system, and the clarity by which this information was communicated:

“They were fantastic as I was unaware all the benefits I was entitled to and the advisor gave me all the information correctly and helped filled out the correct paperwork and supporting documents”
Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“Staff where spot on with details of claim , how to upload documents and step by step guidance help no end.”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Scottish Child Payment

"[...] I feel like the process was as easy as it could be for me, and I hope this is because staff are trauma informed and alert to the possibility that their responses could easily have a negative impact. As it is I certainly feel I have been believed, respected and supported and am happy with the service received."

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Adult Disability Payment

Some commented on the role of staff in reducing their experiences of stress when making an application:

"My anxiety peaks when I discuss or relay the change in my physical and mental health. It was necessary to go into detail to complete my application, but I felt supported and treated with respect throughout. Not attacked, ignored or belittled as the process was previously."

Man, aged 45-54, experience of Adult Disability Payment

"writing down all your child's issues and medical matters can be very challenging and emotionally draining however the person that we spoke to was very calming and reassuring and helped me complete any details I had forgotten"

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment

"I have both mental health and health issues. Completing form was very stressful and did bring on frequent attacks. Social Security Scotland lady who visited me was very compassionate and understanding, non judgemental. She totally understood what I was saying, although I have embarrassing conditions and how they affect me day to day. She helped finish the form and at all times told me how she expressed my illnesses and condition from my description onto the form, if there was something I was unsure with we would go over it again. I never felt hurried or harassed, she kept everything on an even keel. This put me at ease and I felt I was submitting a truthful description of my health and welfare."

Woman, experience of Adult Disability Payment

"The whole application process was free from the anxiety and stress that usually accompanies such an application. Treated with dignity and respect when calling in at all times. Staff very helpful, professional and compassionate. Be proud of this service you are providing."

Man, aged 35-44, experience of Adult Disability Payment

Some respondents also offered suggestions as how to improve the application system. Most often respondents requested an 'online portal' where they could track the progress of their application:

"Would be nice to have log in process and after that a section where I can see my applications date and time with social security Scotland as many times people applying for other grants benefits beside child payments and hard to follow my progress"

Man, aged 35-44, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“It would have been good to have a portal online where you could see the progress of your application after you submitted it because I didn’t know what was happening with it until I received the report through the post, until that point I had no communication after submission telling me that they had everything they needed or that my application had been looked at so I was still expecting to have to have a consultation when the report came in.”

Respondent who described their gender as ‘in another way’, aged 16-24, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“My application took a long time to process due to delay from hospital providing information I only found out by calling. It would have been helpful to have been able to be kept up to date with by online portal or by letter. Although staff were helpful and kind when I called”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment

“It would have been nice to get a confirmation and be able to track progress or edit the application. It felt like once submitted it was gone and I wasn’t sure if I had done it correctly.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“The process would be better if you could log on and see progress of the application”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

9. Application decisions

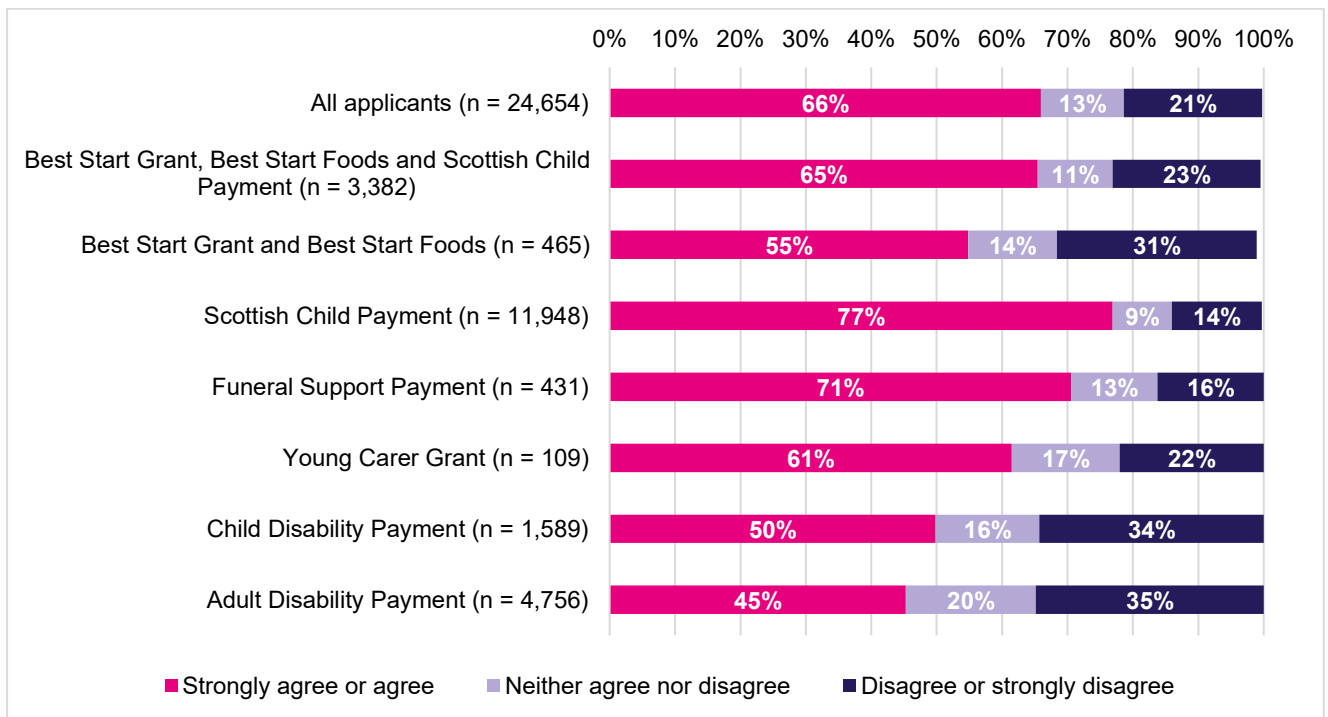
9.1. Updates on progress of decisions

Among all respondents who had applied for a benefit, two-thirds (66%) agreed with the statement 'I got enough updates on the progress of my application(s)'. A little over one-in-five (21%) disagreed with this statement and around one-in-eight (13%) answered 'neither agree nor disagree'.

Views on progress updates were least favourable from Adult Disability Payment and Child Disability Payment applicants, amongst whom 45% and 50% respectively agreed with the statement. Within these groups disagreement was indicated by around one-in-three (35% and 34% respectively), as shown in Figure 9.1.

Figure 9.1: 'I got enough updates on the progress of my application(s)', by benefit experience

All respondents who had applied for a benefit

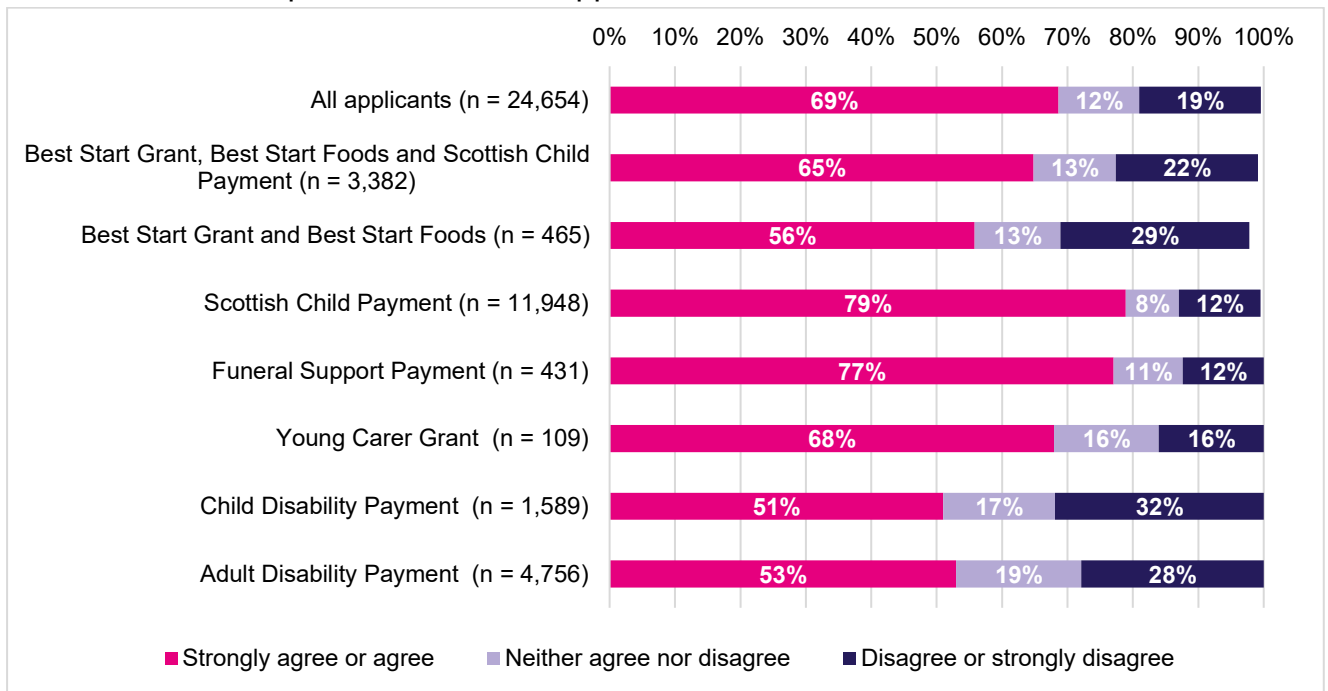


9.2. Timeliness of decision

Among all respondents who had applied for a benefit, just under seven-in-ten (69%) agreed with the statement 'my application(s) was (were) handled within a reasonable time frame'. Just under a fifth (19%) disagreed with this statement and slightly more than one-in-ten (12%) answered 'neither agree nor disagree'. Agreement was highest from Scottish Child Payment applicants (79%) and Funeral Support Payment applicants (77%), as shown in Figure 9.2.

Figure 9.2: 'My application(s) was (were) handled within a reasonable time frame', by benefit experience.

All respondents who had applied for a benefit.



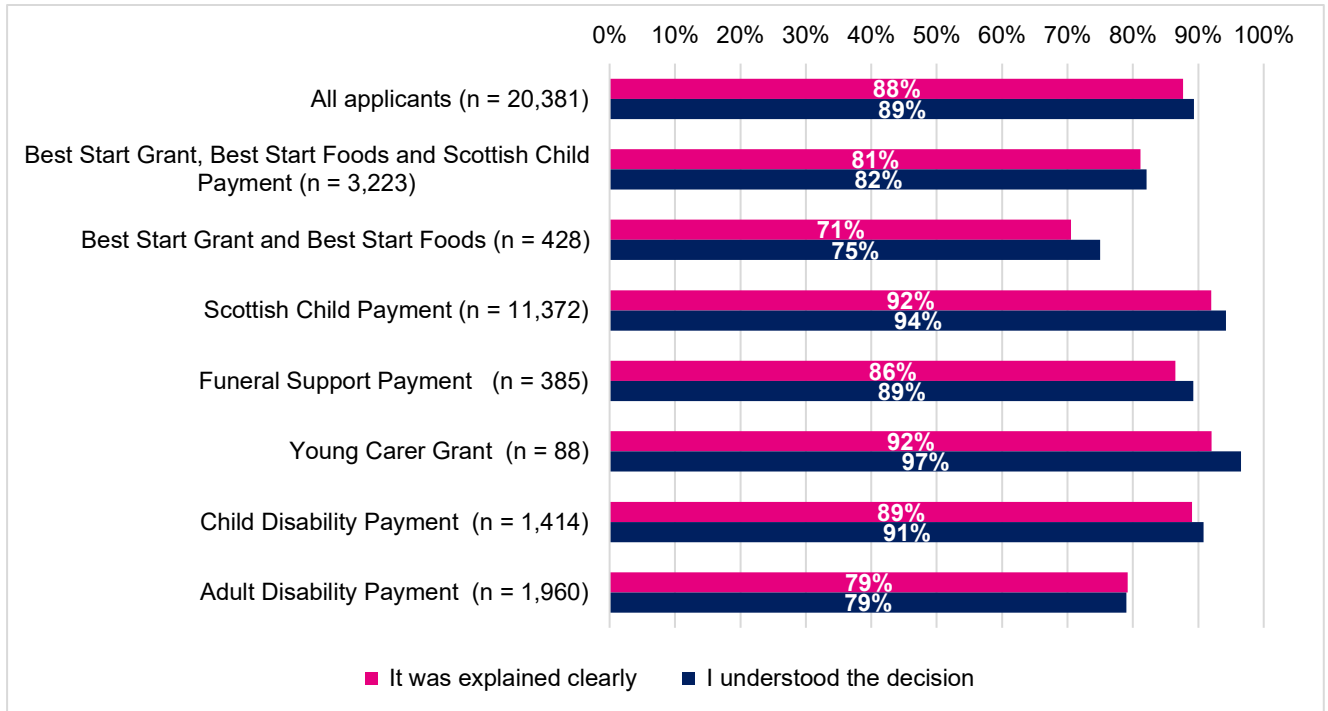
9.3. Clarity of decisions

A little under nine-in-ten respondents agreed that the decision on their application was 'explained clearly' (88%). A similar proportion said they 'understood the decision' (89%).

Figure 9.3 shows that views on the clarity of decisions were reasonably similar across most benefit experience groups. However, Scottish Child Payment and Young Carer Grant applicants were marginally more likely to agree with the statements, and Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods applicants were less likely.

Figure 9.3: Proportion of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statements ‘my decision(s) were explained clearly’ and ‘I understood the decision’, by benefit experience

All respondents who had applied for each benefit



9.4. Unsuccessful decisions and resulting actions

One-in-ten (10%) respondents had received an unsuccessful decision on their application (See Table 9.1). Of those, 11% asked for Social Security Scotland to look at the decision again, 14% made a new application for the same benefit, more than half said that they took no further action (57%).

Around a third (32%) of Best Start Foods applicants reported being unsuccessful with their application. Of those respondents, the majority (76%) reported taking no further action following their unsuccessful application. Scottish Child Payment had the least reported unsuccessful applications (4%). Again, most of those respondents (65%) reported taking no further action.

Table 9.1: Unsuccessful decisions and actions taken after receiving, by benefit experience

All respondents who had received an unsuccessful (no award) decision for a Social Security Scotland benefit; Row percentages

Benefit experience	% unsuccessful (no award)	Ask Social Security Scotland to look at the decision again	Contact Social Security Scotland to find out more	Submit new evidence	Make a new application for the same benefit	Take no further action	Other	Total
All applicants	10%	11%	13%	9%	14%	57%	1%	23,959
Best Start Grant	19%	11%	9%	4%	9%	72%	5%	3,944
Best Start Foods	32%	9%	9%	3%	8%	76%	4%	3,816
Scottish Child Payment	4%	14%	9%	5%	11%	65%	8%	14,869
Funeral Support Payment	13%	10%	12%	4%	2%	78%	4%	452
Young Carer Grant	11%	#	#	#	#	#	#	95
Child Disability Payment	6%	2%	14%	13%	9%	36%	9%	1,702
Adult Disability Payment	14%	0%	12%	16%	9%	51%	14%	4,582

9.5. Disagreement with decisions

Around one-in-six respondents (17%) disagreed with at least one decision made on an application for a Social Security Scotland benefit since 1 April 2022¹³. Those who did not agree with a decision were asked for which benefit they disagreed with the decision, and whether they asked Social Security Scotland to look at the decision(s) again. Table 9.2 sets out the findings from these questions. Almost two-fifths (39%) of those who disagreed with a decision on an application for Adult Disability Payment or Child Disability Payment (36%) then asked Social Security Scotland to look at the decision(s) again, much more than for those who disagreed with decisions for other benefits.

¹³ This includes a small proportion who received more than one decision and disagreed with one or more of these, even if agreeing with others.

Table 9.2: Disagreement with application decision and action(s) taken after receiving such a decision, by the benefit decision which the respondent felt was wrong

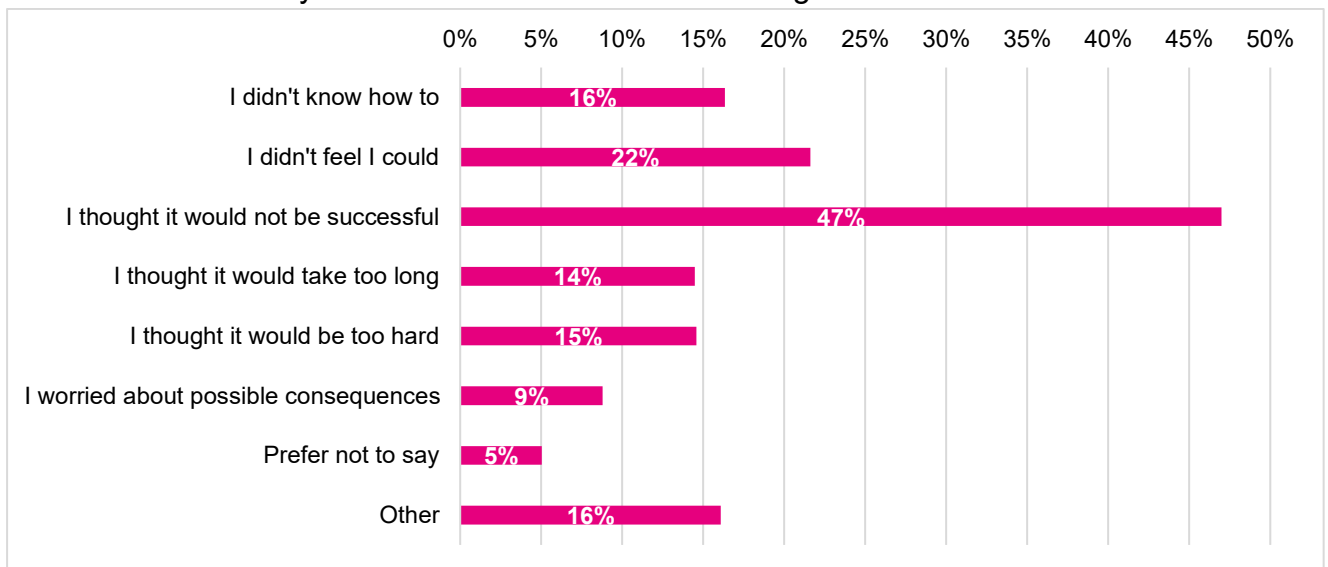
All respondents who had applied for each benefit

For which benefit(s) did you think Social Security Scotland got the decision wrong?	Felt Social Security Scotland got the decision(s) wrong - all receiving decision	Felt Social Security Scotland got the decision(s) wrong - all receiving no award	% who then asked Social Security Scotland to look at the decision(s) again	Total
Best Start Grant	12%	59%	21%	3,685
Best Start Foods	16%	49%	19%	3,493
Scottish Child Payment	5%	79%	27%	11,041
Funeral Support Payment	15%	71%	18%	343
Young Carer Grant	9%	86%	13%	88
Child Disability Payment	11%	57%	36%	1,516
Adult Disability Payment	19%	84%	39%	4,364

Those respondents who felt that Social Security Scotland got the decision(s) wrong, but did not ask Social Security Scotland to look at the decision(s) again were asked why they did not ask Social Security Scotland to look at the decision(s) again. Nearly half (47%) of respondents answered 'I thought it would not be successful', and nearly a quarter (22%) 'I didn't feel I could', as shown in Figure 9.4.

Figure 9.4: Why didn't you ask Social Security Scotland to look at the decision(s) again?

