



Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Social Security Scotland Client Survey: 2018-2020



Contents

1. Executive Summary	4
2. Background and methodology	10
2.1. Survey purpose	10
2.2. Structure of this report and supporting materials available	11
2.3. Survey design and distribution	12
2.4. Data cleaning and analysis	15
2.5. Understanding and interpreting survey results	16
3. Overall experience	18
3.1. Overall rating of experience – all respondents	18
3.2. Overall rating of experience – by benefit experience	19
3.3. Overall rating of experience – by demographic characteristics	23
3.4. Comments about overall experience and general suggestions	25
4. Finding out about Social Security Scotland	31
5. Getting information and advice	34
5.1. Whether and how respondents had sought information and advice	34
5.2. Experience of getting information and advice	37
5.3. Comments about getting information and advice	40
6. Experiences with staff	43
6.1. Whether respondents had been in contact with staff	43
6.2. Views on contact with staff	43
6.3. Information and advice provided by staff	47
6.4. Comments about experiences with staff	49

7. Applying for Social Security Scotland benefits	52
7.1. Applying for benefits and success rate	52
7.2. Who respondents applied for	53
7.3. Application method	53
7.4. Date of most recent application	54
7.5. Views on application process	55
7.6. Following-up applications for updates or to make changes	58
7.7. Comments about applying for Social Security Scotland benefits	59
8. Receiving payment	62
8.1. Receiving payments from Social Security Scotland	62
8.2. Overall experience of receiving benefit payments	62
8.3. Timing and accuracy of benefit payments	63
8.4. Impact of benefit payments	65
8.5. Comments about receiving benefit payments	67
9. Application decisions	72
9.1. Views on and agreement with decisions	72
9.2. Challenging decisions	73
9.3. Comments about application decisions	74
10. Barriers	77
10.1. Experience of barriers	77
10.2. Tackling barriers	78
10.3. Comments about barriers	79
11. Discrimination	82
11.1. Experience of discrimination	82
11.2. Nature of discrimination	83
11.3. Tackling discrimination	84
11.4. Comments about discrimination	85
12. Next steps	88
Annex A: Client Panels - characteristics of members	89
Annex B: Additional tables	92

1. Executive Summary

This report presents results from the first Social Security Scotland Client Survey. The survey ran from 17 August to 25 September 2020. It was open to everyone who had received a successful decision on an application for at least one of [Best Start Grant and/or Best Start Foods](#), [Funeral Support Payment](#) or [Young Carer Grant](#), from the beginning of Social Security Scotland in September 2018 to 31 July 2020. The survey invite was also sent to anyone who had received [Carer's Allowance Supplement](#) (which does not require an application) during this time.

The survey asked about key aspects of respondents' experience with Social Security Scotland. Its 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](#).

3,253 people responded to the survey. This is around 2% of those who were sent invites. Of these respondents:

- 76% had experience of Carer's Allowance Supplement¹, most of whom had no other Social Security Scotland benefit experience
- 21% had applied for Best Start Grant and/or Foods
- 4% had applied for Funeral Support Payment
- 2% had applied for Young Carer Grant

The Covid-19 pandemic impacted the survey in a number of ways. The survey was postponed and completing it was limited to doing so online or by calling a telephone helpline. The results will also reflect some experiences influenced by the impact of Covid-19 on Social Security Scotland's services. For example, the temporary move to telephone call backs. The data does not allow us to compare experiences before and during the pandemic.

Looking across the survey, respondents were largely positive about their experience with Social Security Scotland. For example, 90% rated their overall experience with Social Security Scotland as 'very good' or 'good'. Most were also positive about their interactions with staff and experience of applying for benefits.

¹ Respondents were asked: 'have you received or are you due to receive Carer's Allowance Supplement?'. The eligibility criteria for receiving a survey invite means that except in rare circumstances, all of those who said yes to this question should have received their benefit when they completed the survey.

However, there were specific areas where some respondents were negative. These included low awareness of how clients can challenge application decisions they disagree with, or report barriers or discrimination faced when dealing with Social Security Scotland. Respondents also had low awareness of who Social Security Scotland are. And some felt that communication of benefit information and application updates could be improved.

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

Overall Experience

90% of respondents rated their overall experience with Social Security Scotland as very good or good. Only 3% described their experience as poor or very poor.

