



Social Security
Scotland

Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba



Client Survey 2022-2023

Summary report

Dignity,
fairness,
respect.

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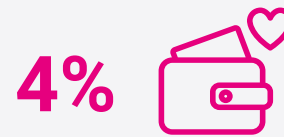
Background

- This report presents the combined results from nine rounds of the Social Security Scotland Client Survey. The first round ran from 12 September 2022 to 9 October 2022, the ninth from 24 April to 21 May 2023.
- Everyone who received an application decision or a benefit payment between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 was invited to take part in the survey.
- For the first time the survey was split into three strands, each targeted at respondents with experience of particular groups of benefits. The three benefit groups consist of 'Five Family Payments', 'Disability Payments' and 'Other Low Income and Carer'.

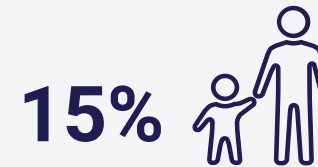
About the survey respondents

- The report is based on a total of 34,070 responses.
 - Most described their ethnicity as 'white' (86%, compared to 7% minority ethnic)
 - Most described their gender identity as 'woman' (78%, compared to 18% 'man')
 - Over a third said their age was 35-44 (34%)
 - A slightly greater number had a physical or mental health condition lasting or expected to last 12 months or more (47%), than those that did not (44%)
 - Most lived in an urban area (87%, compared to 13% rural)
 - 16% of respondents said that they had some form of communication needs
- The majority of respondents (83%) had experience of one benefit, 5% of two benefits and 12% of three benefits.
- Fewer than 25 respondents told us they had experience of Job Start Payment.

Of survey respondents:



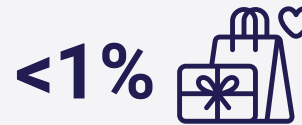
had received Carer's Allowance Supplement



had experience of Best Start Grant



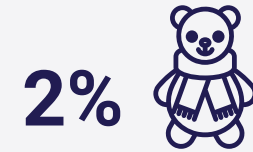
had experience of Funeral Support Payment



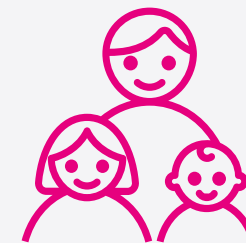
had experience of Young Carer Grant



had experience of Best Start Foods



had received Child Winter Heating Assistance



had experience of Scottish Child Payment



had experience of Child Disability Payment application



had experience of Adult Disability Payment application



had Case Transferred to Child Disability Payment



had Case Transferred to Adult Disability Payment

Overall experience

- Nearly nine-in-ten respondents believed that they had been treated with dignity (88%), fairness (87%) and respect (89%). A similar proportion agreed that Social Security Scotland had not wasted their time (84%), whilst 86% said they understood what Social Security Scotland does.
- Slightly fewer respondents said Social Security Scotland is an honest (81%) or open (78%) organisation.
- Those with a communication need (84%) were less likely to rate their overall experience as 'very good' or 'good' compared to those with no communication needs (90%).



Almost 9 in 10 respondents said their overall experience was 'very good' or 'good'.

Only 2% described their experience as 'poor' or 'very poor'.

Respondents were asked to make any suggestions for improvement or further comments about their overall experience.

Many suggested that better and more frequent communication from Social Security Scotland would have been helpful.

More updates and communication

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

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

Contact with Social Security Scotland

- 43% of all respondents said that they had tried to contact Social Security Scotland at some point since 1 April 2022.
- Respondents most commonly made contact with us via: the phone helpline (76%), sending a letter (22%), the webchat (21%), or a phone appointment (12%).
- Most respondents felt they had enough choice about how they communicated with Social Security Scotland (79%). A similar proportion (76%) said that they got the support they needed.
- White respondents were less likely to agree that 'it was easy to contact Social Security Scotland' (66%, compared to 77% of minority ethnic respondents).



67%

Two thirds of respondents who had tried to contact Social Security Scotland agreed that 'it was easy to contact Social Security Scotland'

When respondents were asked how they first heard about us...

22%



said they first found out about us by word-of-mouth



said they first found out about us online or through social media

10%



said they first found out about us because they were contacted by us

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.

Experiences with staff

- 41% of respondents said they had been in contact with a member of Social Security Scotland staff.
- The vast majority of respondents agreed that they were treated with kindness (93%) and that staff listened to them (90%).
- Most also reported that staff were able to help them (84%), made them feel comfortable (89%) and were knowledgeable about benefits (85%).
- 87% said they trusted staff and a similar proportion felt like they were trusted by staff (86%).
- Respondents with communication needs were less likely to rate their overall experience with staff as 'very good' or 'good' (88%) compared with those with no communication needs (92%).
- Three-in-ten respondents who had been in contact with staff said they would have liked to have been told about other benefits (34%), or other sources of additional help (34%), but were not.