All respondents who disagreed with a benefit decision but did not ask Social Security Scotland to look at the decision again.



9.6. Comments about application decisions

Anyone who had completed an application was asked to comment about their experience receiving an application decision¹⁴.

Around 2000 substantive responses were given. Over half of these comments were negative and just over a third were positive. A roughly equal number of comments were mixed comments (contained elements of both positive and negative sentiment) or included suggestions for service improvement. A small proportion were neutral comments (did not express a positive or negative sentiment).

A number of comments mentioned still waiting on a decision. Respondents were only invited to the survey if they had received an application decision or a payment. However many may have made multiple applications, or made an application whilst also receiving a payment for a non-application benefit, which may account for the number of comments received on the topic of waiting for a decision.

As reported in Sections 3.4 and 8.5 and 11.4, the timing around decisions was mentioned consistently in the negative responses. Many respondents were still awaiting a decision and felt the process took too long:

“I submitted my form in November 22, exact same date as 4 people I know. They have all revived feedback about dates and had payments but I have not...I just don't understand why I'm the only person I know not to have had payment yet”
Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Submitted application on 14th November, only one text update and more than two months on and a decision still had not been made, the Scottish government were aware that there would be a significant amount of applications submitted when the criteria opened up to all children so should have had sufficient staff to cope with the demand and process applications in a reasonable time.”
Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“The time scale and process needs to be improved as I have been waiting almost 6 months and being told there is no timescale for how long this will take as they are awaiting DWP records/paperwork but this has been for almost 3months, there should be something in place for when the dwp don't comply within a certain time to allow applications to be completed without it or another way to retrieve the information”
Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment and child moving from DLA for Children to Child Disability Payment

¹⁴ 'Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience receiving a decision for your *Benefit* application?'

“Applied on 14 November and am still waiting to hear about the decision. As a single parent, struggling financially this is a long time to wait. No updates to keep me up to date with what stage it is at”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“I applied for scp on 14th nov. I have heard nothing. People who applied after me have had a decision and more than one payment meanwhile my application hasn't been looked at. That hasn't been dealt with very well. I do understand there was a lot to process. But people who applied weeks after me have a decision and payment?”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“The wait time is ridiculously long, I understand that there can be a lot of demand of applications coming in but have been waiting 3 months for a decision to get put through on one without any contact about the process is not good”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“I think overall my application took 18 weeks which I thought was a little too long although I fully appreciate that it was a new process and according to press reports an increase in applications. I also appreciate there would be a period of time while waiting for Dr's reports to be returned etc. I think if the system allowed for email updates to be sent when your application changes from one state to another would be really helpful..”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“I really think you need to streamline your service. It took much less time for my younger child to receive a DLA decision and we got regular letters telling us how long it would take.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment and child moving from DLA for Children to Child Disability Payment

“It takes a long time to process, so the bereaved have a large cash outlay before they know if any money will be returned to them in support. This could cause considerable financial hardship for families living on the breadline.”

Man, aged 65+, experience of Funeral Support Payment

As reported in Sections 3.4 and 8.5, issues around timing were compounded for many applicants by a lack of updates. Many felt the communication from Social Security Scotland was poor:

“...It's not good enough that I've been waiting for months and months and have received no contact, no updates, nothing. This service has given me nothing but anxiety about when I'll be able to buy things for my baby which is due in 58 days now. I am very unsatisfied with the service that has been provided and not by staff but just

due to the procedures and practices that you are following.”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“It took an extremely long time. When I applied the website said it would take 6 to 8 weeks after receiving my application. It ended up taking nearly 4 months. During this time I had no contact from Social Security Scotland about my application or why it was taking so much longer than expected. For someone who struggles with severe anxiety and find basic day to day life difficult this really isn't good. I ended up checking my bank and email obsessively up to roughly 25 times daily and had convinced myself my application would be rejected. I phoned Social Security Scotland after 12 weeks to ask about my application and was told that yes someone had looked at my application but they couldn't give me any timeframe for receiving a decision. At that point I had given up on a positive application and just needed information one way or the other. Even just an automatic email to let people know their application is being processed or something to let people know it is going to take months instead of weeks would have made my wait much less stressful and easier to deal with.”

Man, aged 45-54, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“I have not had any updates in regards to my application. There needs to be much more communication to let people know how their application is going.”

Man, aged 25-34, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Communication about the progress of my claim was not good. The initial letter confirming receipt of my claim had invalid online links. The timescale quoted in the letter was very inaccurate. I received no further communication until the award was decided a period of several months later and I was unable to get information on the progress of my claim or any indication of how long I would have to wait from your staff.”

Woman, aged 55-64, experience of Adult Disability Payment

Many respondents found it difficult to get in touch with Social Security Scotland to check on the progress of their application, either through webchat or through the helpline. As also discussed in Sections 3.4 and 7.4, many said call wait times were too long:

“...You can't get through on the helpline, other than waiting ages on hold (longest I have waited is 1.5 hours, others have waited longer!) web chat doesn't work at all. Joined at 9am and still waited until after 4pm with nothing happening. Communication needs improved.”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Due to the postal strikes causing communication problems, I tried to phone social security Scotland in several occasions and found this difficult and time consuming trying to navigate the automated phone system and then very long waiting on the

phone with no clue as to my position in the cue- some indicator as to my position in the cue would have helped”

Woman, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“Communication was very poor. The only time I received any updates was when I made the contact to ask. The only communication I received was an initial email to say my application was received, then a letter about my consultation and then finally my award letter. There was no updates on progress of my application which I feel isn’t good practice. An applicant shouldn’t have to keep phoning or going on webchat to ask for updates”

Woman, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“I tried to clear up some questions on the phone and waited a very long time to get in touch with the assistant. Then when I got through I was told to call back later. I did not want to call back later because the connection time with the assistant took about 30-40 minutes and I was simply told to call back. There was also a feeling that it would be better to find out all the necessary information on my own and I simply distract the assistant from work in vain, or perhaps because English is my second language and I was poorly understood.”

Respondent with experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

Some respondents had issues around payments. Many received their payments before their decision letters which some found confusing. As also reported in Section 11.4, others said that the lack of payment schedule was making it difficult to plan. Some had experienced inaccurate decision letters:

“The way payments are made are confusing. The date I was told (with the exception of over new year) was different from what I was expected. I was told every 4 weeks which would make it a Friday but I was paid on a Monday. With it being unclear when payment will be made it makes it very difficult to budget.”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“After submitting the application I had no confirmation of receipt, also no update on progress in the 10 weeks. My first payment reached my bank account before I received the award letter so unsure what I had actually been awarded at first.”

Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment

“Money was in bank before I received a decision letter. Probably should do that the other way round. Send a text maybe? I had no idea what it was when it appeared.”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“I think may have been time of the year and postal strikes but my money came a considerable time before my paperwork. I would also have preferred a schedule of

payments to help me manage my finances. I'm still trying to figure out payment dates as payments were paid early at Christmas/New year. I'm grateful to be awarded and agree money should be paid as soon as. However a schedule of payments would really help."

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Scottish Child Payment

"I have had numerous letters, all dates differently with different decisions. It was all very confusing"

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods

There were many respondents who disagreed with the eligibility criteria for benefits and felt that it was discriminatory to certain groups, particularly working people. Others, as also reported in Section 13.4, felt the eligibility criteria should be widened, notably those in receipt of Scottish Child Payment. Some wanted eligibility criteria based on income thresholds to be increased in line with rising prices:

"It's still not enough money to help in this crisis."

Respondent who identified as 'in another way', aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

"Everyone should be entitled to support not just those on benefits"

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

"I just don't understand why people who work to provide, don't get these benefits. Or additional payments to help. The cost of living has risen. And the government should be helping all parents. Not targeting a specific group. Where's the fairness and equality in that? People who work still struggle too. But because we earn and work hard for a living, we miss out."

Woman, aged 35-44

"I just feel if you don't hit certain trigger words when filling out an application then that's what makes it unsuccessful rather than the actual condition. I am baffled how a child with daily struggles due to a brain condition can possibly be rejected but I know first hand people that claim benefits because they know just exactly what to write. I work 37 hours and have to take my own leave or unpaid when my daughter is having a bad day yet get no help. The system penalises genuine parents it's unfair. But then it's always the workers that suffer while those playing the system that have never worked a day in their lives get everything."

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment

"It's not fair to base this help on one's salary. I may have a good salary, but I pay a lot of taxes and it's not easy to live with three young kids - regardless of your household income."

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods

Some negative comments were about staff. As reported in Section 7.4, some respondents said that they were given poor or conflicting information from staff. Others felt that staff did not understand their condition:

“The communication has been very poor. Even when I web chatted with someone, they were reluctant to provide any specifics about my application and each piece of information had to be drawn out by several questions. Eventually I was told my application had been processed but I then had to ask if it had been successful, which was met with a very short answer "Yes" no information was offered voluntarily despite the fact it was clearly there to be given. Instead of telling me when my payments would be etc I was told I would get a letter, but it seems I am not allowed to know the contents of this letter until it arrives. It comes across as unnecessarily secretive, and I don't know why that would be. I appreciate staff are under an immense amount of pressure just now, and that should have been managed better by those rolling out the new benefits and expecting staff to deal with this level of work load in such a short space and time. I think it has been planned poorly by management and this has had a huge detrimental affect on both SSS employees and those who use the service. There are many lines of communication open to SSS to keep people updated but all that has been sent is texts and emails that actually don't really provide any use able information.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Staff need to be more respectful to customers, unprofessional, unkind & poor communication. I was made to feel anxious & worried because no one would help or explain the process. Staff are a disgrace & their attitude was truly appalling.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“Got into debt waiting. A cheerful caller told me 'i wouldn't be any worse off for waiting, as would get all the money I was due' which was upsetting as I needed the money to bring me out of my overdraft. Suggests that SSS is staffed by the same judgemental middle class 'do gooders' who have themselves never struggled for money, that staff much of Scotland bloated public sector. Of course withholding money costs the recipient. So frustrating that the organisational culture doesn't accept that.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“When phoning and getting the application done over phone, I felt that the lady could have said there and then that because my mother already had a plot and £2900 in her bank that I would not qualify for help. It would have saved me having to check up twice on the progress and receiving the call on Mother's Day to inform me that I didn't qualify, on a hard enough day anyhow!”

Woman, aged 55-64, experience of Funeral Support Payment

“Staff haven't been helpful and sounds like they didn't have a clue what they were

doing and didn't want to help, lost count how many times I was left feeling frustrated better training needed”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Scottish Child Payment

Positive responses most often focused on respondents' overall experience. As reported in Sections 3.4 and 8.5, many found the process straightforward. Others felt that their experience with Social Security Scotland legitimised their experiences:

“I have had such a positive experience with the SSS process. It is warm and welcoming. There is also lots of good information on the website. I'd like to say well done and keep up the good work. The money will and has made a positive difference to our children and family unit.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“I was treated with respect and made to feel like my conditions were taken seriously”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“There are many people with rare diseases and hidden disabilities. Social Security Scotland is recognising these people”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“10/10 for the whole experience.”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“My experience of the application process has been positive..”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“Application process and whole experience with Social Security Scotland was very positive. Thank you”

Man, aged 35-44

As also reported in Sections 3.4 and 7.4, many respondents had a good experience of the service, including with staff who they felt understood and listened to them:

“Even if I had not been given an award my view of the service would remain the same. It was very difficult for me to accept having a disability and the staff made sure they got it right the first time. I felt validated by the award and relieved about being able to get support.”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“Overall very satisfied and staff were amazing very supportive and understanding they fully explained everything to me and made it straight forward for me.”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“On any occasion I have had contact with this department , my call or mail has always been responded to in a timely manner and I felt reassured that any matters would be dealt with . They seem organised and well versed in answering any question . Very professional”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“I was phoned by a staff member to advise that a decision had been made, what it was based on and what and when I would receive benefit. This was very helpful and a huge relief.”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“My case officer was incredibly helpful. There was a postal strike during my application process so my case officer made a promise to call me with the decision instead of me having to wait on the official decision letter. He stuck to the promise he made. He called and explained the decision, what to expect next and signposted me to other help possibly available to me. Three months on I've been able to access more support which was all because my case officer was patient enough to take the time to help me. I appreciate him every day.”

Man, 45-54, experience of Adult Disability Payment

Some respondents appreciated communication from Social Security Scotland and were understanding of delays to application processing times:

“Application was dealt with quickly despite being at a peak time with applications opening to older children in November. Regular text/email updates and payment processed quickly. The service did well to achieve this with the volume of new applications.”

Woman, aged 65+, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“I particularly appreciated that all documentation was send both in English and in Ukrainian. A small simple thing but it allowed independence and agency, being able to read and understand the letters. The whole process overall was a very refreshing change from the torture of the UC application.”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Communication has been excellent. If I needed to call I never felt the usual dread as I knew I'd be treated like a person”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“Found the Scottish system to be far easier to use. The reminder emails/texts letting me know how much time I had to finish the application were helpful as I could nor fill in in one go.”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Adult Disability Payment

Decision letters were also commented on favourably by some, who appreciated the level of detail:

“I liked how the award letter explained how and why I got awarded points under each criteria clearly with reference to supporting information.”

Man, aged 35-44, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“...it really helped that a full breakdown (a printed letter was especially appreciated) of my application and how each part was assessed (or 'weighted') was provided, so that I could see my struggles and requirements in the broader context of what ADP is awarded for, and what sorts of things are considered to be 'more serious'. This is in terms of mental and physical health. Thank you for providing this.”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“Very well explained and reasoned how decision was made. Options to dispute any factor were very clear.”

Man, aged 35-44, experience of Adult Disability Payment

Where comments contained both positive and negative sentiment, it was common for respondents to have a positive experience with staff whilst feeling like they waited too long for a decision or had not received enough communication from Social Security Scotland:

“Although timescales for getting through to a call handler were long, when I did speak to someone they were very respectful, courteous and treated me fairly and with dignity and I am grateful for that.”

Woman, aged 35-44

“The initial process was amazing. But, the clerical side of things needs a shake-up. I didn't hear anything about my application until I saw there was money in my account and a wrongly dated declaration letter a week later. However, I still believe the whole process was built on treating disabled people with fairness and dignity.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“Still waiting for the new under 16 payments? Applied ages ago, but no one knew when I phoned. Apart from that: you're all wonderful, helpful, patient, kind and make us feel of value; not a drain. The money also is a huge life changing blessing and means we can live a little not just survive.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

There were also some suggestions for service improvement. Many of these cover issues previously discussed such as a payment schedule, improved communication and extending eligibility. As with Section 8.5, some respondents wanted to be able to check the progress of their application online. Other common suggestions were for accessibility

improvements, automatic payments to eligible people, the ability to provide updates on changing medical conditions online and a call back service.

“I think it would be useful to provide information on when you will receive payments, IE the date of the first payment and the next couple of payment dates.”

Man, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“It would be beneficial to be able to log on and see the status of a new application. It would cease the need to call and check the status of an application. Thanks”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“I wouldn't have known about this payment if haven't seen it on Facebook. I think automatic receipt of payments would be a great benefit to people. A lot just don't know the system and it's hard when have children (additional needs) to find the information when a full time carer.”

Woman, aged 45-54

“It would be nice to have an online account to check when payments are due to be made as I like to have a budget each month and haven't been sure when the payments would be made recently due to adding a child onto the application”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“Signs the video with BSL to clarify me”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Scottish Child Payment

10. Case Transfers

For the first time responses from clients who had completed a Case Transfer to either Child or Adult Disability Payment are included in a Client Survey annual report. Such clients completed a modified survey which included additional questions focused on their experience of the Case Transfer process and, where relevant, omitted questions on applications and decisions. Around 3,900 survey respondents had completed a Case Transfer, which equates to around three-in-ten (30%) of all respondents with experience of Child or Adult Disability Payment, and around one-in-ten (11%) of all respondents.

10.1. Experience of Case Transfer

Of those who had completed a Case Transfer to either Child or Adult Disability Payment, over four-fifths (84%) agreed with the statement 'I felt informed about the process'. Less than half agreed with the statement 'being Case Transferred made me feel anxious' (47%), with around a third (32%) disagreeing with this statement (see Table 10.1).

Table 10.1: Views on the Case Transfer process

All respondents who had completed a Case Transfer; Row percentages

Thinking about your Case Transfer, how much do you agree or disagree with the following...	Strongly agree or agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree or strongly disagree	Total
I felt informed about the process	84%	9%	7%	3,728
I felt reassured about the process	77%	15%	8%	3,638
Being Case Transferred made me feel anxious	47%	21%	32%	3,599
I felt supported during the process	58%	31%	11%	3,642

10.2. Experience of Case Transfer, by type of transfer

Respondents who had Case Transferred to Adult Disability Payment were asked whether they had transferred from Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Working Age Disability Living Allowance (WADLA). The low number of respondents who transferred from WADLA means that findings for this cohort should be interpreted with caution.

Those who Case Transferred to Child Disability Payment were more likely to agree that they 'felt informed about the process' (87%, compared with Case Transferred from PIP (84%) or WADLA (74%) to Adult Disability Payment). Of those who Case Transferred from PIP to Adult Disability Payment over half (57%) agreed with the statement 'being Case Transferred made me feel anxious' compared to around a third (34%) of those who transferred to Child Disability Payment (see Table 10.2).

Table 10.2: Views on the Case Transfer process, by transfer type

All respondents who had completed a Case Transfer; Row percentages

Agreed or strongly agreed that...	Case Transferred...		
	From PIP to Adult Disability Payment	From WADLA to Adult Disability Payment	To Child Disability Payment
I felt informed about the process	84%	74%	87%
I felt reassured about the process	75%	71%	82%
Being Case Transferred made me feel anxious	57%	53%	34%
I felt supported during the process	54%	63%	61%
Total	1,861	58	1,528

10.3. Views on Case Transfer communication

Those with experience of Case Transfer were also asked about the communication they received from Social Security Scotland about the Case Transfer process. Of those, over four-fifths agreed that: ‘the tone was friendly’ (84%); and that ‘it was clear and easy to understand’ (83%). To a slightly lesser extent, respondents agreed that: ‘it helped me to understand what was happening and why’ (80%); and, ‘it made me feel confident that I could approach Social Security Scotland if I had a query’ (79%) (see Table 10.3).

Table 10.3: Views on communication received from Social Security Scotland about the Case Transfer process

All respondents who had completed a Case Transfer; Row percentages

Thinking about the communication you received from Social Security Scotland about your Case Transfer	Strongly agree or agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree or strongly disagree	Total
It was clear and easy to understand	83%	11%	6%	3,722
The tone was friendly	84%	14%	2%	3,605
It helped me to understand what was happening and why	80%	14%	5%	3,688
It made me feel confident that I could approach Social Security Scotland if I had a query	79%	16%	6%	3,709

10.4. Views on Case Transfer communication, by transfer type

On communication received about the process, those with experience of being Case Transferred to Child Disability Payment were more likely to agree with the statement ‘it was clear and easy to understand’ (88%, compared with Case Transferred from PIP (80%) or WADLA (73%) to Adult Disability Payment). There was also differences in agreement with the statement ‘it made me feel confident that I could approach Social Security Scotland if I had a query’ for experience of Case Transfer to Child Disability Payment (84%, compared with Case Transferred from PIP (75%) or WADLA (74%) to Adult Disability Payment) (see Table 10.4).