Most respondents believed that they had been treated with dignity (86%), fairly (87%) and with respect (87%). A similar proportion agreed that Social Security Scotland had not wasted their time (86%), whilst 81% said they understood what Social Security Scotland does.

Although the majority were still positive, fewer respondents said Social Security Scotland is an honest (77%) or open (66%) organisation. However, only 2% of respondents said they disagreed with each of these points. The rest said they 'neither agreed nor disagreed' or that they 'didn't know'.

Comments made about overall experience were mostly positive. Many respondents favourably compared their experience to that with the Department for Work and Pensions. Among suggestions for improvement, some respondents called for better publicity of Social Security Scotland and its benefits. Others asked for better communication in the application process, such as more updates and information.

Finding out about Social Security Scotland and Getting Information and Advice

Respondents were asked how they first found out about Social Security Scotland. Two-fifths (41%) said by being contacted by Social Security Scotland. Around half (47%) of those with experience of Carer's Allowance Supplement said they found out about Social Security Scotland this way. However, this was only the case for a fifth (19%) of respondents who had applied for a Social Security Scotland benefit.

All survey respondents were asked if at any point they had looked up or made contact with Social Security Scotland to find out about benefits or services. Around two-fifths (43%) said they had. This was more common amongst respondents who had applied for a benefit (64%) than those who had experience of Carer's Allowance Supplement (38%).

Respondents' experience of looking up or making contact with Social Security Scotland to find out about benefits or services was generally positive. For example, 84% said they found doing so 'very easy' or 'easy'. Over four-in-five felt they had enough choices of communication to (86%) and from (84%) Social Security Scotland. Similar proportions said they got the support they needed (86%) and got it in the way they wanted (84%).

Many respondents who gave positive comments in this section mentioned the ease of communicating with and getting information from Social Security Scotland. Although negative comments were less common, respondents repeated several key issues. These issues included general lack of information and awareness about benefits and entitlements, and difficulty getting through to the phone helpline.

Experiences with staff

Three-in-ten (31%) respondents said they had been in contact with a member of Social Security Scotland staff. 88% of these respondents said their experience with staff was very good or good.

The vast majority of respondents agreed that they were treated with kindness (90%) and that staff listened to them (88%). Most also reported that staff were able to help them, made them feel comfortable and were knowledgeable about benefits (all 86%). Finally, 85% said they trusted staff and a similar proportion felt like they were trusted by staff (82%).

Around three-in-ten (31%) respondents who had been in contact with staff said they would have liked to have been told about other benefits but were not. Around a quarter (26%) would have liked to have been told about other sources of additional help but were not. Respondents who did report being told about other benefits or other sources of help were more likely to give a higher overall rating of their experience with staff.

Respondents' also emphasised wanting more information and communication in comments for this section. Negative comments most commonly spoke of staff not being able to give the help respondents wanted, including enough information and updates. But overall, most comments were positive and complimented staff manner and the help provided.

Applying for benefits

27% of respondents said they had applied for at least one Social Security Scotland benefit – Best Start Grant and/or Foods, Funeral Support Payment or Young Carer Grant.

Of these respondents, 87% rated their overall experience of applying for a benefit as 'very good' or 'good'. This measure was above 80% for all benefits and demographics. Respondents most commonly reported applying for benefits online (84%). Fewer had applied by phone (16%) or by post (10%).

The vast majority of respondents considered the application process clear (90%). Many also felt that the application only asked relevant questions (87%). However, relatively fewer agreed their application was handled within a reasonable time frame (79%) or that they got enough updates (66%). Almost one-in-five respondents disagreed that they got enough updates on the progress of their application (19%). This issue was also prominent in respondent comments in this section.

Receiving payments from Social Security Scotland

86% of respondents said they had received a benefit payment from Social Security Scotland. Most had received Carer's Allowance Supplement payments (80%), whilst 24% had received payment for a benefit requiring an application. Around one-in-five had received Best Start Grant (18%) whilst one-in-ten had received Best Start Foods payments (9%). Much smaller proportions had received payments for Funeral Support Payment (3%) and Young Carer Grant (1%).

The vast majority of respondents (93%) said their overall experience of receiving benefit payments was 'very good' or 'good'. Most respondents said they received their payment(s) when Social Security Scotland said they would (94%). A similar amount reported that they received the right amount on the first time (95%) and every time (94%).

