

Annual Client Panels Survey 2023

Summary report

Dignity,
fairness,
respect.

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A total of
1,182
panel members took
part in the survey

Background

This report summarises some key findings from the Annual Client Panels Survey 2023.

As set out in **Our Charter**, Social Security Scotland remains committed to listen, learn and improve by encouraging and valuing feedback. Our Client Panels are key to this, ensuring the social security system works for the people of Scotland.

The Client Panels are made up of Social Security Scotland clients from across Scotland. Research with Client Panel members explores what people's experience of Social Security Scotland has been like. The research informs decisions about Social Security Scotland's systems, processes and policies.

The Annual Client Panels Survey 2023 is the first of its kind. The purpose of this research is to gather insights from clients about aspects of their experience which (usually) happen post-decision, such as the experience of receiving recurring payments and communicating with Social Security Scotland about a change of circumstances.

The broad aim of the research is to identify aspects of client experience where things are working well, or could be improved. Repeating the survey annually also allows for baseline and trend data to be built up to assess change over time.

The results only represent the views of the panel members who took part in the survey. Results shouldn't be interpreted as being representative of all Social Security Scotland clients.

About the survey respondents

- The report is based on a total of 1,182 responses.
- Most (83%) were aged between 35-64
- Most described their ethnicity as 'white' (88% compared to 10% minority ethnic)
- Almost three quarters described their gender identity as 'woman' (72% compared to 28% 'man')
- More than half (58%) had a lasting physical or mental health condition
- Two fifths (40%) said they were carers
- More than half (59%) lived in the two most deprived SIMD quintiles

Which benefits did our survey respondents receive in the last year?



45%

Scottish Child Payment



40%

Adult Disability Payment



20%

Child Disability Payment



19%

Carer's Allowance Supplement



11%

Winter Heating Payment



9%

Child Winter Heating Payment



9%

Best Start Foods / Best Start Grant



1%

Funeral Support Payment



1%

Young Carer Grant



<1%

Job Start Payment

Impact of payments

- Clients were asked how much the payments from Social Security Scotland had:
 - helped them to pay for what they need
 - helped them to control their finances
 - had a positive impact on their health and wellbeing
- Respondents gave an average score of 8 out of 10 for each of these measures.
- Similarly, most respondents who received Scottish Child Payment, Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods reported that the payments had a positive impact on their child's health and wellbeing and helped to purchase milk and/or healthy food for their child.

Most respondents said the payments they received from Social Security Scotland had a positive impact on them and their families.



Receiving payments

- 9 in 10 respondents (90%) had not experienced any problems with receiving payments from Social Security Scotland in the last 12 months.
- Among the minority (7%) who did experience problems with payments...
 - common issues were receiving payments late and long processing times between applications and decisions
 - the benefit most prone to problems was Adult Disability Payment
 - almost half (46%) of the 7% said they were satisfied with how Social Security Scotland handled the problem with the payment overall

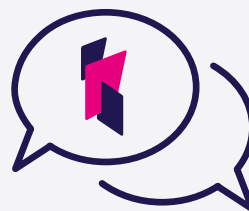


94%

More than 9 in 10 respondents were positive about their overall experience of receiving payments from Social Security Scotland over the last 12 months.

Telling Social Security Scotland about a change of circumstances

- Clients who have applied for or receive certain benefits need to tell Social Security Scotland if their circumstances change. This is so Social Security Scotland can make sure clients get the payments they are entitled to and keep in touch about payments.
- Most respondents were positive about the process of reporting a change of circumstances. Around 7 in 10 said the process was clear (73%) and easy (70%).
- Despite finding the process of reporting a change to be easy, half (50%) of respondents said telling Social Security Scotland about the change of circumstances made them feel anxious. Around two fifths (42%) worried that reporting a change would mean they would lose some or all of their payments.
- More than three quarters (77%) said it was clear what supporting information they needed to provide, relevant to their change of circumstances.



70%

of respondents said it was easy to tell Social Security Scotland about the change



50%

of respondents said telling Social Security Scotland about the change made them feel anxious

- Almost one third (31%) of respondents asked Social Security Scotland to collect supporting information on their behalf. This group felt Social Security Scotland could collect the information faster, or knew better what to collect, or could get information they wouldn't be able to get themselves.

- Over half (56%) of the respondents felt Social Security Scotland processed their change of circumstances within a reasonable time.
- Among respondents whose payments were affected by a change of circumstances, almost three quarters (72%) said their payments increased.
- When asked whether Social Security Scotland had clearly explained the way their payments would or would not be affected and why, more than two thirds of respondents agreed. A larger majority said they agreed with the decision made about how their payments would or would not be impacted.
- Around three quarters (72%) of respondents agreed that Social Security Scotland treated them with fairness and respect when dealing with their change of circumstances.
- More than half (57%) rated their overall experience of telling Social Security Scotland about their change of circumstances as good or very good.



95%

of respondents whose payments were affected by a change of circumstances said they agreed with the decision

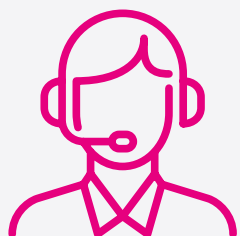
Communication with Social Security Scotland

- Around half (51%) of survey respondents said that they had received communication from Social Security Scotland in the last 12 months. A large majority of this group were satisfied with the level, format and usefulness of that communication.
- More than three quarters (78%) of respondents said promotional information about Social Security Scotland benefits made it easy to understand what the payments are and how to apply.
- Over one third (38%) of survey respondents had contacted Social Security Scotland in the last 12 months.
- The most common reason for making contact was to get an update or information about an application. Most respondents were positive about their experience of contacting Social Security Scotland.
- Around 6 in 10 (61%) said it was easy to make contact and a similar proportion (60%) felt their issue was dealt with in a timely manner.
- More than one third (37%) of respondents had recently used webchat to contact Social Security Scotland. Around two thirds (64%) of this group had a positive experience of using Webchat.