Table 10.4: Views on communication received from Social Security Scotland about the Case Transfer process, by transfer type

All respondents who had completed a Case Transfer; Row percentages

Strongly agreed or agreed that...	Case Transferred...		
	From PIP to Adult Disability Payment	From WADLA to Adult Disability Payment	To Child Disability Payment
It was clear and easy to understand	80%	73%	88%
The tone was friendly	82%	84%	87%
It helped me to understand what was happening and why	78%	74%	85%
It made me feel confident that I could approach Social Security Scotland if I had a query	75%	74%	84%
Total	1,852	56	1,524

11. Receiving payments

11.1. Overall experience of receiving benefit payments

The vast majority of respondents (94%) said that their overall experience of receiving benefit payment(s) from Social Security Scotland was 'very good' or 'good'. Only 1% described their experience as 'poor' or 'very poor'.

A substantial majority (92% or more) of respondents with experience of receiving payments each benefit described their experience as 'very good' or 'good', with the exception of Carer's Allowance Supplement recipients (88%) (see Table 11.1).

Table 11.1: Overall rating of experience of receiving payments, by benefit received
All respondents with experience of receiving a payment for each benefit; Row percentages

Benefit received	Very good or good	Neither poor nor good	Poor or very poor	Total
All payment recipients	94%	5%	1%	28,303
Carer's Allowance Supplement	88%	9%	3%	1,417
Best Start Grant	93%	5%	1%	3,075
Best Start Foods	92%	6%	2%	1,828
Funeral Support Payment	94%	#	#	340
Young Carer Grant	92%	#	#	61
Scottish Child Payment	96%	4%	1%	14,110
Child Winter Heating Assistance	95%	#	#	307
Child Disability Payment	93%	6%	1%	4,245
Adult Disability Payment	92%	7%	1%	6,788

Ratings were similar across different demographic breakdowns, with over 90% in each key group saying their experience was good. These results can be seen in full in the [Supplementary document: tables and methods](#).

11.2. Timing and accuracy of benefit payments

The vast majority (97%) of respondents who had received a payment said they got it when Social Security Scotland said they would. A similarly high proportion said that they were paid the right amount 'first time' (95%) and, where relevant, the right amount 'every time' (96%). Agreement was also very high among all benefit recipient groups, as shown in Table 11.2.

Table 11.2: Whether payments were on time and accurate

All respondents with experience of receiving payments for each benefit; Row percentages

Benefit received	Received payment when Social Security Scotland said they would	Received right amount first time	Received right amount every time	Total
All payment recipients	97%	97%	97%	26,102
Carer's Allowance Supplement	97%	97%		1,326
Best Start Grant	94%	94%		2,741
Best Start Foods	93%	92%	90%	1,624
Funeral Support Payment	96%	97%		283
Young Carer Grant	91%	95%		54
Scottish Child Payment	96%	95%	97%	12,916
Child Winter Heating Assistance	97%	99%		269
Child Disability Payment	98%	99%	99%	3,953
Adult Disability Payment	99%	99%	99%	6,382

11.3. Impact of benefit payments

Respondents were asked about the impact that benefit payment(s) from Social Security Scotland have had for them. On a scale of zero ('not at all') to ten ('a lot'), benefit recipients were asked to rate how much their payment(s) had:

- Helped to make a difference to their life
- Helped them to control their finances
- Helped them to pay for what they needed.

Ratings provided were grouped into low (zero to three), medium (four to seven) and high (eight to ten) categories for the purposes of analysis. Overall most respondents gave a high rating for the impact of receiving payments, as outlined in Table 11.3. Around three-quarters of respondents gave a high rating for how much their payment(s) had 'helped make a difference to your life' (77%) and 'helped you to pay for what you needed' (72%). Over six-in-ten respondents gave a high rating for how much their payment(s) had 'helped you to control your finances' (67%). Around half of respondents gave a rating of ten ('a lot') across each of the three statements.

The table also shows the average score given in response to each statement ranged from 7.9 for how much their payments 'helped you to control your finances' to 8.6 for 'helped make a difference to your life'.

Table 11.3: Impact of benefit payments

All respondents with experience of receiving payments; Column percentages and mean score

Rating of impact of benefit payment in relation to statement from zero ('not at all') to ten ('a lot')	Helped make a difference to your life	Helped you to control your finances	Helped you to pay for what you needed
Proportion saying zero to three	4%	8%	7%
Proportion saying four to seven	19%	25%	22%
Proportion saying eight to ten	77%	67%	72%
Proportion saying ten	61%	49%	55%
Average (mean) rating	8.6	7.9	8.2
Total	28,360	28,196	28,311

The mean ratings given by those who received Child Disability Payment were higher across all three statements compared to other benefit recipient groups. The mean ratings given by those who had received Carer's Allowance Supplement were lower than across most other groups, as Table 11.4 shows.

Table 11.4: Average impact rating, by benefit experience

All respondents with experience of receiving payments for each benefit; Mean score by row for each statement

How much benefit payments have:				
Benefit received	Helped make a difference to your life	Helped you to control your finances	Helped you to pay for what you needed	Total
Carer's Allowance Supplement	7.5	6.9	7.0	1,420
Best Start Grant	8.6	8.0	8.4	3,080
Best Start Foods	8.5	7.9	8.2	1,838
Funeral Support Payment	8.7	8.0	8.5	309
Young Carer Grant	8.1	7.2	8.0	60
Scottish Child Payment	8.7	8.1	8.4	14,060
Child Winter Heating Assistance	8.1	7.5	7.9	302
Child Disability Payment	8.8	8.1	8.5	4,201
Adult Disability Payment	8.6	8.1	8.3	6,698

A clear association was evident between several demographic groups and the likelihood of giving a high rating (8-10) for each of the three statements relating to the impact of receiving payments. Women, white respondents, and respondents aged 16-54 were all more likely to give a high rating across all three measures. This was also the case for respondents without communication needs, who identified English as their main language, and who said that they could speak, write, understand, and read English 'very well'.

Table 11.5: Average rating (out of 10) of benefit impact, by demographic group

All respondents with experience of receiving payments in each demographic group

Proportion providing rating of 8-10 for extent to which benefit payments have:				
Demographic group	Helped make a difference to your life	Helped you to control your finances	Helped you to pay for what you needed	Total
Gender identity				
Man	70%	62%	66%	4,768
Woman	78%	68%	73%	22,573
Long-term health condition				
With long-term physical/mental health condition	78%	67%	72%	12,910
No condition	76%	67%	73%	13,159
Ethnicity				
White	78%	68%	73%	24,619
Minority ethnic	66%	59%	61%	2,162
Age				
Aged 16-54	78%	67%	73%	22,063
Aged 55+	74%	66%	69%	5,380
Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)				
Quintile 1 (most deprived)	77%	67%	72%	8,235
Quintile 2	77%	68%	74%	5,593
Quintile 3	78%	68%	72%	3,993
Quintile 4	78%	70%	73%	3,025
Quintile 5 (least deprived)	77%	68%	72%	1,771
Communication needs				
Had communication needs	72%	61%	66%	4,447
Had no communication needs	77%	67%	72%	14,270
Main language				
English	79%	69%	74%	20,964
Other	69%	61%	64%	6,940
Speaking, writing, understanding, and reading English				
Could speak, write, understand, and read English 'very well'	83%	73%	78%	16,614
Others	68%	59%	63%	11,746

11.4. Comments about receiving benefit payments

Anyone who had received a benefit payment had the chance to offer views on their experience¹⁵.

Around 1450 respondents provided a comment regarding their experience of receiving a payment from Social Security Scotland. Around three-in-every-five comments were positive and just over one-in-five were negative. A similar number of comments were mixed, or neutral responses.

The most frequent theme among positive comments was an appreciation for benefit payments. Some of these comments were general expressions of thanks. Others mentioned the positive impact payments had on their lives.

Of those that detailed the positive impact of benefit payments, many specifically mentioned the effects their payments had on their children or family:

“It’s an excellent benefit for our young children, it allows single working households like myself to ensure our children are fed, watered and socially part of society which is so important in youngsters! I’m very grateful for the help! :)”
Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Great support for Food Milk clothing shoes for my child and it helps a lot 😊.”
Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“The payments are most welcome in easing the impact of the recent cost of living increases in food, energy and other essentials which has been a worrying time, it also supports my eldest to attend swimming club which would have been a financial strain previously and is so good for her confidence and wellbeing[...].”
Respondent

“I am full time carer for 2 children and home educate and this payment has been so helpful as home educating an autistic person is very expensive on top of equipment and things they need.”
Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“If it was not for sss, my children would not be able to get to activities and pay for that extra bit of food as they get older. Our family would of been in financial crisis if it wasn't for this payment.”
Man, aged 25-34, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“It’s made my life so much easier. I was on maternity leave and haven’t been able to return back to work yet so can’t afford things like we used too. I don’t feel like I’m a

¹⁵ ‘Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience receiving *Benefit* payments?’

failure of a mum anymore as I can make our money stretch to buy them clothes/shoes that they keep growing out of”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“This payment helped with heating bills and stopped us having to use food banks and allowed my child to access a safe warm space at the local sports centre”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“I think the whole system is fantastic and has and will benefit my child. He is still in pull ups and is nearly 5- we have to change him regularly as well as change clothes due to enjoyment of sensory play in water and outside. Waterproof clothes and footwear are required as well as other expenses for items for safety- ie wrist reigns, and probably a specialised buggy will be purchased”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment

Others detailed how payments afforded them the ability to purchase goods and services that improved their health and wellbeing:

“ADP permits me to achieve as normal a life as possible. Weekly physiotherapy helps me stay as mobile as I can be. I would not be able to walk with out this support.”

Woman, aged 55-64, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“As a petite lady with incontinence and Dermatitis Herpetiformis on my buttocks, I can now afford to purchase better incontinence pants that slightly less rub against rash and sticks less when rash weeps.”

Woman, aged 65+, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“It’s made a big difference for me especially the mobility component as I can now get an automatic car which I need for my bad knees”

Woman, aged 55-64, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“It has made a huge difference to be able to move house to a place that better suits my needs, get an adapted car and not worry about how I am going to pay the bills as I couldn’t work in the job I was in due to my disability”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“The money helps me heat my home now I could not put my heating on before so I was always cold and now I can eat healthy food as I could only live on sandwiches before as I had no money left after paying bills to buy food [...] I used to sleep on my chair in living room now I can sleep in my bed the damp and mould is gone”

Woman, aged 55-64, experience of Adult Disability Payment

Due to my medical condition, it has help a lot towards paying for transport cost to attend various hospital appointments, as I'm unable to drive a vehicle due to medication requirements (sleepiness, drowsiness).

Man, aged 55-64, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“This money has helped me , I now get a cleaner twice a month to do bathroom and stairs and mopping , also I can now go to a class for movement and balance to strengthen my muscles and learn about appropriate healthy foods and exercise this is weekly”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Adult Disability Payment

Some commented on their ability to meet funeral expenses:

“The money we received payed for my Son's funeral. It made the world of difference, my wife and I are both in our eighties and would not have managed without the payment we are very grateful.”

Man, aged 65+, experience of Funeral Support Payment

Others on not having to go into debt:

“My Scottish child payment prevented me going short in my bank and enabled me to feed my children and not have to do the endless cycle of borrowing and paying back money to family members, it was lifesaving”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“This payment has help us control our debt (credit cards/loans) as it has meant we have not had to put food shopping on our credit cards.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

For some, the impact was notably felt as the reduction of stress and anxiety, as well as the improvement of their mental wellbeing:

“its helped me meet the needs of my children and taken a lot of stress off me so I can focus more on recovery, my studies and getting into work. It was a godsend in my circumstances and helped so much with the grief and anxiety I was suffering at the time.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“I no longer have to worry about getting the basics to help with my disability and daily living. I'm grateful for the strain that it has taken off of my husband, who has been working to cover us both to the detriment of his physical and mental health. The easing of that burden broke an emotional dam that we'd both been struggling with. Thank you so much.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“I find the payment very helpful. I can ring fence it to spend on the things that help me to cope with the difficulties I have. And on things that help my health and well-being. Also it gives me a feeling of being supported which really helps.”

Man, aged 55-64, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“It's an extremely needed benefit for us, or those, who are eligible for it. Takes some pressure off family finances monthly and takes away the worry. This is the biggest attribute for us less sorry better mental health which is everything!”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Made me less stressed due having enough money to pay for food and electricity”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

For a few respondents, payments allowed for those with caring responsibilities to reduce their working hours so to care for dependents:

“My son needs a strict routine and he had so many sensory issues. I was working over time and picking up a lot of extra shifts just to provide different meals, fidgets, certain clothes and shoes and for activities when he needed 1 on 1 care. Me working all the time meant he was unsettled as he like to be close to me and doesn't like change in routine. Your payments have allowed me to reduce my hours at work so I can care for him more and still provide him his meals and fidgets and also things like diesel for hospital appointments, visual boards for my son [...]”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment

“Just to thank Janice who handled our case. I really didn't realise how much cost was involved in my sons day to day life due to autism. I am a front line worker and have been able to drop some overtime shifts I was having to do to make ends meet.”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Child Disability Payment

While others related how benefit payments enabled them to live life with greater independence:

“Having this benefit is a god send. I can purchase items that make my life easier to be independent and do more things for myself. Small things like chunky cutlery and electric heat pads to wrap my knees in which otherwise I wouldn't have been able to purchase. Paying a window cleaner monthly as I can no longer do that simple task. It's the small things you don't think about that impacts life when you are no longer able to do it. Mentally you want to do things but the body says otherwise. It's helped me immensely. Thank you”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“I was depending on my kids dad to take me to appointments or for shopping, we've been separated 14 years and I hated that I still depended on him, now I'm able to get a taxi and feel more independent not relying on my ex. My daughter usually comes with me now which is a less stressful situation”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“it's helped me feel like an adult not having to rely on my parents for money to pay for my needs and being able to pay toward the house hold”

Respondent who 'preferred not to say their gender', aged 16-24, experience of Adult Disability Payment

Despite most comments on the impacts of payments being positive, some comments were negative. This was notable for respondents who received both Carer's Allowance Supplement and Universal Credit payments. For some, they reasoned they were no better off, financially, for having received Carer's Allowance Supplement. A few stated they were financially worse off after deductions were taken from Universal Credit payments:

“My carers allowance is taken into account with universal credit given in one hand and taken from the other.”

Woman, aged 55-64, experience of Carer's Allowance Supplement

“The service is good . But when you are on Universal Credit you don t get the carers Allowance benefit it all taken away so your not any better off the supplement is good lets u paid off sum bills.”

Man, aged 55-64, experience of Carer's Allowance Supplement

“The Carer's allowance did not benefit me as I was taxed to the same amount as the allowance.”

Woman, aged 55-64, experience of Carer's Allowance Supplement

“My claim of carers allowance prompted universal credit to contact me to let me know that it was termed as extra money I wasn't entitled to and that I had to pay money back to them due to this. Yet nobody told me about that at the time. My carers allowance money stopped on 7th march 2023 and I have had no money from universal credit since 7th February 2023 because of this error. [...] Due to this experience I have had to get money from my savings and my partner to pay bills and to buy food.”

Woman, aged 55-64, experience of Carer's Allowance Supplement

As well as noting the impact of benefit payments, respondents often commented on the timing of payments, as well as the accuracy of payment amounts.

Positive comments often related to the timeliness of payments, i.e. payments always being on time, and of payments being the correct amount. Some also stated they had been well informed by Social Security Scotland of payment dates and amounts.

Some comments further explained that the accuracy of payments enabled them to effectively budget, and to organise payments for goods and services:

“That is fantastic, on time so helping me to organise my payments, and what ever my

boy needs. Paid on time”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Myself and my daughter are so grateful for the help from the Social Security. The payments are on time and we budget for the month for what we have.”

Man, aged 55-64, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“I received the payment quickly and was notified of next steps. I also received communication by post and text and I got more information than I expected”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Scottish Child Payment

When comments about payments and timings were negative, they often related to missed payments (including back payments), and inaccurate payment amounts or dates. This is notable for recipients of Scottish Child Payment:

“I am still waiting on backdated pay”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“I applied for 2 children got £100 backdated money for 4wks, which only covers 1 child”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“My first payment was £25 but i received it 3 weeks after i applied so i was expecting 3 weeks so £75 i phoned up & was told my payments would sort themselves out and i would receive the backdated amount to date i dont think i have”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“I never got my Scottish child payment back dated, as I was told would be. And it also never comes in on the right date. I was told it would be every 28 days to hit my bank account, it never does and I can't track the date to expect it, so it makes it really difficult to budget with it as I don't know when to expect it”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Scottish Child Payment

As reported in Section 9.6, others explained they had not received information about when payments would be made, or how much they would receive. In some cases this has caused confusion, uncertainty and anxiety for respondents:

“As I have not received payments on the day /time specified. This has caused distress and confusion. I am unclear when to expect these payments”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“I would just like to know what payments I am receiving and when I will receive and the amount as I didn't get any type of breakdown or letter sent to me”

Man, aged 55-64, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“Payment dates are not clear to me at this moment with the holiday period just over im

unsure what day each month the payments will be made with limited budget this is slightly inconvenient with not knowing when to plan extra food shop I have high levels of anxiety and planning ahead makes shopping easier a clear payment date or way to find dates would be helpful at festive periods or bank holidays.”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“I have only received 1 single payment and now 6 weeks on have not received anymore, my letter says it would be paid every 4 weeks but no other payment has been made.”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Scottish Child Payment

Some respondents also noted that they found it difficult to communicate with Social Security Scotland when trying to rectify problems with payment amounts and timings:

“It's not consistent and it takes forever to get updates or speak to someone on the phone to correct mistakes”

Respondent who 'preferred not to say their gender', aged 35-43, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“I haven't received payment due Feb 1st and the HelpLine is closed and I don't know what to do”

Man, aged 25-34, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“I have attempted number of calls to social security Scotland and can't get through to check where the payment is and when due to come.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“I am receiving wrong amount for Child benefit and I cannot contact with Social Security”

Woman, aged 25-34

For those who received pre-paid cards, comments were often mixed. Some found the card a discrete way of paying for foods and for keeping monies separate. Others found it awkward or embarrassing having to separate out a mixed shop when using multiple payment methods. Some were also confused as to which items were eligible for the pre-paid cards:

“[...] I really liked having the best start foods card which was like using a bank card, discreet and means I'm not singled out or judged by staff or customers. Fairness, dignity, respect SSS does what it says on the tin I'm impressed.”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“I really like the prepayment card because I know I have that little bit of extra money separately for food and milk. However it's been declined on 2 separate times (despite

having enough in the account), and another 2 times it's asked for my pin. Sounds like a small thing but I get anxious about going to shops anyway so now I don't feel very confident using it and only use it when I have enough cash just in case it doesn't work, which means I go around the shop twice - firstly for fruit and veg and then I know if I've got money for everything else or not, and go again, rather than just asking to put the fruit and veg through separately at the till. This is a bit of a faff with a young child.”
Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods

[...] “Slightly inconvenient to pay for part of shopping via best start food card and part of shopping via bank card.”
Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“Using the card was difficult [...] Retailers need you to separate your shopping to pay for what you buy by hr card . This caused stigma and there was no confidentiality whilst using it .”
Woman, aged 45-54

“The card is tricky because you have to phone to find out how much is on it .. q and then split your shopping 🛒 so you only spend that amount on the appropriate items. Really annoying and a bit embarrassing (I can see shame would stop Some people from using it at all!)”
Respondent with experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“Would be better if best start food was made clearer as to what healthy foods can be bought.”
Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

A number of respondents also found it difficult to use the card to make purchases online. A lack of published guidance on the use of pre-paid cards for online shopping was noted:

“I've overall had a good experience receiving benefit payments from Social Security Scotland. [...] The only thing I would say is I was stressed trying to figure out how to use the card online or in shops, I looked online and didn't find it all that clear, I ended up finding out by asking one of my friends and that helped me a lot.”
Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“[...] the card with money on I've currently not been able to use since I received it as it won't allow me to use online despite the website saying you can ... I can't shop in store and rely solely on home delivery so it's useless to me [...]”
Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

Some also stated that their pre-paid card was not automatically topped up, as and when expected:

“I have found the best start food card difficult as it doesn't seem to get topped up every month as it indicates”

Woman, aged 25-34

“Did not get monthly top up on the best food grant card? Still to phone them about this issue.”