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 – 8.5
- Helped them to control their finances – 7.8
- Helped them to pay for what they needed – 8.2

Many respondents who provided comments were recipients of Carer's Allowance Supplement. Most were positive and expressed gratitude or saw the supplement as a sign of appreciation for the work of carers. Many of the negative comments saw the supplement or other benefit amounts as too low.

Your application decision

Almost nine-in-ten respondents who had applied for a benefit agreed that the decision on their application was 'explained clearly' (87%). A similar proportion (89%) said that they 'understood the decision'. 92% said they agreed with the decision, with 8% disagreeing.

Of the 67 respondents who disagreed with the decision made on their application:

- 50% said they did not know how to challenge it
- 56% said they did not feel they could challenge it
- 24% said they challenged it.

A number of respondents also brought up difficulties challenging decisions in their comments. However, most negative comments mentioned long waits and lack of updates on decisions.

Barriers

7% of respondents said they had faced some sort of barrier getting help from Social Security Scotland.

Only two-in-five of those people who had faced barriers said they told Social Security Scotland (43%). Of those respondents, only around a quarter felt that the Social Security Scotland 'understood them' (26%). A similar proportion felt that Social Security Scotland 'supported [them] in overcoming them' (25%).

Many of the comments raised issues mentioned elsewhere. These included helpline and processing delays, lack of updates, eligibility requirements and not knowing enough about Social Security Scotland and its role. In addition to these, a number of respondents raised language and technology barriers.

Discrimination

2% of respondents said they had been discriminated against during their experience with Social Security Scotland, and 3% preferred not to say.

Of the 74 respondents who said they had experienced discrimination, 43% said it related to processes, 41% said it related to policy, and 22% said it related to staff.

Of those who had experienced discrimination 64% didn't feel it was 'clear how to challenge it'. The same amount 'felt [they] couldn't challenge it.' Only 21% said they told Social Security Scotland about the discrimination.

Most negative comments highlighted disagreement with eligibility requirements. Several expressed feelings of mistreatment as a benefit claimant or by the process of applying.

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 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.

2. Background and methodology

2.1 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 new 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.

This report provides the results from the first round of the Survey, conducted in summer 2020. All those who had received a benefit payment or had a successful decision on an application for a benefit from the formation of Social Security Scotland until 31 July 2020 were offered the chance to take part in this initial survey.²

Work is currently underway to plan for the future of the survey. At present, the intention is for the survey to be issued to all Social Security Scotland clients within a set timescale following a decision on an application, and on an annual basis for clients receiving on-going benefits.

² Further information on the design, timing and scope of the survey is provided in [Section 2](#) of this report.

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. The Experience Panels research with people with lived experience of the benefits coming to Scotland focuses on the design of the benefits.

Additionally, as part of the survey, respondents were offered the opportunity to sign-up for Social Security Scotland's newly established Client Panels for the first time. 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 will provide another route to ensure user voice informs how Social Security Scotland operates.

All clients are eligible to join the Client Panels and joining is completely voluntary. More than 1,000 respondents to the first 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.

2.2 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 11 outline the main findings across the survey, grouped into themes as structured in the questionnaire
- Section 12 briefly outlines how the results will be used and the future of the survey
- annexes provide additional information to support the report's main content.

A '[Visual Summary](#)' 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. It 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.

2.3 Survey design and distribution

Survey content

The survey was designed 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 aimed 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. 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.

Survey structure

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

Table 2.1: Overview of survey questionnaire sections

Section
1. Finding out about Social Security Scotland
2. Getting information and advice
3. Our staff
4. Applying for Social Security Scotland benefits
5. Receiving payments from Social Security Scotland
6. Your application decision
7. Barriers
8. Discrimination
9. Overall experience
10. Taking part in future research (Client Panels sign-up)
11. 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 2.2](#) outlines the structure of this report which varies a little from the order in which questions were asked. Most notably, this report presents findings on respondents' overall experiences of dealing with Social Security Scotland (Section 9 of the questionnaire) 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 8.

Section 10 of the questionnaire offered respondents the chance to sign up for the Client Panels ([discussed above](#)). Section 11 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.