Contact with Social Security Scotland Staff

- When asked about recent contact with Social Security Scotland staff, survey responses were very positive across all satisfaction markers.
- Respondents described feeling respected and listened to. Some expressed gratitude for staff giving clear explanations of the application and payment processes.
- More than 8 in 10 respondents (81%) said their overall experience of recent contact with Social Security Scotland staff was good or very good.



81%

of respondents had a positive experience with Social Security Scotland staff

Most respondents agreed with the statements:

I was treated with kindness

84%

Staff listened to me

80%

Staff made me feel comfortable

77%

Staff were honest with me

75%

I felt trusted

73%

I trusted staff

71%

Staff were able to help me

69%

Staff were knowledgeable about Social Security Scotland benefits and services

67%

Many respondents described the staff as helpful and supportive.

Staff explained everything I needed to know and were patient and helpful. I trusted what they told me and advised me to do. It may have taken a few attempts but I got there.

I was supported emotionally and mentally by the staff when explaining my situation.

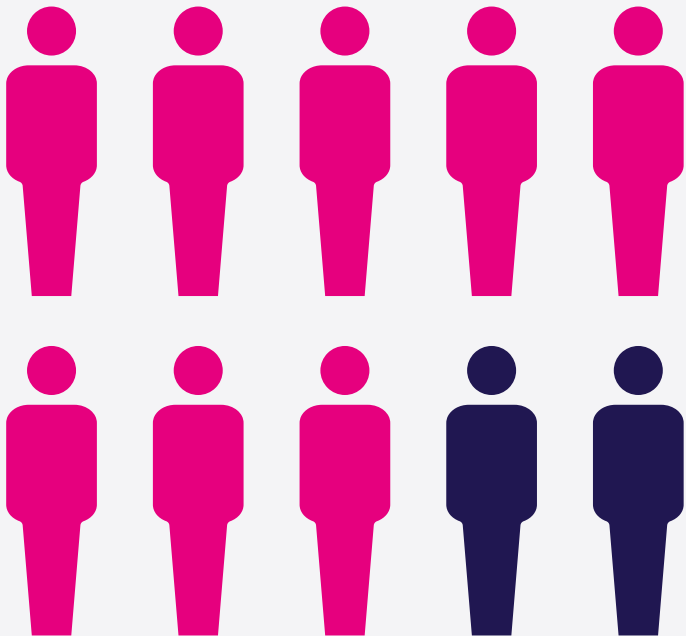
Anyone I've spoken to has been exceptionally helpful, respectful and considerate.

A smaller number of respondents who had a negative experience commented that staff were unable to help with their query.

They couldn't/wouldn't advise me on how long I will be waiting or even what the outcome might be or how it will affect me.

Overall experience with Social Security Scotland

When asked to rate their overall experience with Social Security Scotland in the last 12 months, more than 8 in 10 respondents (84%) rated it good or very good.



Many respondents spoke positively about their interactions with Social Security Scotland staff, describing them as empathetic, supportive and helpful. Respondents were grateful for the support received from Social Security Scotland and some described the positive impact payments have had on their, and their families', lives.

I have been treated with dignity, respect, compassion and understanding and for this I feel very grateful to your staff and the decisions that were made for me were done on a personal basis instead of a one size fits all category. Thank you.

We appreciate your help and support. It's really helpful in the recent living costs crisis. Getting an extra amount of money without paying more for taxes which helps mentally and financially so many thanks.

On the other hand, some respondents described waiting too long for their application to be processed and a lack of communication about the progress of their applications. This was a prominent theme in open text responses across almost all sections of the survey.

Respondents' suggestions for improvement included recommending that Social Security Scotland issue regular update messages to assure clients of the progress with their applications, or establish an online platform where clients log in to see details of their benefit, reminders and updates.

Get more staff in so that applications are resolved in good time. It just worsens people's mental health to have it hanging over their heads and being clueless as to what will happen to them. Also there should be updates on the status of your case. Instead of us getting upset and trying to call by ourselves.



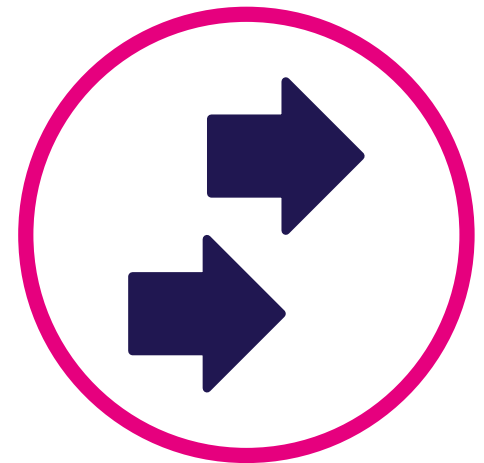
Next steps

Social Security Scotland will continue to work with the Client Panels to make sure the social security system works for the people of Scotland.

This was the first Annual Client Panels Survey. Repeating the survey annually allows for baseline and trend data to be built up to assess change over time.

The results of this and future Annual Client Panels Surveys will be used alongside other evidence to feed into the Charter Measurement Framework which reports on Social Security Scotland's performance. The findings will also support Social Security Scotland's continuous improvement.

This survey was designed in consultation with teams across Social Security Scotland, including client services, communications, research, and policy colleagues. The findings have been shared with these teams and will inform their decision-making.



Contact us

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