Respondent, aged 25-34, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“[...] when I got the best start food card for the first two months it was very good but since November I did not use it because you did not add money in the card so it has not sufficient balance”

Man, aged 25-34, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

Comments were also often made about payment amounts. When comments were positive, they related how benefit payment amounts accurately reflect the applicant's needs:

“Really grateful for the financial support and feel that my son's needs have been well understood and properly awarded.”

Respondent who 'preferred not to say' their gender, aged 45-54, experience of Child Disability Payment

However, many comments on payment amounts were negative. Comments often state that payment amounts do not reflect the needs of the applicant:

“Carers in Scotland should be paid more.”

Man, aged 35-44

“The payment is not enough for babies who are formula fed”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“Yes the card doesn't cover my child's baby milk for the month as he takes 5 tubs in a month which works out at £50 per month I only get £38 for the month.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“Min rate doesn't cover the wear or replacement of all destroyed weekly, it won't ever support the extra education materials required or the support in home to help manage

additional house duties due to meltdowns, detergents etc or help in home, it never covers cost of damages and insurance don't cover as not seen as accidental.”
Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment and child moving from DLA for Children to Child Disability Payment

When respondents comment on payment amounts, this has often been coupled with comments about increases in the cost of living. This includes both positive and negative comments. For some, payment amounts were enough to cover the rise in living costs - such as fuel, food and accommodation - while also covering payments for goods and services that improve their living standards:

“[...] Very satisfied as it has helped myself and the children a lot especially with the cost of living right now”
Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“The payments are most welcome in easing the impact of the recent cost of living increases in food, energy and other essentials which has been a worrying time, it also supports my eldest to attend swimming club which would have been a financial strain previously and is so good for her confidence and wellbeing. I am also now able to provide a little pocket money to help teach the children about budgeting and saving. The payments are making an immediate difference to my children's lives.”
Respondent

However, as reported in Section 9.6, for others they felt the rise in cost of goods and services negated any additional benefits that may have been felt by receiving payments:

“First off, we want to say how much we appreciate the £100 - it really helps to have even a little bit of extra cash, so thank you! Sadly, with extortionate energy bills and interest/mortgage rates rising almost every month, it's gone in an instant. We'd much rather have affordable bills than handouts.”
Respondent who identified as 'in another way', aged 55-64, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“This has been very valuable to us as a family. We would have really really struggled without this payment. I don't feel like I have extra money as a result of this payment as it has been used to cover rising costs in recent times.”
Man, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

Some respondents related how payments, which they ear-marked to go towards purchases such as children's clothes and sports activities, have instead been spent on rising costs such as utility bills or mortgage repayments:

“Unfortunately due to the higher cost of living I've not not been able to spend it on getting my children into local groups etc. the money has went towards the rising costs of food, gas and electricity.”
Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“My child payment goes straight to energy bill which is not right!!!!!!”

Respondent who ‘preferred not to say’ their gender with experience of Scottish Child Payment

“actually the money that we receive for child benefit, and all, isn’t enough for the utilities i need for my babys because of the price being risen allot”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods

When respondents made suggestions for improvement, some called for clearer published guidance on the use of pre-paid cards online:

“Could more guidance be provided for using the card online? For those of us who live rurally or can’t access the shops otherwise in person it would be helpful. I've managed through trial and error but it's been a frustrating process.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

Also, as reported in Section 9.6, for clearer communication from Social Security Scotland as to when payments will be made. Also clearer communication as to payment amounts, as well as what the payment reference will be when monies are paid into an account:

“I am unsure of when the benefit will be paid, I thought it was every 4 weeks. I think a scedule of payments would be helpful to help budget.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Decision letter should include a schedule of when payments will be made, to allow it to be added to budget planner.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

[...] “The award letter is clearly laid out and explains when/why a review date will be carried out. The only part that could be improved in my opnion is to have an extra page/ column (that just states that you have been awarded which ever element at which ever rate as the letter gives the full reasoning; as you can use this letter to provide proof to other bodies/organisations it isn't always good to have the full description or amount awarded visible so in my opinion a page which doesn't replace that info but is seperate and gives the proof of award would be beneficial. This would assist in applying for cinema discount card, reduded entry or pa/carer admission to events such as sport, concerts etc”

Woman, aged 65+

“More communication with the progress or mentioning what reference should I check in my bank account to link received money with the application”

Man, aged 35-44, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

As also reported in Section 9.6, others called for changes in eligibility criteria. This is notable for recipients of Scottish Child Payment. Many Scottish Child Payment applicants suggest raising of the age limit to 18, or to include those in full-time education aged 16 and beyond:

“I think the bridging payments should have been available for parents of home educated children. They need to eat too! Also some parents find themselves with no other choice but to home educate due to violence and bullying in schools”
Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“I think the age should be raised to 18 seeing as we have let down a whole generation who now have serious mental issues on the back of forced lockdowns etc, these kids between 16-18 could do with some help too”
Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“It would be good if it continues until they leave school. I know there is a Child Education Bursary but that goes to my son.”
Woman, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“[...] It would be better if the SCP worked like child benefit and if your child is staying in full time education then you keep receiving the benefit till they are 21.”[...]
Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“the funds awarded for a child must be maintained until the child turns 18 or is still in education”
Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“These payments are really helpful and help me get things that my child needs. The only thing I have to say bad about them is my child turns 16 in January and he will still have to go to school until June before he's aloud to leave and the benefit only pays till he turns 16 I think it should be kept going until he's out of school.”
Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

12. Barriers

All respondents were asked if they had faced any barriers getting help from Social Security Scotland¹⁶. This section presents the results on how many said they had experienced barriers, the kinds of barriers faced, and whether those affected sought help.

12.1. Experience of barriers

17% of respondents said they had experienced some form of barrier getting help from Social Security Scotland.

Respondents with experience of Best Start Foods (24%) were marginally more likely to have faced some form of barrier getting help from Social Security Scotland, whereas those with experience of Child Disability Payment Case Transfer (11%) were less likely to have (see Table 12.1).

Table 12.1: Whether faced any barriers getting help from Social Security Scotland, by benefit experience

All respondents with any experience of each benefit

Benefit experience	Faced barrier getting help from Social Security Scotland	Total
All respondents	17%	33,419
Carer's Allowance Supplement	14%	1,422
Best Start Grant	23%	4,898
Best Start Foods	24%	4,300
Funeral Support Payment	17%	457
Young Carer Grant	18%	111
Scottish Child Payment	15%	16,280
Child Winter Heating Assistance	14%	307
Child Disability Payment applicants	21%	1,679
Child Disability Payment Case Transfer	11%	2,426
Adult Disability Payment applicants	20%	4,914
Adult Disability Payment Case Transfer	22%	2,743

¹⁶ "Did you face any barriers getting help from Social Security Scotland?" Response options included "No (I didn't face any barriers)", as well as a list of types of barriers that may have been faced, which are included in Table 12.2.

Experience of barriers was similar across most demographic characteristics. However, one-fifth (20%) of men said they had experienced barriers, compared to 16% of women. Furthermore, those with a long-term physical or mental health condition were more likely to say that they had experienced a barrier (20%, compared to 14% of respondents with no such condition).

Those with a communication need were far more likely to say that they had experienced a barrier (28%, compared with 13% of those with no communication needs). This was also the case for those whose main language was not English (20%, compared to 16% of respondents whose main language was English), and those who did not answer 'very well' to how well they could: speak, write, understand, and read English (21%, compared to 15% of those who did answer 'very well' to each).

Respondents were provided with a list of types of barriers, which are shown in Table 12.2. Across all respondents, none of the types of barrier were selected much more than others. There was a small amount of variation by benefit experience; those with experience of Young Carer Grant were more likely to select 'I could not get the information of updates I needed' (9%, compared to 4-8% across other groups). The barrier most infrequently selected across most groups was 'I could not access or use the internet'.

Table 12.2: Types of barrier faced, by benefit experience

All respondents with any experience of each benefit; Row percentages

Benefit experience	I could not communicate with Social Security Scotland when I wanted to	I could not communicate with Social Security Scotland how I wanted to	I could not access or use the internet	I could not get the information or updates I needed	Other	Total
All respondents	5%	5%	2%	5%	5%	33,419
Carer's Allowance Supplement	3%	3%	2%	4%	6%	1,422
Best Start Grant	7%	7%	2%	8%	6%	4,898
Best Start Foods	7%	8%	2%	8%	6%	4,300
Funeral Support Payment	2%	4%	4%	4%	6%	457
Young Carer Grant	7%	8%	2%	9%	4%	111
Scottish Child Payment	4%	4%	1%	7%	8%	16,280
Child Winter Heating Assistance	6%	5%	1%	4%	3%	307
Child Disability Payment applicants	8%	8%	2%	7%	4%	1,679
Child Disability Payment Case Transfer	3%	3%	1%	4%	3%	2,426
Adult Disability Payment applicants	6%	6%	2%	7%	5%	4,914
Adult Disability Payment Case Transfer	7%	6%	3%	6%	7%	2,743

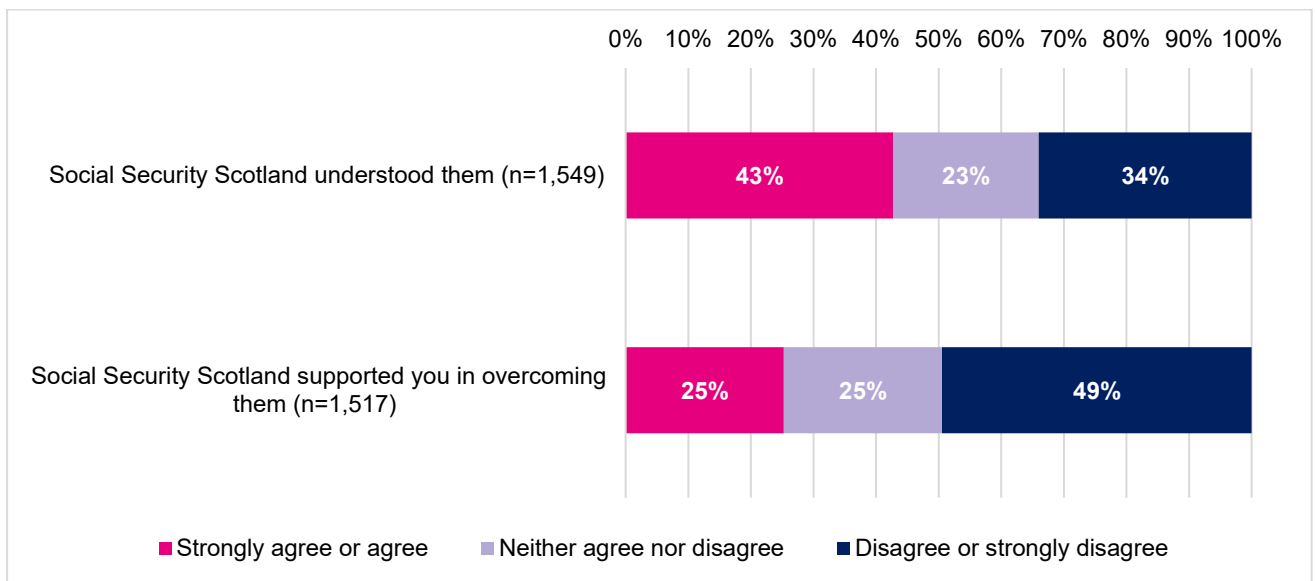
12.2. Tackling barriers

Just under a third (30%) of those who experienced barriers said they told Social Security Scotland about them.

Where respondents had told Social Security Scotland about the barriers they experienced, over two-fifths agreed that Social Security Scotland 'understood them' (43%). A smaller proportion agreed that Social Security Scotland 'supported [them] in overcoming them' (25%), as shown in Figure 12.2.

Figure 12.2: Whether respondents felt Social Security Scotland understood, and supported them to overcome the barriers they experienced

All respondents who experienced barriers and then told Social Security Scotland



Respondents had the option to explain why they did not tell Social Security Scotland about their barriers. Of the 2,959 respondents who indicated that they did not tell Social Security Scotland about the barriers they faced, around half gave a reason why.

Of this cohort, most simply could not get in touch with Social Security Scotland. This was for a variety of reasons, some of which were compounded by the barriers they faced.

12.3. Comments about barriers

After being given the above options (shown in Table 12.2), respondents who had reported facing a barrier were given an opportunity to tell us in their own words about the barriers they had faced¹⁷. This provided additional insights into the barriers faced, and often the reasons why respondents faced the barriers that they did.

Substantive responses were given by around 1050 respondents. Overwhelmingly, the most common theme amongst comments describing the barriers that respondents faced was difficulties contacting Social Security Scotland.

As with Section 7.4, respondents specifically mentioned a long wait time when calling the phone helpline:

“A lot of the times I phoned up I was in the queue for over an hour which is hard to do when you have a new baby so a couple of times I’d have to hang up and try again later.”

Woman, aged, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“Getting in touch over the phone is difficult as it has taken over an hour each time to get through to anyone”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods

“Long wait time on phone, over an hour to get through to someone”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Long waiting times on phone is a constant issue.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Call waiting times are ridiculous. each time I'm waiting well over an hour to speak with someone”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

Many respondents explained that they had tried to use the phone helpline and the webchat, but faced challenges or delays with both:

“Can’t get to speak to anyone, was on waiting for 2 hours plus on few occasions and nobody answered. Tried web chat, was on half a day and absolutely nothing”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“The telephone lines were extremely busy. Some days there was just a message

¹⁷ “Please tell us about the barrier(s) you faced?”

saying unable to take your call and other days you could wait a couple of hours. Same with the Web chat an hour or so wait and you have to make sure you stay on the page so constantly touching the phone so you weren't removed"

Woman, aged 35-44

"Long waits on phone and webchat unavailable."

Man, 55-64, experience of Scottish Child Payment

"Unable to get onto webchat as there was no more available spaces and the phones take an hour or more to be answered."

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Carer's Allowance Supplement

"Haven't been able to speak to anyone on phone or live chat phone waiting time over 40 minutes"

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Scottish Child Payment

"As mentioned before, waiting times to get through to SSS are horrific. [...]. Web chat doesn't work, even when joining in the morning and being on all day."

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Scottish Child Payment

"I can't get through to anyone online or on the phone and still can't."

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Scottish Child Payment

"Taking between 1 hour and 1 hour 30 minutes to get through to SSS on the helpline and webchat. Who can hold on this long while you've got work all day and dealing with kids before/after school. Can't even call SSS on your lunch due to length of time it takes to answer. No 'drop in' service available at local delivery team - have to make appointment through the helpline first!"

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Scottish Child Payment

"Phone waiting times are absurd and unacceptable The chat service has NEVER worked for me. It just doesn't connect to anyone."

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Scottish Child Payment

Several respondents told us that they had given up trying to contact because of the difficulties:

"Cannot get through to speak to anyone left in a queue for hours and gave up in the end. I still needing to get in touch"

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

"Can't get through when calling. On hold for hours until I gave up. Still haven't received childrens payments for my two children."

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start

Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“I couldn’t get through to you by phone. Was on hold for hours. I gave up. Web chat wasn’t working either.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“[...] When I tried to phone I was on the phone for over an hour but gave up because no one answered.”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods

“Called their helpline, stayed on the phone for more than an hour but no one came to the phone, it happened couple of times then I didn’t bother anymore”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

As reported in Sections 3.4 and 9.6, some respondents mentioned a lack of communication or updates on outstanding applications, including where they felt there was a delay in receiving a decision. Amongst these, several mentioned that this had caused them to try and contact Social Security Scotland, but that this had not resolved the issue:

“Phone lines are busy and web chat is too busy. No updates given on my application and no payment’s received”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Can’t get through on the phone. I haven’t had any contact regarding my child’s pre school grant other than a text to say there slightly running behind”

Woman, aged 16-24

“I can’t get to speak to someone to ask what is happening with my application”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Unable to speak to anyone on the phone as no one answers and absolutely no updates on the progress of application despite advising it would take 30 days. The only update received was one week after application to say there’s delays there is nothing further”

Woman, aged 55-64, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Waited hours in phone to find out what was happening with claim for the call to be answered by staff who didn’t know what they are talking about”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Lack of updates and being fobbed off from your online team”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

A number of respondents mentioned a lack of email option to communicate with Social Security Scotland, or that they felt this would be a positive improvement:

“It is a little hard to contact by telephone as really busy maybe should have email option for updates”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Email would have been easier”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods

“Couldn’t get through on the phone No email to find out about my claim”

Woman, aged 45-54, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“Applied for child disability in nov 22, no updates, no communication from sss at all. tried to call, over 1 hr waiting on both occasions. Would have been easier to email sss back but got told numerous times its not set up yet which i find very strange.”

Woman, aged 55-64, experience of Scottish Child Payment

“There should be a message or email system, if someone miss a call. I couldnt figure it out the reason for the call. and reaching SSS on the pone wasn't easy. many attempt then finally, I got them.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Scottish Child Payment

13. Discrimination

This section presents results on respondents' experiences of discrimination when dealing with Social Security Scotland.

13.1. Experience of discrimination

Respondents were asked if they felt they had been discriminated against at any point during their experience with Social Security Scotland. A small proportion (4%) said they had experienced discrimination, with a further 4% selecting the 'prefer not to say' response option (see Table 13.1). The proportion who had experienced discrimination was very similar across most benefit groups.