Eligibility

Everyone who had reached a decision stage from the formation of Social Security Scotland in September 2018 until 31 July 2020 on a benefit application was eligible to take part in the survey. This included applicants for any of the following Social Security Scotland benefits:

- [Best Start Grant and/or Foods](#)
- [Funeral Support Payment](#)
- [Young Carer Grant.](#)

Invites were also sent to anyone who had received [Carer's Allowance Supplement](#) up to the end of July 2020. This group accounted for the majority of Social Security Scotland's clients at the time of the survey. This payment does not require an application so involves limited interaction between recipients and Social Security Scotland in most instances.

Distribution of survey invites and fieldwork period

Intended for distribution in April 2020, the survey was postponed to prioritise operational services during the Covid-19 outbreak. Instead, the survey was released on 17 August 2020 and closed on 25 September 2020.

Invitations to participate in the survey were posted to all those eligible to take part.³

The invitation explained the purpose of the survey and the options to complete it online or by calling a helpline. In future, there will also be the option to complete the survey by post. This was not possible in the first iteration due to the Covid-19 pandemic as mail processes were prioritised to support operational activities, such as processing applications.

Number of responses

In total, 164,752 survey invites were posted, in approximate batches of 20,000 per day from 17 August to 27 August.

1,923 letters were returned as undelivered to the mail service provider.

A total of 3,253 responses were received once the data had been cleaned and duplicate checks performed. This represents around 2% of the number of invites issued.

The vast majority of respondents completed the survey online (95%), with the remainder doing so over the phone (5%).

³ Using information from Social Security Scotland's database of clients or appointees who had received a benefit or received a successful decision on an application for a benefit between September 2018 and July 2020.

2.4 Data cleaning and analysis

Closed questions

The majority of the survey questions were closed questions, meaning they had tick boxes for people 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 Scottish Government researchers. This included removing a small number of responses which were identified as duplicates or where nearly all questions had no valid answer provided. The data has not been weighted due to a lack of publicly available information about a comparable population.

Results from the closed questions are generally presented for all respondents then broken down by benefit experience. Key results across the survey were also examined for differences across selected demographic characteristics. These were gender identity, age, ethnicity, whether respondents have a long-term health condition, and whether they live in an urban or rural area. Notable differences between groups are highlighted in the report. Further results and more demographic breakdowns are provided in the [‘Supplementary document: tables and methods’](#) published alongside this report.

Open text questions

Most sections of the survey ended with a chance to provide comments.⁴ The respondent was 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 further comments.

Responses were categorised as positive, negative, neutral, mixed, other and suggestion, before undergoing further thematic analysis.

‘Other’ applied to comments that did not fit another category or were unclear. A substantial number contained details that made it clear the comment was not about Social Security Scotland. Most described experiences with the Department for Work and Pensions. Some detailed experiences with Jobcentres, the NHS or home visits.⁵ These comments were not included in the analysis. It is possible that more comments, without explicit indicators, were also about experiences not to do with Social Security Scotland. However, only those comments explicitly about other organisations or experiences were labelled ‘other’.

⁴ There were eight opportunities to provide comments in total. The one exception was the first section. This contained only one closed question which asked respondents how they had first heard of Social Security Scotland.

⁵ Social Security Scotland only performed home visits on a few occasions under exceptional circumstances during the time period covered by the survey.

2.5 Understanding and interpreting survey results

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. Therefore, findings should be seen as representing the views of clients who responded only and are not generalisable. This includes when results are shown by benefit experience and demographic group.

However, 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 most important aspects to be aware of are listed below.

1. 3,253 people responded to the survey. Of these respondents, 76% had experience of Carer's Allowance Supplement; 21% had applied for Best Start Grant and/or Foods; 4% had applied for Funeral Support Payment; and 2% had applied for Young Carer Grant⁶.
2. Overall results based on all respondents will therefore be dominated by people with experience of Carer's Allowance Supplement. People do not apply for Carer's Allowance Supplement and most respondents with experience of this benefit had not applied for any other Social Security Scotland benefits. Therefore many of this group will likely have had limited interaction with Social Security Scotland.
3. Results based on all benefit applicants will be mostly accounted for by Best Start Grant and/or Foods applicants.
4. Most people who had applied for a benefit said they had only applied for one. However, many benefit applicants also had experience of receiving Carer's Allowance Supplement. For example, this was the case for 51% of respondents who had applied for Funeral Support Payment.
5. Everyone who had experience of each benefit is counted against that benefit in the breakdowns. This means there is some overlap between groups where respondents had experience of more than one benefit.