90%

Most respondents said their experience with staff was 'very good' or 'good'.

Most comments about staff were positive and complimented their manner and helpfulness.

Nice and helpful staff.

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

A minority had a mixed or negative experience with staff.

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.

There was a mistake made by staff on my claim and every time I phoned I got wrong information.

Applying for benefits

- The majority of respondents (83%) said they had applied for at least one Social Security Scotland benefit.
- Around nine-in-ten respondents said the application process was clear (87%) and asked only relevant questions (85%).
- Marginally fewer agreed that filling in and submitting their application(s) did not take too long (81%).
- 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).



90%

Most respondents said their overall experience of applying for a benefit was 'very good' or 'good'.

Comments about the application process were mixed. Many said the application process was too delayed and lacked communication. Others found the process quick and easy.

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.

Applications disappear into the void and you hear nothing for months on end.

Quick and easy.

I was pleasantly surprised how straightforward and easy it was to complete and submit from beginning to end, no problems at all.

Application decisions

- A little under nine-in-ten respondents who had applied for a benefit agreed that they 'understood the decision' (89%).
- Two-thirds (66%) agreed with the statement 'I got enough updates on the progress of my application(s)'. One-in-five (21%) disagreed with this statement. Notably, only around half of Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment applicants agreed with this statement.
- Around seven-in-ten (69%) agreed with the statement 'My application(s) was (were) handled within a reasonable time frame'. Around one-in-five (19%) disagreed with this statement.
- 11% said they disagreed with a decision they received.
- 10% of applicants received an unsuccessful decision on their application. Only 11% of unsuccessful respondents asked Social Security Scotland to look at the decision again. Of the cohort who did not ask us to look at the decision again:
 - 47% thought it wouldn't be successful
 - 22% didn't feel they could.



88%

Most respondents agreed that the decision on their application was 'explained clearly'.

Comments negatively discussed wait time on decisions, as well as communication and eligibility criteria. Other positive comments mentioned clarity of decisions and communications:

Its not good enough that i've been waiting for months and months and have received no contact, no updates, nothing.

Submitted application on 14th November, only one text update and more than two months on and a decision still had not been made.

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

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

Receiving payments

- Most respondents said they received their payment(s) when Social Security Scotland said they would (97%). A similar amount reported that they received the right amount on the first time (95%) and 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 average scores for how much benefit payments:
 - Helped to make a difference to their life – 8.6
 - Helped them to control their finances – 7.9
 - Helped them to pay for what they needed – 8.2
- The mean ratings given by those who received Child Disability Payment were higher across all three statements compared to other benefit groups.



94%

The majority of respondents said their overall experience of receiving benefit payments was 'very good' or 'good'.

Many were thankful for the impact payments had for them and their children. A small proportion thought payments were not enough.

Carers in Scotland should be paid more.

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!

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.

Barriers

- 17% of respondents said they had faced some form of barrier getting help from Social Security Scotland.
- Just under a third (30%) of respondents who had faced barriers said they told Social Security Scotland.
- Of those respondents, over two-fifths (43%) felt that Social Security Scotland 'understood them'. A smaller proportion felt that Social Security Scotland 'supported [them] in overcoming them' (25%).

The most frequently mentioned barrier was the long wait times for 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.

Discrimination

- 4% of respondents said they had been discriminated against during their experience with Social Security Scotland, and 4% preferred not to say.
- Of the 1,226 respondents who said they had experienced discrimination, 36% said it related to Social Security Scotland policies, 39% said it related to processes, and 22% said it related to staff.
- Of those who had experienced discrimination, 45% disagreed that it was 'clear how to challenge it'.
- 47% also disagreed with the statement 'I felt I could challenge it', and around a quarter (26%) said they told Social Security Scotland about the discrimination.

Disagreement with eligibility criteria was by far the most common theme throughout the comments.

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.

Change across the year

- Respondents' overall experience with staff remained consistent for all benefit groups, with around 90% of all respondents giving a rating of 'very good' or 'good' across each of the three rounds.
- Overall experience of Social Security Scotland remained consistent for all benefit groups, with 88% of all respondents giving a rating of 'very good' or 'good' across each of the three rounds.
- In round 1, 72% of Scottish Child Payment applicants agreed their 'application was handled within a reasonable time frame'. By round 3 this increases to 81%.
- When asked if 'it was easy to contact Social Security Scotland' agreement with this statement decreases most significantly for Child Disability Payment applicants (81% in round 1 to 44% in round 3).

Fieldwork was split into three benefit experience strands, each of which ran across the three rounds of fieldwork.



Five Family Payments – experience of Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, 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 Payment



Round 1
Sep-Dec 2022

Round 2
Jan-Apr 2023

Round 3
Apr-May 2023



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Contact us

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