Table 13.1: Experience of discrimination by benefit experience

All respondents with experience of each benefit; Column percentages

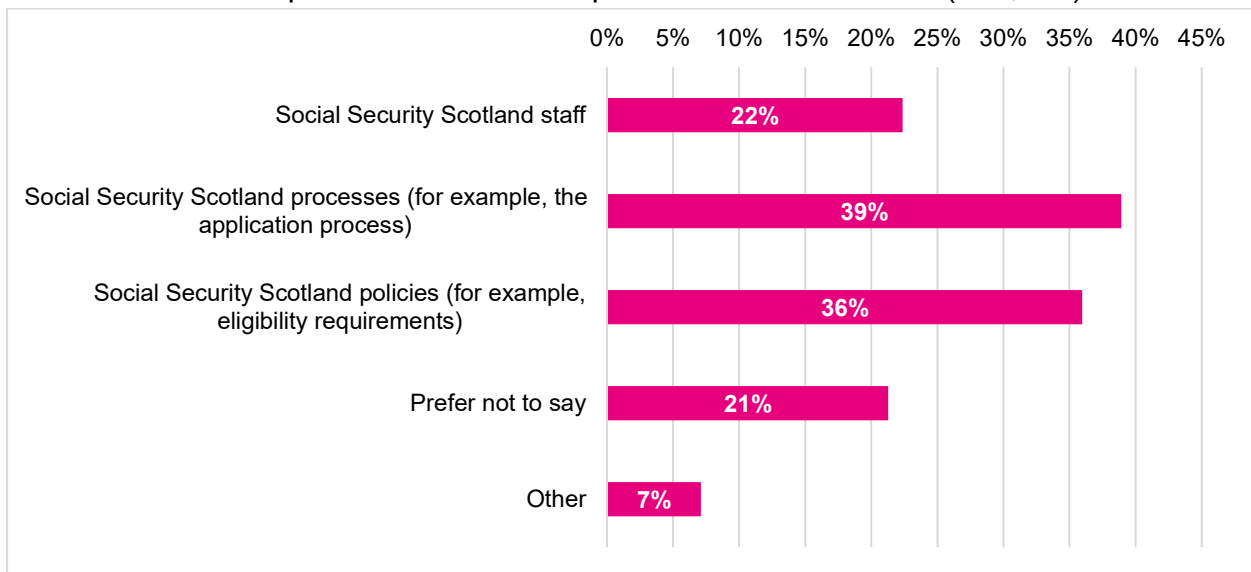
Benefit experience	Yes	No	Prefer not to say	Total
All respondents	4%	93%	4%	33,593
Carer's Allowance Supplement	3%	94%	3%	1,421
Best Start Grant	5%	89%	6%	4,905
Best Start Foods	5%	88%	6%	4,304
Funeral Support Payment	5%	90%	5%	460
Young Carer Grant	6%	90%	4%	112
Scottish Child Payment	3%	93%	3%	16,298
Child Winter Heating Assistance	2%	96%	2%	309
Child Disability Payment applicants	3%	94%	3%	1,688
Child Disability Payment Case Transfer	2%	96%	1%	2,441
Adult Disability Payment applicants	5%	90%	4%	4,965
Adult Disability Payment Case Transfer	3%	94%	3%	2,787

Results were broadly similar across key demographic breakdowns. Findings are outlined in full in [Supplementary document: tables and methods](#) available alongside this report.

13.2. Nature of discrimination

Respondents who had experienced discrimination were asked who or what they felt was discriminatory towards them. They could select more than one option if they wished. The most commonly chosen source was Social Security Scotland ‘processes’, selected by almost two-in-five respondents (39%). More than one-in-three (36%) said that the source of the discrimination they experienced was Social Security Scotland ‘policies’, and just over one-in-five (22%) said Social Security Scotland ‘staff’ (see Figure 13.1).

Figure 13.1: Who or what respondents felt discriminated by
All respondents who had experienced discrimination (n=1,226)

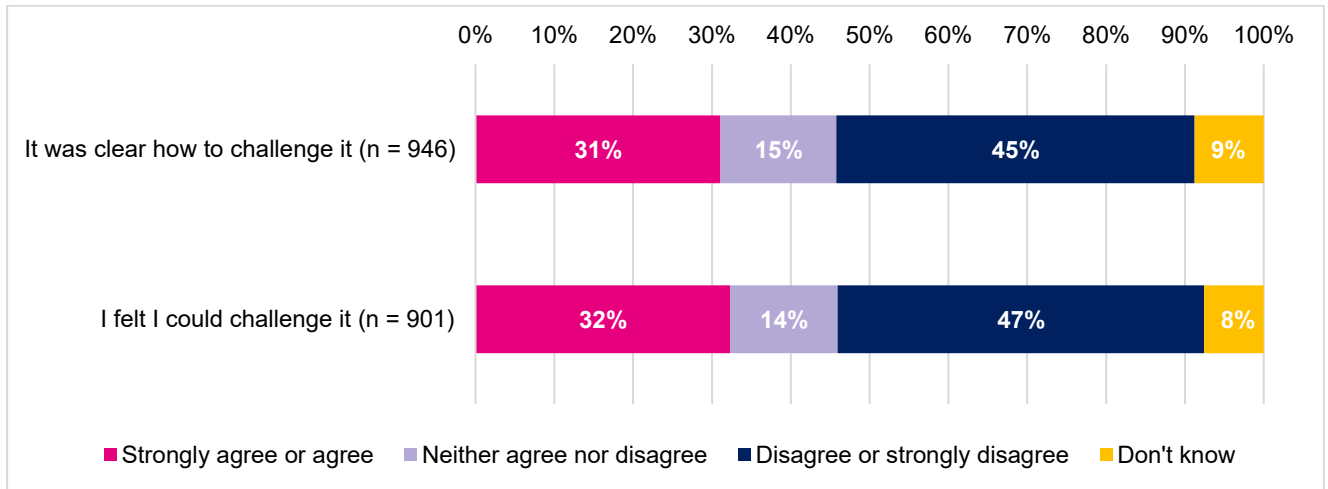


13.3. Tackling discrimination

More than two-in-five of those who felt they had been discriminated against disagreed with the statements ‘it was clear how to challenge it’ and ‘I felt I could challenge it’ (45% and 47% respectively). A little over one-in-three (31% and 32% respectively) agreed with these statements, as Figure 13.2 outlines.

Figure 13.2: Whether respondents knew how, and felt able, to challenge discrimination

All respondents who said they had experienced discrimination



Regarding the discrimination they faced, over half of respondents aged 55 or over disagreed that ‘it was clear how to challenge it’ (53%, compared to 33% amongst respondents aged 16-24. This was also the case for white respondents who experienced discrimination; around half (49%) disagreed that ‘it was clear how to challenge’ the discrimination they faced, and ‘I felt I could challenge it’ (51%) compared with 25% and 22% respectively amongst minority ethnic respondents. Those with a long-term physical or mental health condition were more likely to disagree with the statements: ‘it was clear how to challenge’ (54%) the discrimination they faced, and ‘I felt I could challenge it’ (54%), compared to 33% and 35% respectively amongst respondents with no such condition.

Around a quarter of respondents said they told Social Security Scotland about the discrimination they faced (26%), whilst nearly one-fifth (17%) selected the ‘prefer not to say’ option and half of respondents said that they did not (58%).

Around 300 respondents reported their experiences of discrimination and they were asked if Social Security Scotland took the action needed. Around a third of respondents (35%) said that Social Security Scotland took the action needed, and over half (55%) said that Social Security Scotland did not.

13.4. Comments about discrimination

Survey respondents who told us that they had ‘felt discriminated against at any point during your experience with Social Security Scotland’ were given the chance to tell us about that experience¹⁸.

Around 500 substantive comments were given.

Disagreement with eligibility criteria was by far the most common theme throughout the comments, including for qualifying benefits. As reported previously in Sections 9.6 and 11.4, some of these comments related to income thresholds and mentioned challenging financial situations:

“I feel discriminated against for actually working, if I wasn't working I would be entitled to all sorts of help. It's not just people on benefits who are struggling through these hard times, people who are working just get forgotten about and it is assumed don't need any help.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“My partner is my only income and we have come across many barriers such as just being over the threshold by penny's and not qualifying for any support think working families deserve support too”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“I'm a working mum with only my income to pay rent, energy bills ,council tax etc and the cost of living going through the roof and you decide not all children are entitled to the BEST START in life. People that work should also be entitled to help but we are forgotten about. Really need change the name as Best Start as you say isn't for all children”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“Having a decent salary doesn't mean that these grants wouldn't be helpful to me and other mothers like me!!”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods

Some similar comments also mentioned financial challenges associated with maternity leave or studying:

“As I was working and not in receipt of any benefits I didn't qualify while I was

¹⁸ ‘Please tell us about the discrimination you faced?’

pregnant and while I was off on maternity leave for the 1st 6 mo the even though my income was low”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“Work full time so not entitled to any support even though on less than half my wage during maternity leave”

Respondent who ‘preferred not to say’ their gender with experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“I am a single mother and full time nursing student. Because I do not qualify for universal credit I am not able to access any support from yourselves. I use the local food bank and have no money to heat my home yet you deem me not suitable for financial support. It is disgraceful.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

“I feel that I have been penalised for becoming a student which is to better myself and become a nurse to then support family and children better but this has resulted in me losing all access to benefits and social security payments despite still needing them and some months having childcare costs that amount to nearly £1000.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment

As reported in Section 8.5, another prevalent theme related to the degree to which the application process for disability benefits recognised or considered certain disabilities or conditions:

“I feel like the application doesn't consider people who have mental illness”

Man, aged 25-34, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“Don't think they consider enough how difficult it is living with mental health issues”

Woman, aged 55-64, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“As mentioned previously I feel the entire application process is more aligned to applications for conditions such as autism and mobility related disabilities. I do not feel it takes into consideration other less visible or well recognised disabilities and the impact these have on people's lives which is quite disappointing regarding the fact that not all disabilities are visible. As a result I felt that it was a very stressful process”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Child Disability Payment and child moving from DLA for Children to Child Disability Payment

“Not applicable or supportive of people with fluctuating conditions and conditions that affect more than mobility”

Man, aged 25-34, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“The fact that I have an invisible disability (Crohn’s disease) I’m not eligible for payments as I can tie my shoe and braid my hair. Sorry I’m just really angry and annoyed with the whole process.”

Woman, aged 35-44, experience of Adult Disability Payment

“Your form is narrow and it discriminates other disabilities such as asthma, eczema, bowel disease. I never had to opportunity to truly tell you how my life is so impacted because your point system is singular.”

Woman, aged 25-34, experience of Adult Disability Payment

14. Change across the year

As set out in Section 2.4.2 of this report, the 2022-23 Client Survey fieldwork was split into three benefit experience strands, which each ran across the three rounds of fieldwork. The fieldwork dates for each round are set out in Table 2.2.

This section of the report compares responses given across the three rounds of fieldwork within each benefit experience group. This allows us to indicatively assess any change in response to key survey measures across the period from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Findings for “all respondents” or “all applicants” included all applicable respondents for each fieldwork round. Findings by benefit experience groups only included groups which received a sufficient volume of responses across each round. Those were: Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, Scottish Child Payment applicants, Child Disability Payment applicants, Child Disability Payment Case Transfer, Adult Disability Payment applicants and Adult Disability Payment Case Transfer. An insufficient volume of responses from clients who had completed a Case Transfer to Adult Disability Payment in round 1 of fieldwork means data is presented for this group for rounds 2 and 3 only.

Table 14.1 below outlines the number of responses for each benefit experience group across each of the three fieldwork rounds. This should be considered when interpreting the findings in this section, particularly the fact that round 1 has considerably fewer respondents for all groups except Child Disability Payment applicants and Case Transfers.

Table 14.1: Number of responses, by fieldwork round

All respondents with experience of each benefit

Benefit experience	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3
All respondents	4,602	13,341	16,127
Best Start Grant	645	3,000	1,331
Best Start Foods	578	2,628	1,165
Scottish Child Payment	728	6,745	8,982
Child Disability Payment applicants	627	734	350
Child Disability Payment Case Transfer	1,645	610	223
Adult Disability Payment applicants	164	2,400	2,448
Adult Disability Payment Case Transfer	n/a	654	2,134

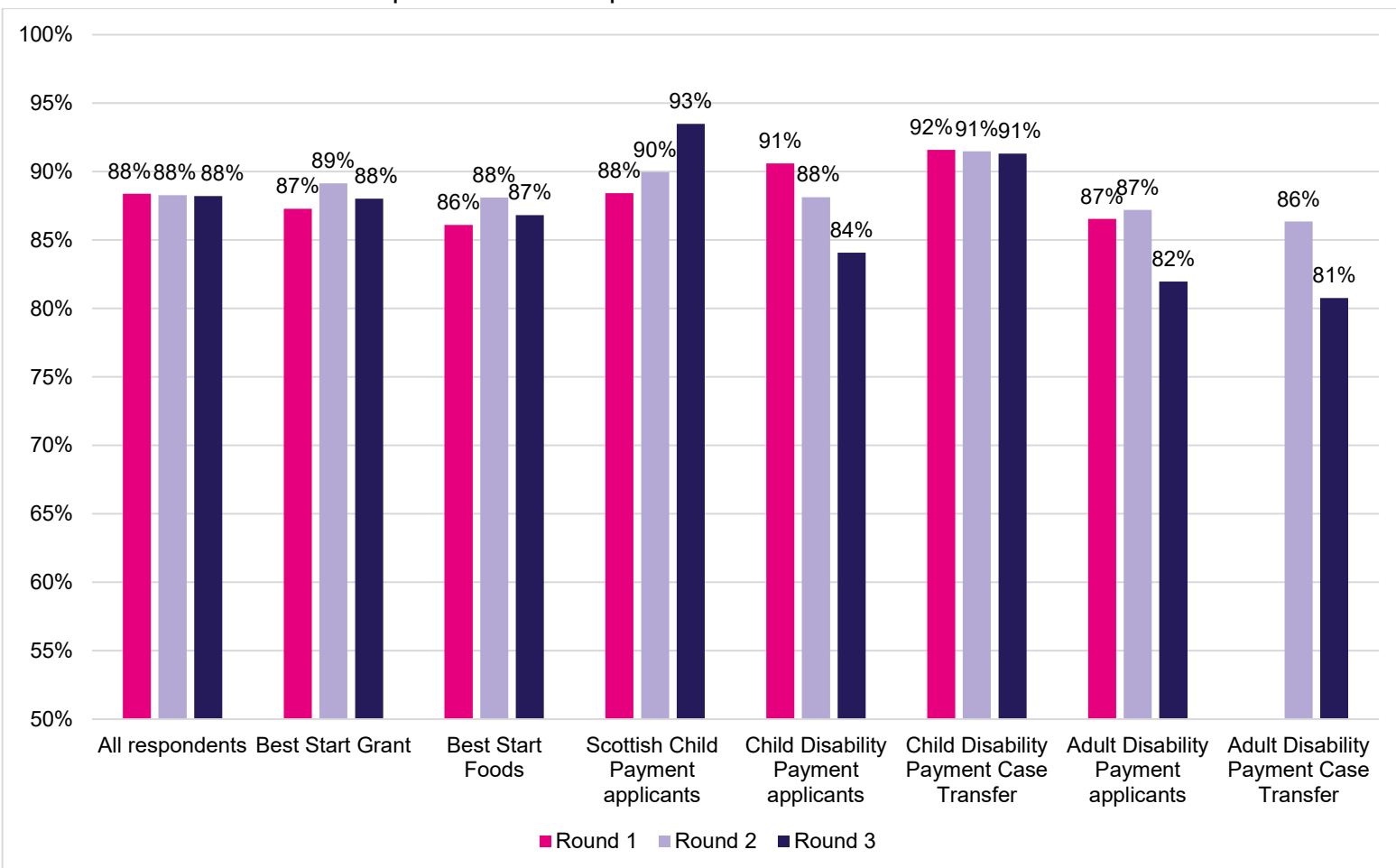
14.1. Overall experience

Across the three rounds respondents were asked about their overall experience with Social Security Scotland. Figure 14.1 shows overall experience by fieldwork round for each benefit. The overall experience was consistently rated as 'very good' or 'good' for all respondents across all three rounds (88%).

There was some variation in rounds for certain benefits. Child Disability Payment applicants saw a steady decline in overall experience (from 91% in round 1, 88% in round 2, to 84% in round 3). Conversely, respondents with experience of Scottish Child Payment saw a steady increase in their overall experience (from 88% in round 1, 90% in round 2, to 93% in round 3).

Figure 14.1: Overall experience with Social Security Scotland, by fieldwork round (% who rated very good or good)

All respondents with experience of each benefit

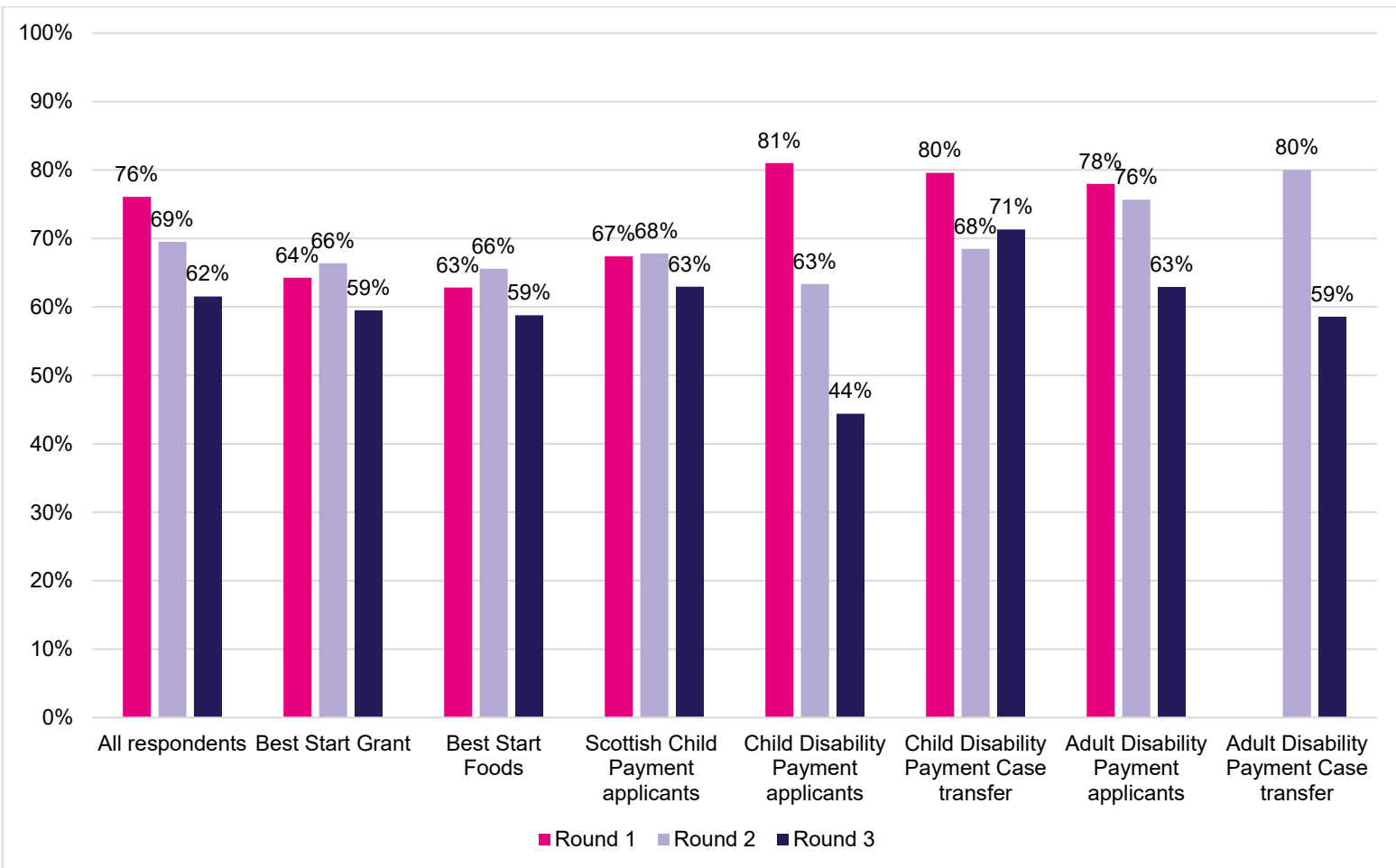


14.2. Contacting Social Security Scotland

Across the three rounds respondents were asked how much they agreed with the statement 'it was easy to contact Social Security Scotland'. Figure 14.2 shows agreement with this statement by fieldwork round for each benefit. Agreement dropped for all respondents across the three rounds (76% in round 1, 69% in round 2, to 62% in round 3). Round 3 shows the lowest agreement for all benefit experiences. The most significant drop in agreement is in Child Disability Payment applicants where in round 1 81% agreed with the statement and 44% agreed in round 3.

Figure 14.2: Agreement that 'it was easy to contact Social Security Scotland', by fieldwork round (% who answered strongly agree or agree)

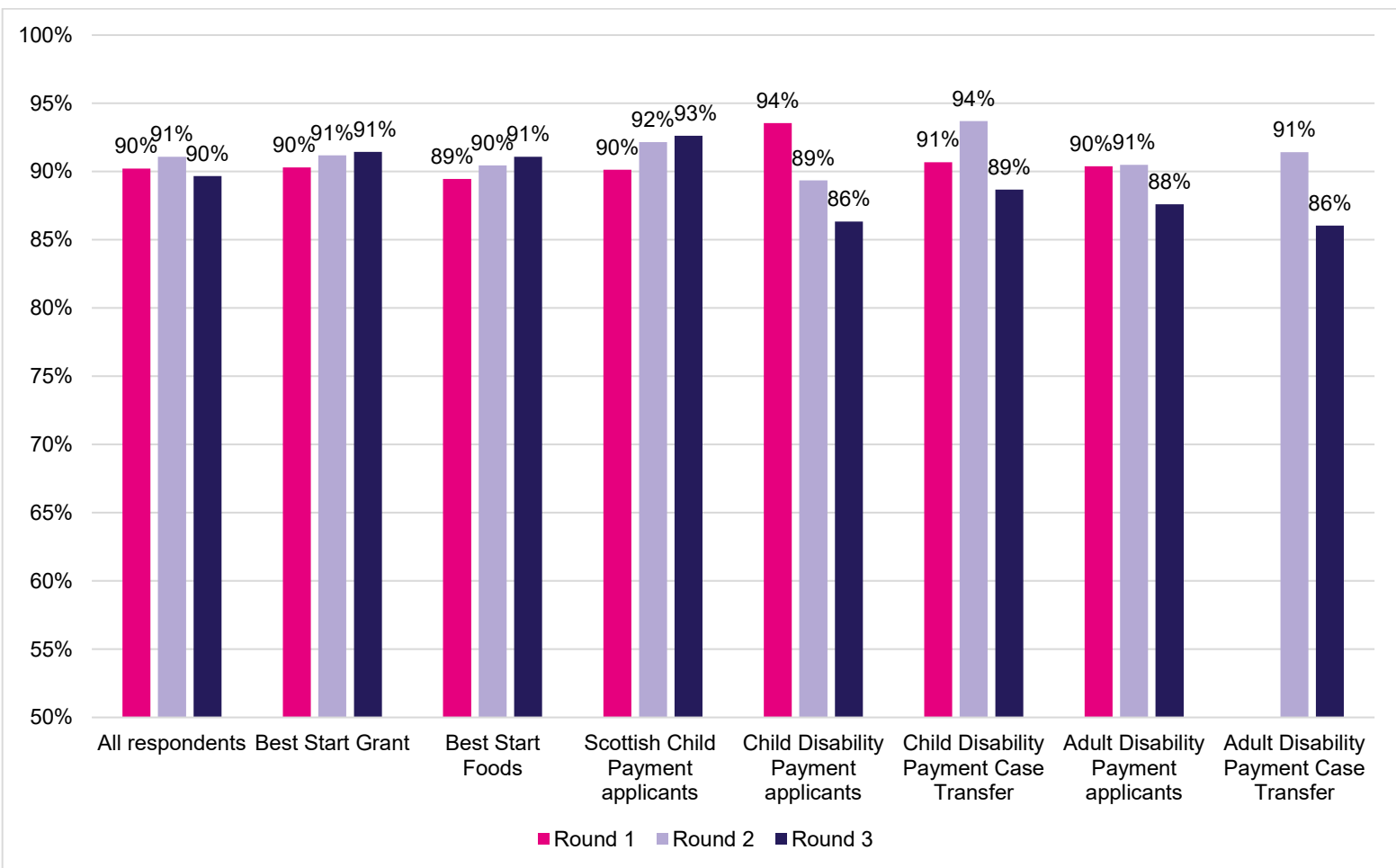
All respondents with experience of each benefit, who had been in contact with staff



14.3. Experiences with staff

Across the three rounds respondents were asked to rate their experience with Social Security Scotland staff. Figure 14.3 shows overall rating of experience with staff by fieldwork round for each benefit. Overall experience with staff remained largely consistent across the three rounds (90% in round 1 and 3, 91% in round 2). Child Disability Payment saw the most noticeable decline across the three rounds (94% in round 1, 89% in round 2, to 86% in round 3). Conversely Scottish Child Payment saw the greatest increase (90% in round 1, 92% in round 2, to 93% in round 3).

Figure 14.3: Overall rating of experience with staff, by fieldwork round (% who rated very good or good)
All respondents with experience of each benefit, who had been in contact with staff

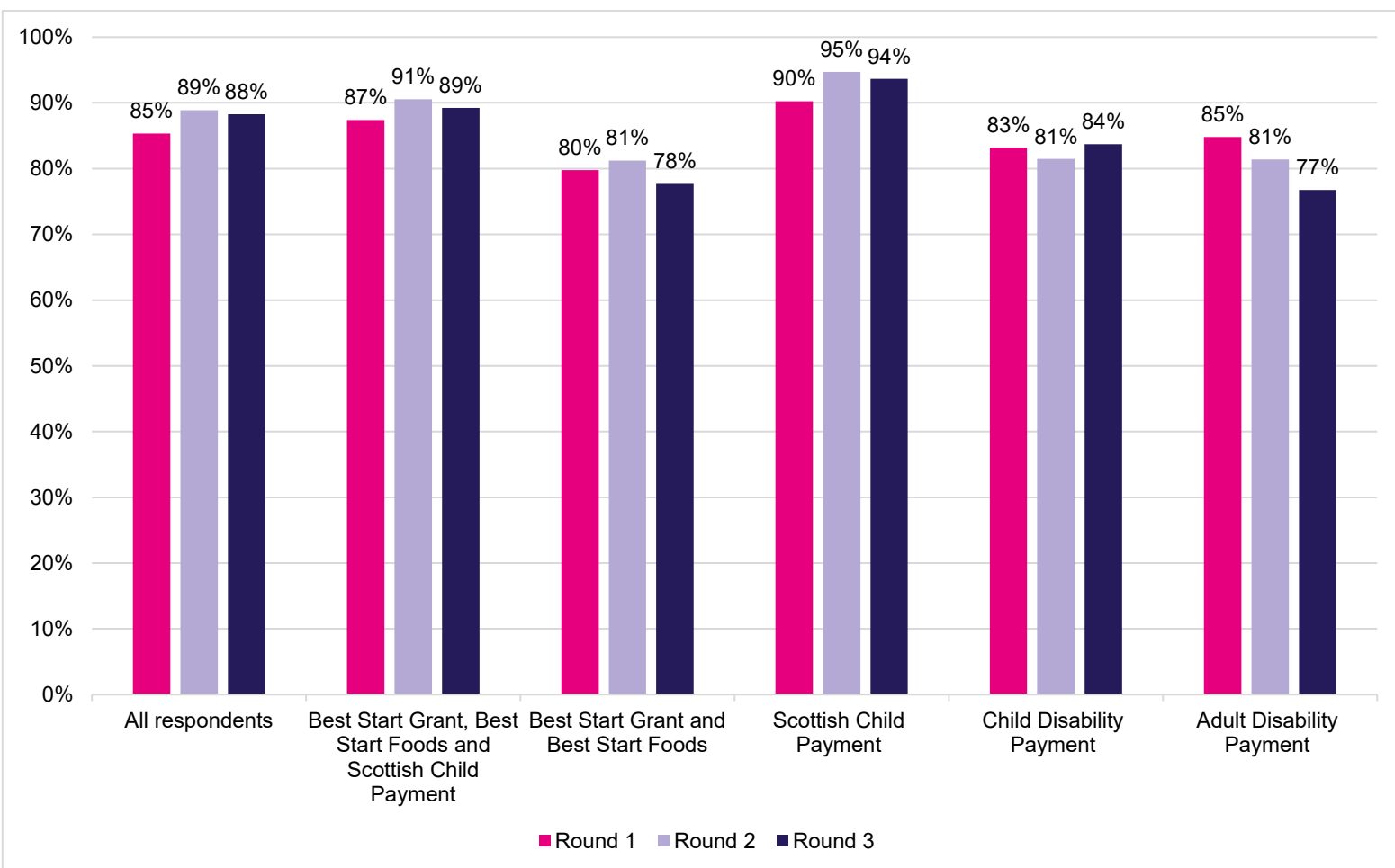


14.4. Applying for Social Security benefits

Across all three rounds respondents were asked to rate their overall experience of the application process. Figure 14.4 shows the overall experience of the application process by benefit across the three rounds. Rating of the application process remained largely consistent across the three rounds (85% in round 1, 89% in round 2, and 88% in round 3). Adult Disability Payment saw the most noticeable decline across the three rounds (85% in round 1, 81% in round 2, to 77% in round 3). Ratings drop marginally between round 2 and round 3 across each benefit (between 1-4%), with the exception of Child Disability Payment where there was an increase in overall rating of 3%.

Figure 14.4: Overall rating of application process, by fieldwork round (% who rated very good or good)

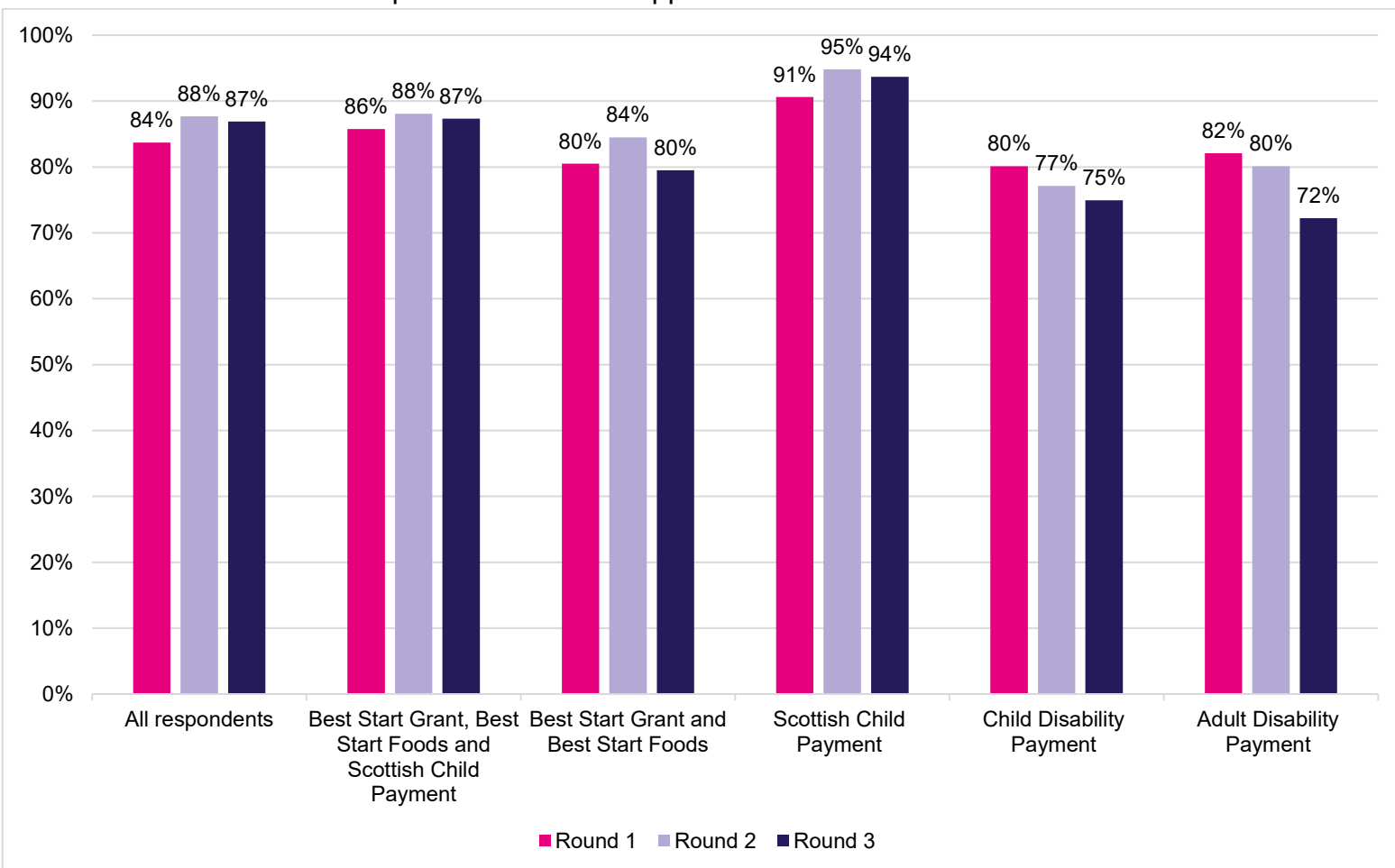
All respondents who had applied for each benefit



Across all three rounds respondents were also asked how much they agreed with the statement ‘the application process was clear’. Figure 14.5 shows agreement with this statement by benefit across the three rounds. Rating of the application process remained largely consistent across the three rounds for all respondents (84% in round 1, 88% in round 2, and 87% in round 3). There was large variations across benefit experience. Adult Disability Payment saw the most noticeable decline across the three rounds (82% in round 1, 80% in round 2, to 72% in round 3). Ratings drop marginally between round 2 and round 3 across each benefit (between 1-8%).

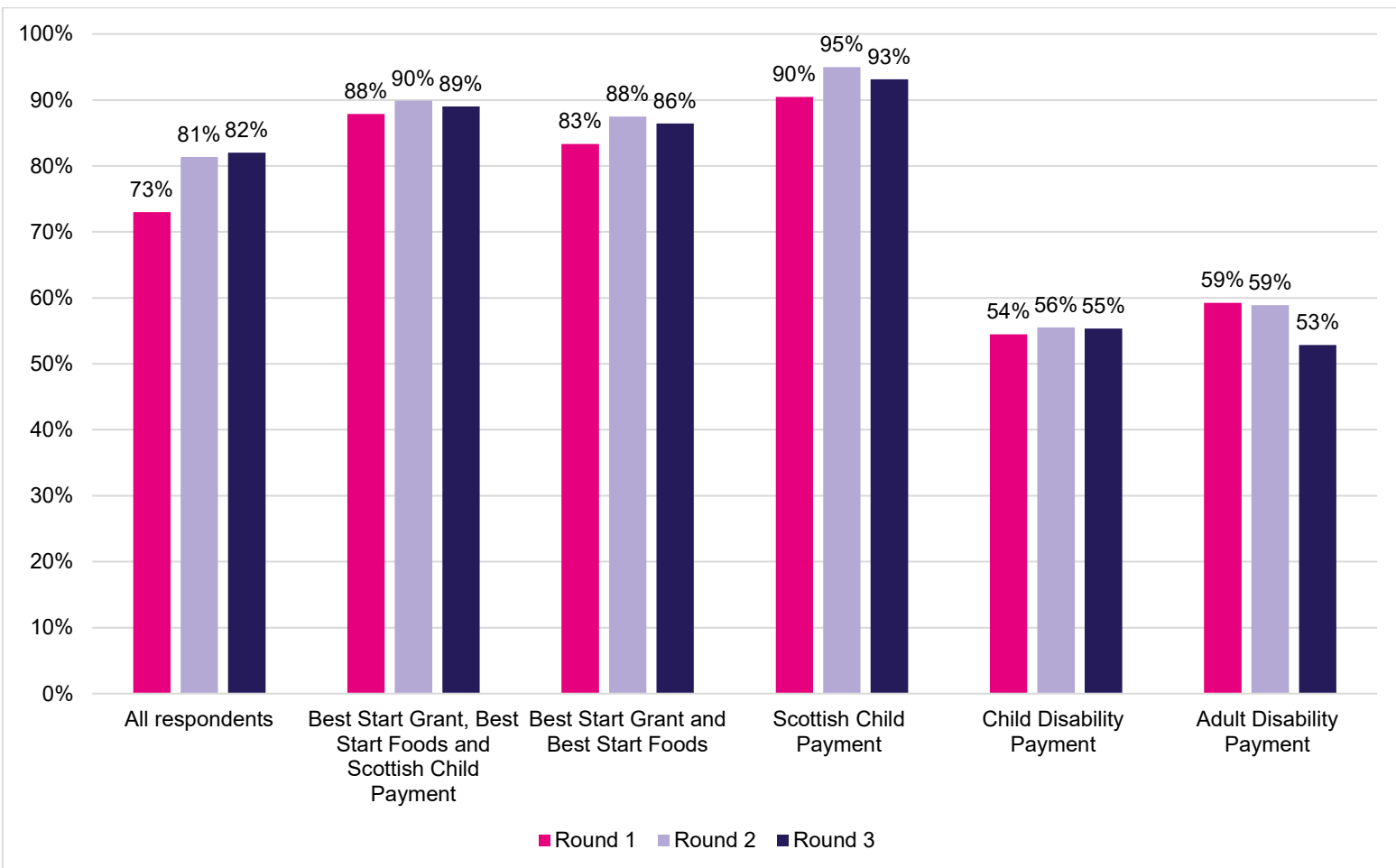
Figure 14.5: Agreement that ‘the application process was clear’, by fieldwork round (% who answered strongly agree or agree)

All respondents who had applied for each benefit



Across all three rounds respondents were also asked how much they agreed with the statement ‘filling in and submitting the application did not take too long’. Figure 14.6 shows agreement with this statement by benefit across the three rounds. Rating of the application process increased slightly across the three rounds for all respondents (73% in round 1, 81% in round 2, and 82% in round 3). Although they remained consistent, Adult Disability Payment and Child Disability Payment are consistently lower than other benefits.

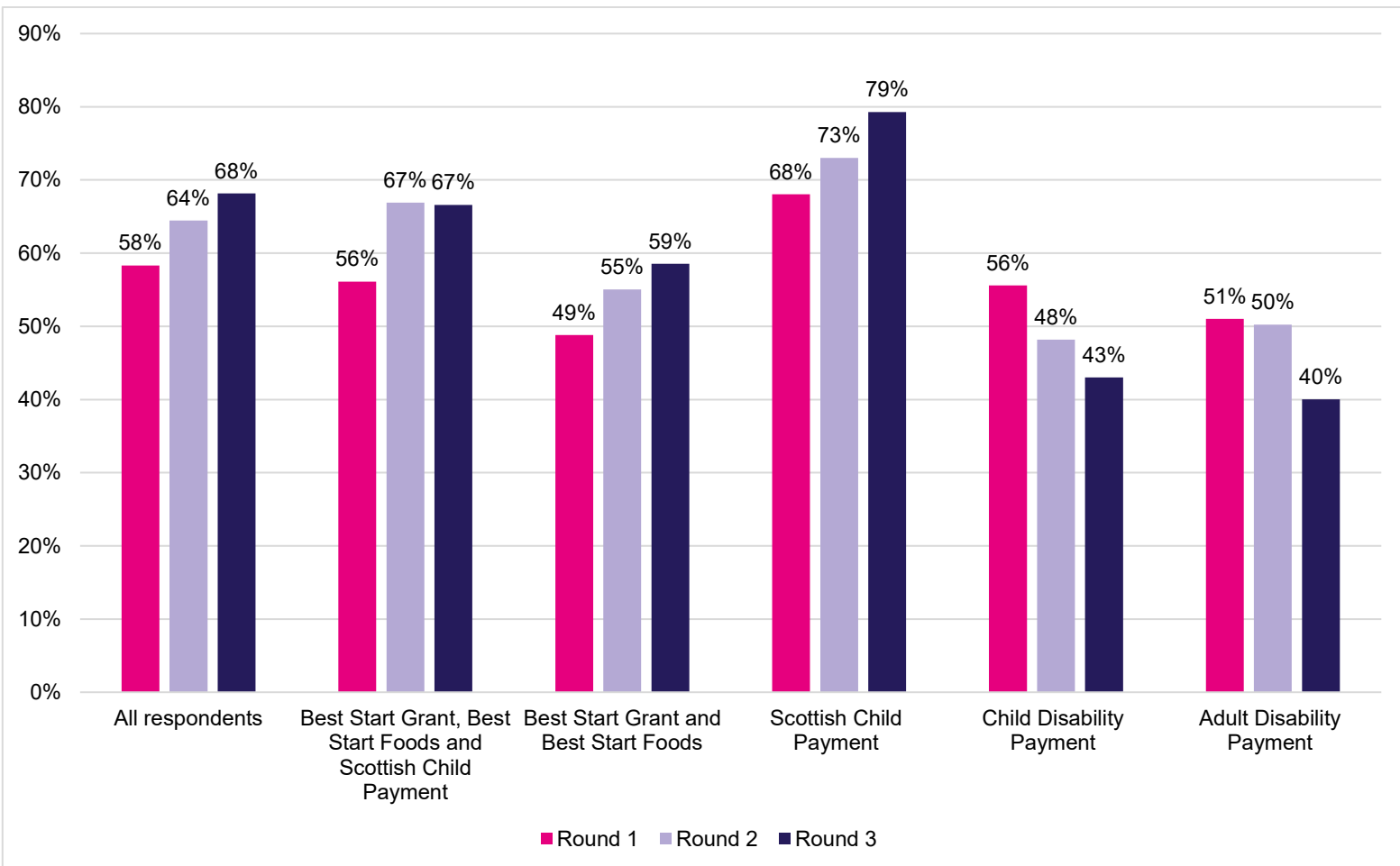
Figure 14.6: Agreement that ‘filling in and submitting the application did not take too long’, by fieldwork round (% who answered strongly agree or agree)
All respondents who had applied for each benefit



14.5. Application decision

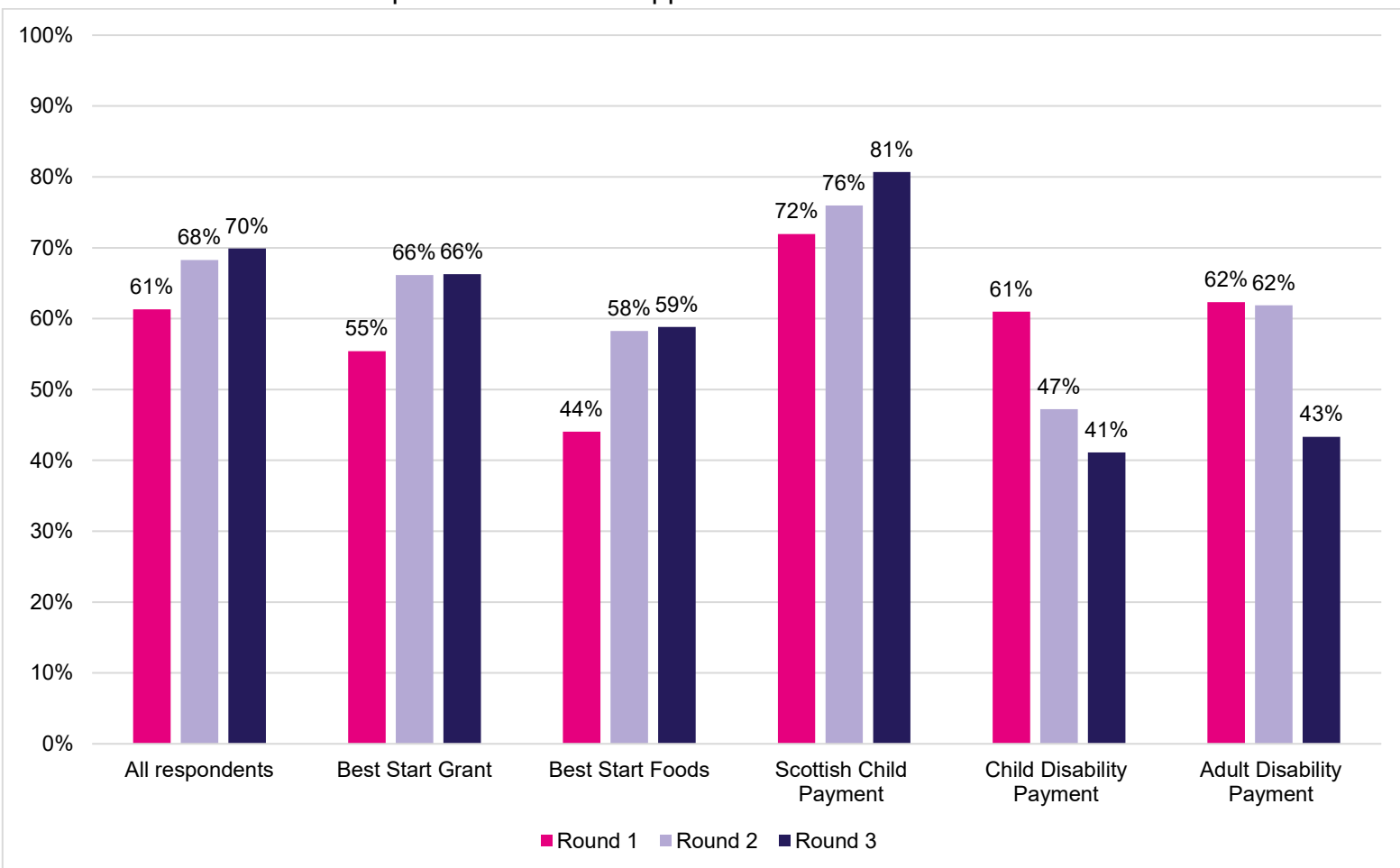
Across all three rounds respondents were also asked how much they agreed with the statement 'I got enough updates on the progress of my application'. Figure 14.7 shows agreement with this statement by benefit across the three rounds. Agreement with the statement increased across the three rounds for all respondents (58% in round 1, 64% in round 2, and 68% in round 3). There was large variations across benefit experience. Scottish Child Payment saw the most noticeable increase across the three rounds (68% in round 1, 73% in round 2, to 79% in round 3).

Figure 14.7: Agreement that 'I got enough updates on the progress of my application', by fieldwork round (% who answered strongly agree or agree)
All respondents who had applied for each benefit



Respondents were asked how much they agreed with the statement 'my application was handled within a reasonable time frame'. Figure 14.8 shows agreement with this statement by benefit across the three rounds. Rating of the statement increased somewhat across the three rounds for all respondents (61% in round 1, 68% in round 2, and 70% in round 3). There was large variations across benefit experience. Child Disability Payment saw the most noticeable decline across the three rounds (61% in round 1, 47% in round 2, to 41% in round 3). Adult Disability Payment saw an equally large decline between rounds 2 and 4 (from 62% to 43%).

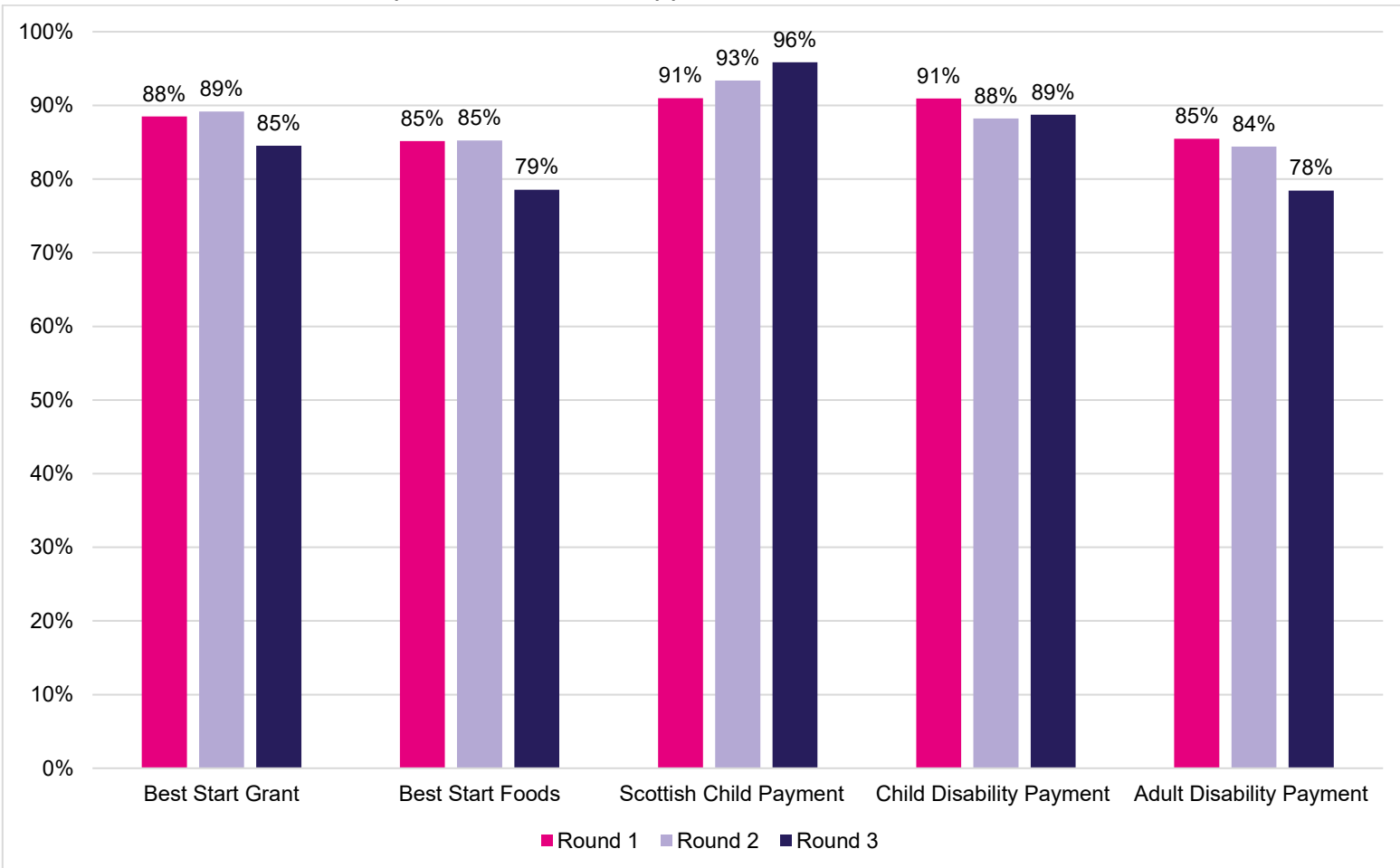
Figure 14.8: Agreement that 'my application was handled within a reasonable time frame', by fieldwork round (% who answered strongly agree or agree)
All respondents who had applied for each benefit



Respondents were asked if they agreed with their application decision. Figure 14.9 shows agreement with application decision by benefit across the three rounds. Agreement fluctuated somewhat across the three rounds for all respondents (88% in round 1, 89% in round 2, and 85% in round 3). There was some variations across benefit experience. Scottish Child Payment showed the only consistent increase across the three rounds (91% in round 1, 93% in round 2, and 96% in round 3). Adult Disability Payment and Best Start Foods saw identical decline across the round 2 and round 3 (dropping 6% between rounds).

Figure 14.9: Agreement with my application decision, by fieldwork round (% who agreed with decision)

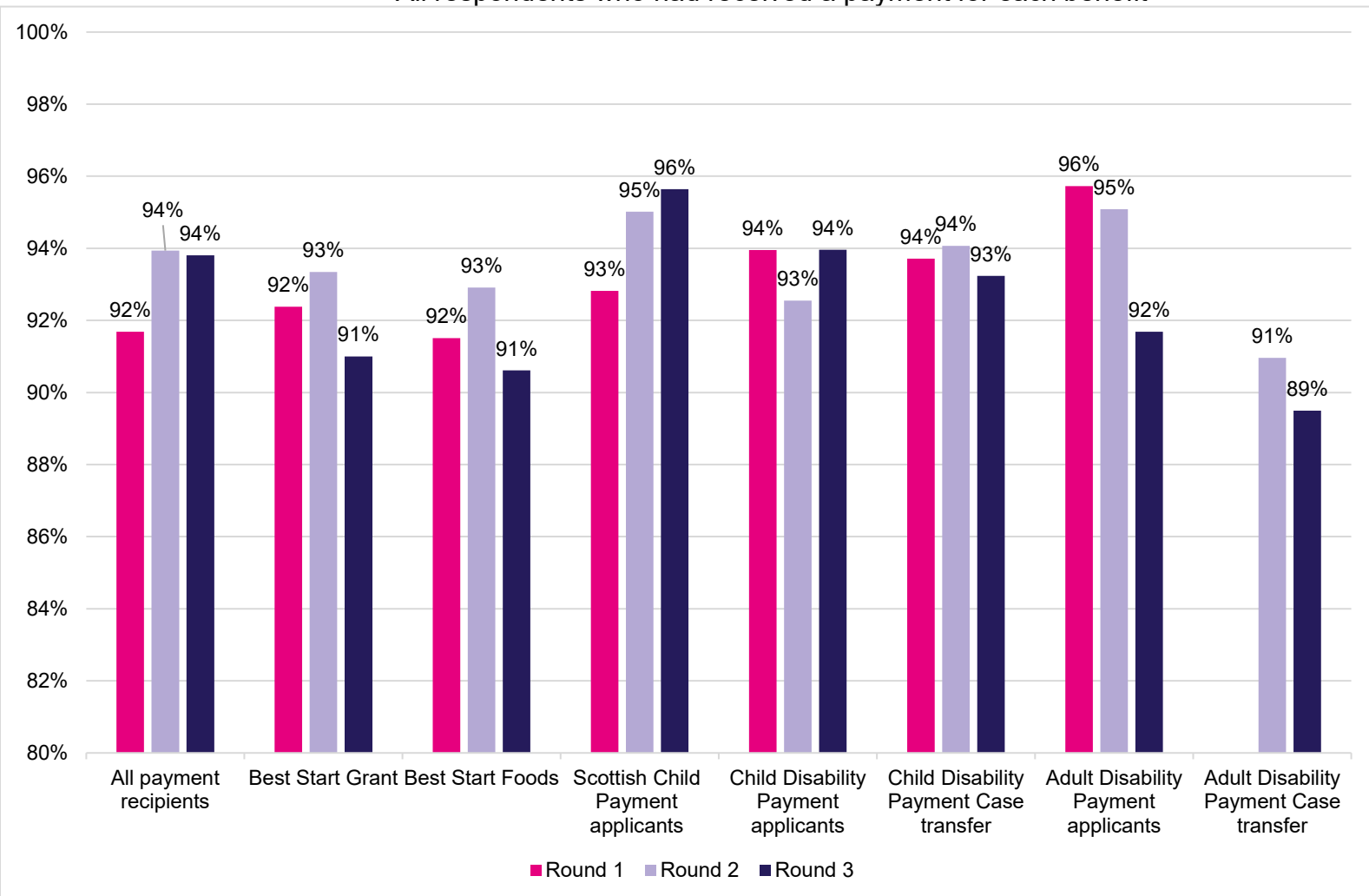
All respondents who had applied for each benefit



14.6. Receiving payment

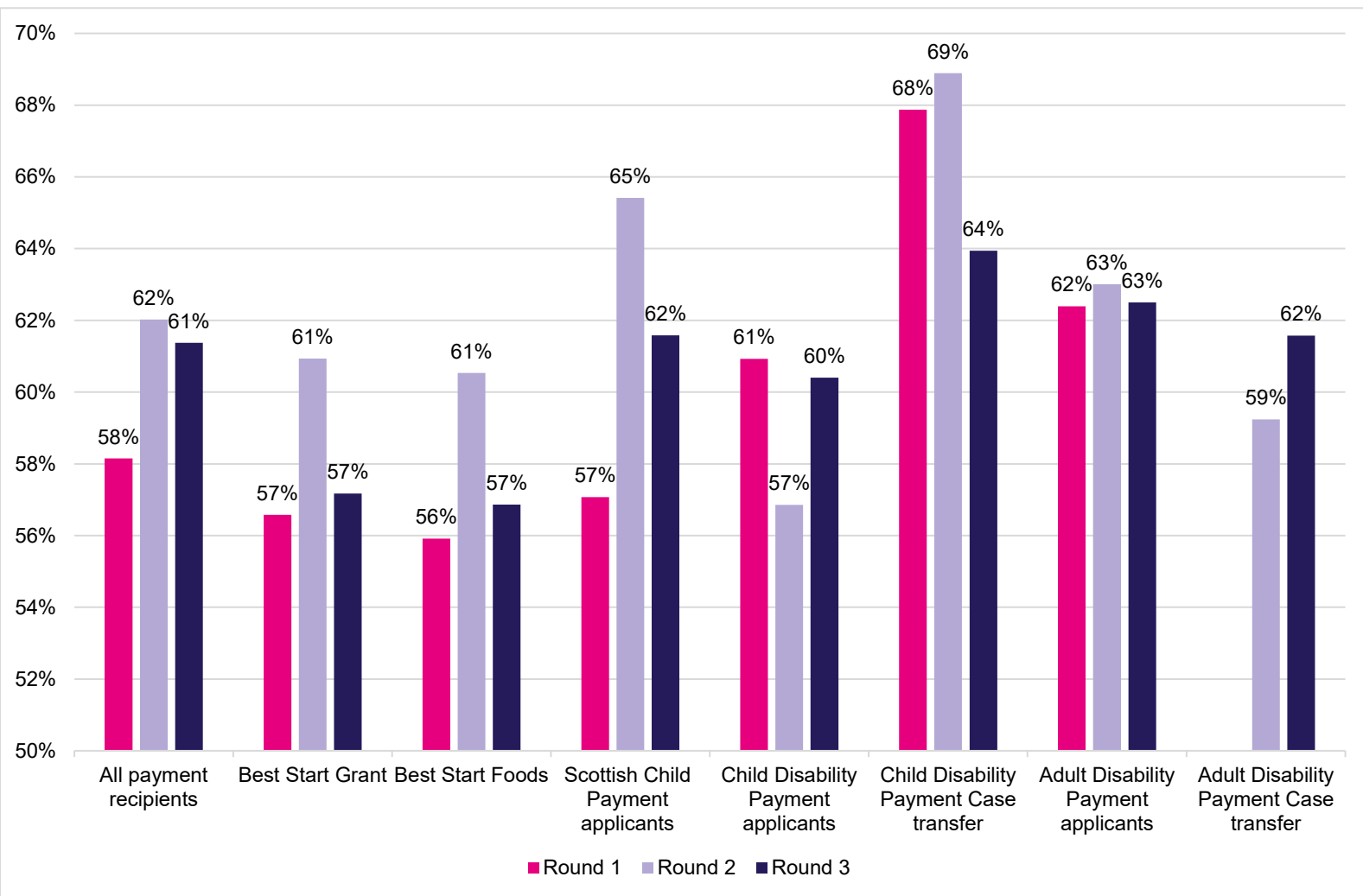
Respondents were asked their overall rating of receiving payments from Social Security Scotland. Figure 14.10 shows overall rating by benefit across the three rounds. Overall rating fluctuated somewhat across the three rounds for all respondents (92% in round 1, 94% in round 2, and 94% in round 3). There was large variations across benefit experience. Scottish Child Payment showed the only consistent increase across the three rounds (93% in round 1, 95% in round 2, and 96% in round 3). Adult Disability Payment applicants showed the biggest drop in overall rating between round 2 and round 3 (from 95% to 92%).

Figure 14.10: Overall rating of receiving payments from Social Security Scotland, by fieldwork round (% who rated very good or good)
All respondents who had received a payment for each benefit



Respondents were asked how much benefit payments ‘help make a difference to your life’. Figure 14.11 shows overall rating by benefit across the three rounds. Overall rating fluctuated somewhat across the three rounds for all respondents (58% in round 1, 62% in round 2, and 61% in round 3). There was large variations across benefit experience. Scottish Child Payment showed a large increase between round 1 and round 2 (from 57% to 65%).

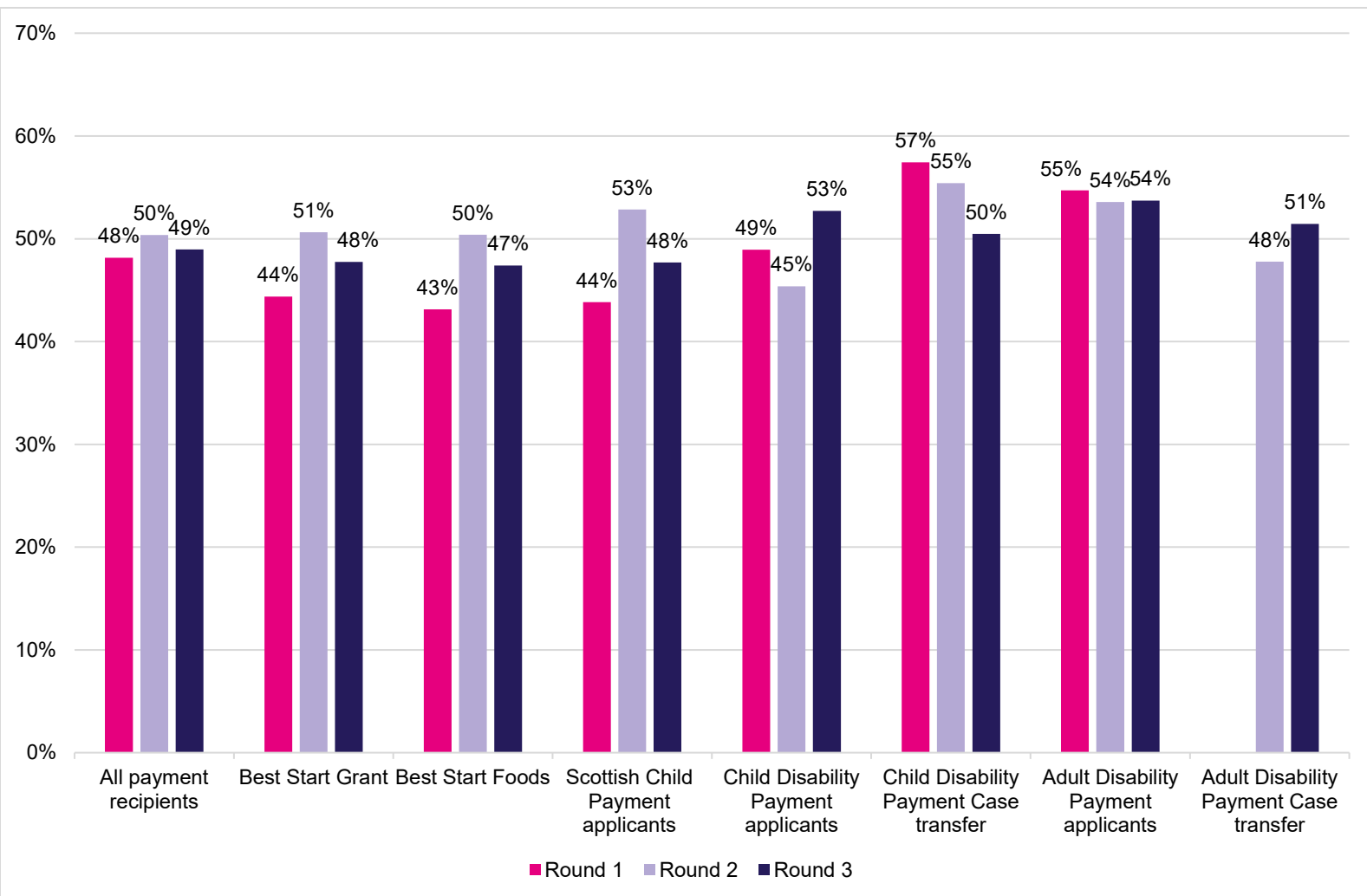
Figure 14.11: How much did your benefit payment(s) ‘help make a difference to your life’, by fieldwork round (% who gave rating of 10 out of 10 - “a lot”)
All respondents who had received a payment for each benefit



Respondents were also asked how much benefit payments ‘help you to control your finances’. Figure 14.12 shows overall rating by benefit across the three rounds. Overall rating fluctuated somewhat across the three rounds for all respondents (48% in round 1, 50% in round 2, and 49% in round 3). There was large variations across benefit experience. Child Disability Payment Case Transfer saw a steady decrease across the three rounds (57% in round 1, 55% in round 2, and 50% in round 3).

Figure 14.12: How much did your benefit payment(s) ‘help you to control your finances’, by fieldwork round (% who gave rating of 10 out of 10 - “a lot”)

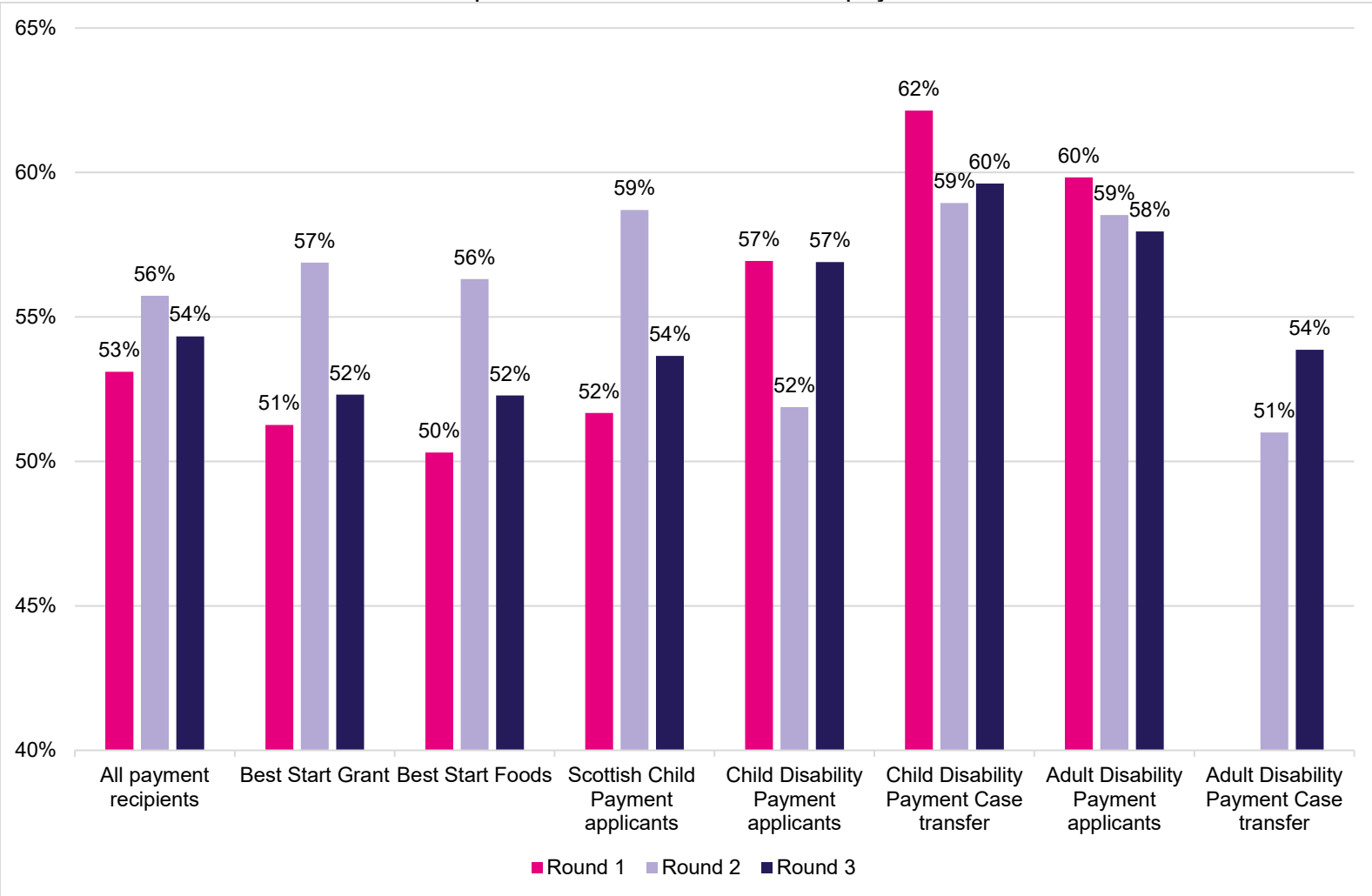
All respondents who had received a payment for each benefit



Respondents were also asked how much benefit payments ‘help you pay for what you needed’. Figure 14.13 shows overall rating by benefit across the three rounds. Overall rating fluctuated somewhat across the three rounds for all respondents (53% in round 1, 56% in round 2, and 54% in round 3). There was large variations across benefit experience. Adult Disability Payment applicants saw a steady decrease across the three rounds (60% in round 1, 59% in round 2, and 58% in round 3).

Figure 14.13: How much did your benefit payment(s) ‘help you pay for what you needed’, by fieldwork round (% who gave rating of 10 out of 10 - “a lot”)

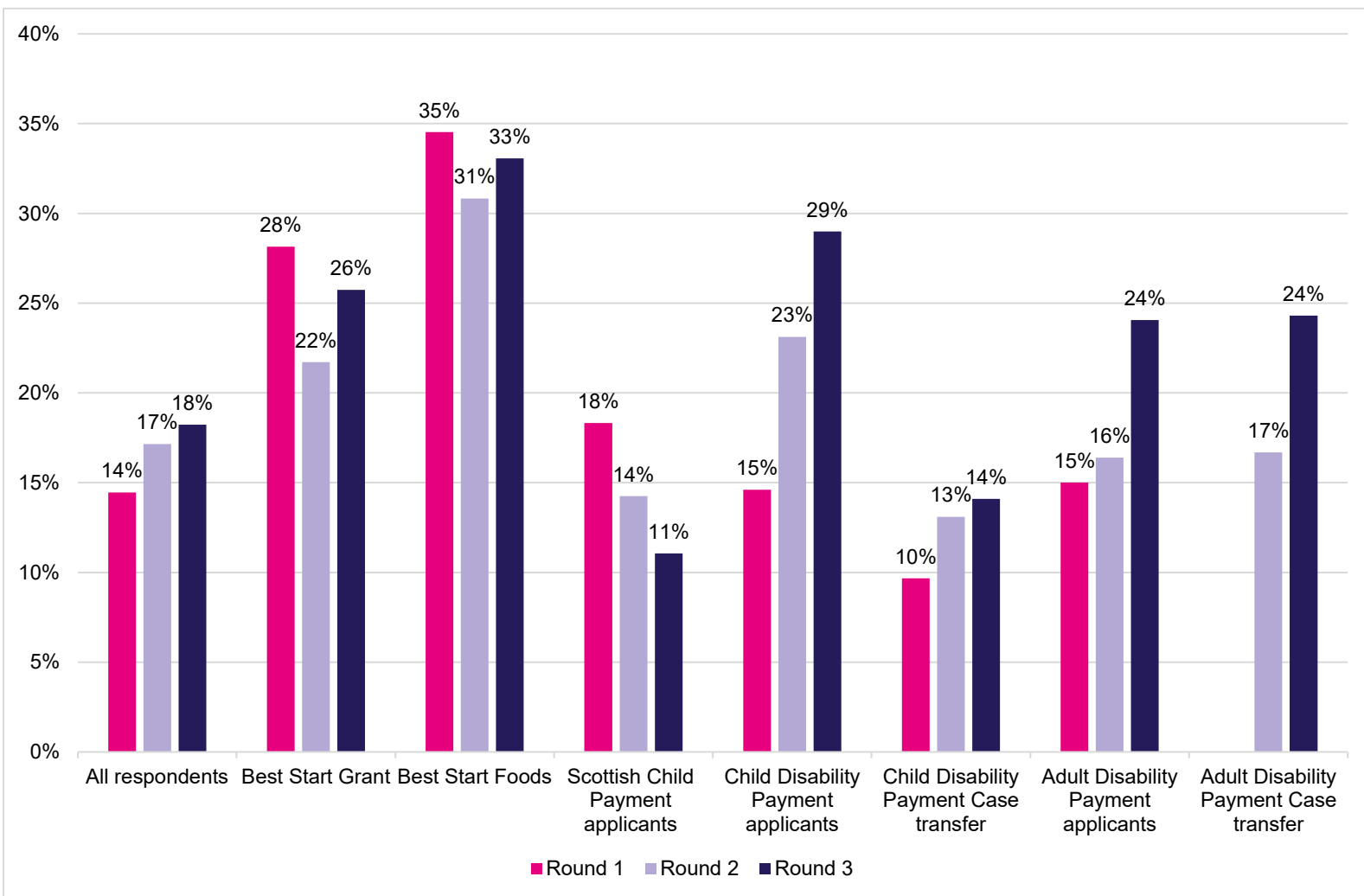
All respondents who had received a payment for each benefit



14.7. Barriers

Respondents were asked whether they faced any barriers getting help from Social Security Scotland. Figure 14.14 shows overall rating by benefit across the three rounds. Overall rating increased somewhat across the three rounds for all respondents (14% in round 1, 17% in round 2, and 18% in round 3). There was large variations across benefit experience. Adult Disability Payment applicants saw a large increase between round 2 and round 3 (from 16% to 24%). Scottish Child Payment applicants saw a steady decrease across all three rounds (18% in round 1, 14% in round 2, and 11% in round 3).

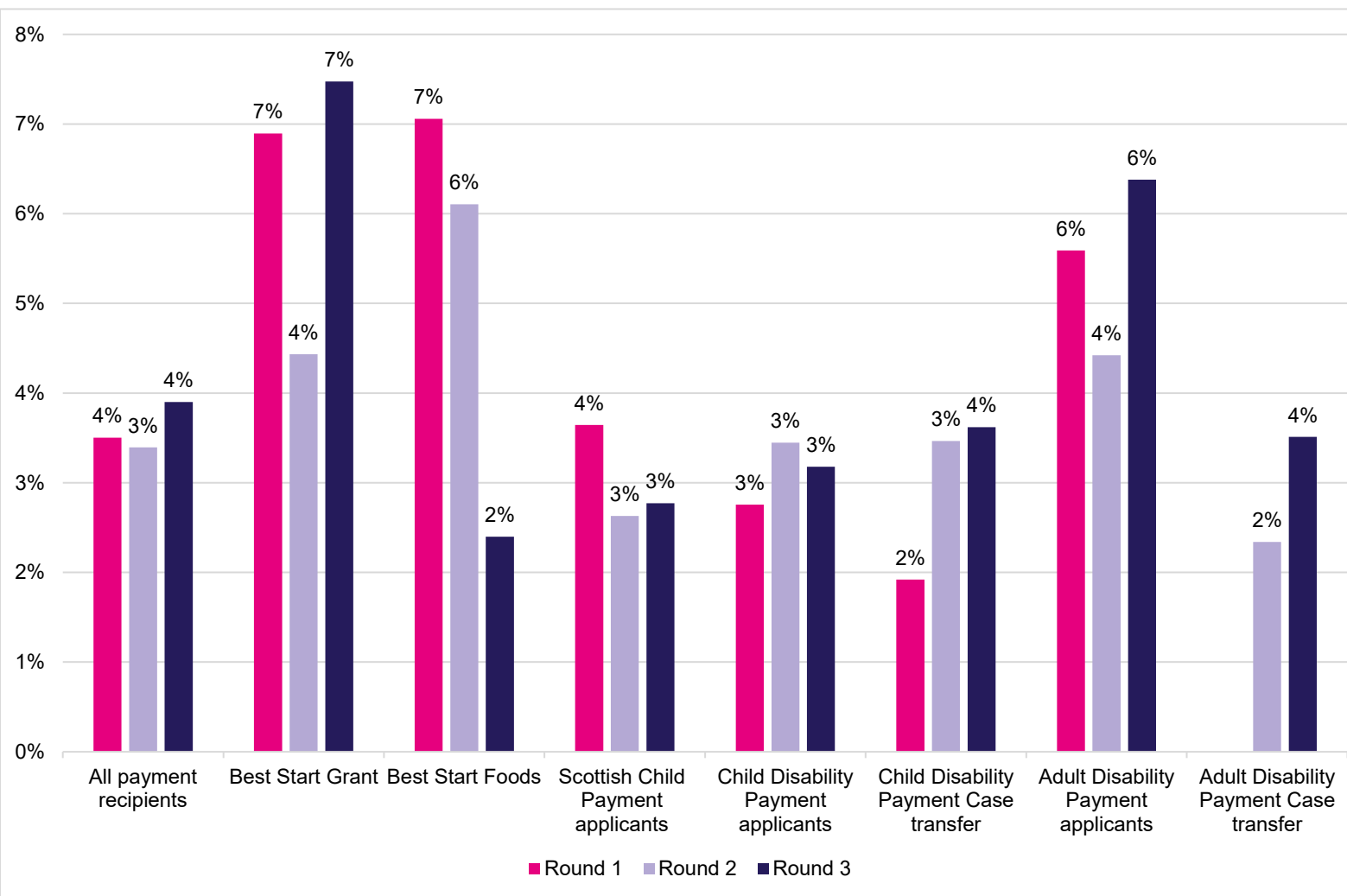
Figure 14.14: Whether respondents faced any barriers getting help from Social Security Scotland, by fieldwork round
All respondents with experience of each benefit



14.8. Discrimination

Respondents were asked whether they faced any discrimination getting help from Social Security Scotland. Figure 14.15 shows overall rating by benefit across the three rounds. Overall rating fluctuated somewhat across the three rounds for all respondents (4% in round 1, 3% in round 2, and 4% in round 3). There was large variations across benefit experience. Best Start Foods saw a steady decrease across all three rounds (7% in round 1, 6% in round 2, and 2% in round 3). Child Disability Payment Case Transfer saw a steady increase across the three rounds (2% in round 1, 3% in round 2, and 4% in round 3).

Figure 14.15: Whether respondents faced any discrimination at any point during their experience with Social Security Scotland, by fieldwork round
All respondents with experience of each benefit



15. Next steps

The survey results provide rich insight into some of the experiences of Social Security Scotland clients. The results will be used alongside other evidence to populate the [Charter Measurement Framework](#) which reports on Social Security Scotland's performance. The findings will also support Social Security Scotland's continuous improvement. They have also highlighted areas where more research may be useful to further explore clients' experiences, views and expectations.

We're also planning for the future of the survey. The intention is for the survey to be issued on a rolling basis to all applicants following a decision on an application. Invites will also be sent annually to people receiving recurring benefits.

We will also consider lessons learned from the initial round of the survey and whether any changes are required for future versions. [Please get in touch](#) with any feedback, comments or suggestions you have on this report or any aspect of the survey.

How to access background or source data

The data collected for this report:

- are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
- are available via an alternative route
- may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact ResearchRequests@socialsecurity.gov.scot for further information.
- cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.

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