The demographic background of respondents also differed across each benefit group. For example, we know that respondents with experience of applying for Funeral Support Payment were more likely to be older and living with a long-term health condition. In contrast, Best Start Grant and/or Foods applicants and Young Carer Grant applicants were more likely to be younger.

⁶ These figures relate to all 3,253 respondents, including a small number who skipped the benefit experience questions.

These relationships may be a factor behind any difference in results seen across these groups. In other words, findings for Funeral Support Payment applicants may be influenced by (e.g.) the older age profile of this group. In other places, what appears to be an age effect in results may actually be related to different benefit experience in each age group.

Understanding results and quotations presented in the report

Other key factors to be aware of when interpreting the findings in this report are listed below.

- Most results to the closed questions presented in this report are rounded to whole numbers. As such, results included charts and tables in figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
- 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.
- 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% with the other percentages presented.
- 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. Any potentially identifying information has been omitted and comments have been cleaned of spelling and grammar errors.

Impact of Covid-19

The survey invite was sent to anyone who had received Carer's Allowance Supplement or a successful decision on a Social Security Scotland benefit by 31 July 2020. Therefore the survey captures responses from some clients whose most recent experiences with Social Security Scotland would have been during the Covid-19 pandemic. Social Security Scotland faced a number of challenges particularly at the beginning of the pandemic, when many staff moved to working from home. Since then, Social Security Scotland has implemented a range of measures to adapt its services, including webchat and telephone call backs.⁷

Covid-19 may therefore have had an impact on the more recent experiences of the respondents and their responses to the survey. The survey design did not allow for a clear distinction between before and during Covid-19 experiences. However, the report highlights where Covid-19 was mentioned in comments.

⁷ For some examples, see: [Social Security Scotland - Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

3. Overall experience

This section presents findings from the survey's headline questions which asked how respondents felt overall about their experiences with Social Security Scotland.

3.1 Overall rating of experience – all respondents

The survey's highest level question asked respondents how they would rate their overall experience with Social Security Scotland. The vast majority of respondents (90%) said that their overall experience was 'very good' or 'good'. Just 3% said their experience was 'poor' or 'very poor'.⁸

Table 3.1: Overall rating of experience with Social Security Scotland

All respondents; Column percentages

Response options	All respondents (n=3,222)
Very good	62%
Good	28%
Neither poor nor good	8%
Poor	1%
Very poor	1%

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 below).

Notably, more than four-in-five believed that they had been treated with dignity (86%), fairness (87%) and respect (87%). A similar proportion agreed that Social Security Scotland had not wasted their time (86%), whilst 81% said they understood what Social Security Scotland does.

⁸ Unrounded figures for 'poor' and 'very poor' sum to 3%.

Table 3.2: Views on overall experience with Social Security Scotland

All respondents (n=3,035-3,182); Row percentages

Thinking about your overall experience with Social Security Scotland...:	Strongly agree or agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree or strongly disagree	Don't know
Social Security Scotland treated me fairly	87%	8%	3%	2%
Social Security Scotland treated me with respect	87%	9%	2%	2%
Social Security Scotland treated me with dignity	86%	10%	2%	3%
Social Security Scotland did not waste my time	86%	8%	4%	3%
I understand what Social Security Scotland does	81%	10%	5%	4%
I feel I can trust Social Security Scotland	80%	12%	3%	5%
Social Security Scotland is an honest organisation	77%	13%	2%	8%
Social Security Scotland is an open organisation	66%	16%	2%	16%

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 they 'neither agreed nor disagreed' or 'didn't know'. For instance, the statements on whether Social Security Scotland is an 'honest' and 'open' organisation attracted the lowest levels of agreement (at 77% and 66% respectively). However, only 2% of respondents said they disagreed with each of these points.

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 point to note is that all respondents are presented against each of the benefits they said they had experience of, meaning there is some overlap between the groups.

The proportion rating their experience as good or very good was lowest amongst Funeral Support Payment applicants (85%) and highest for those with experience for applying for Young Carer Grant (97%) (see Table 3.3).

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

All respondents with experience of each benefit; Column percentages

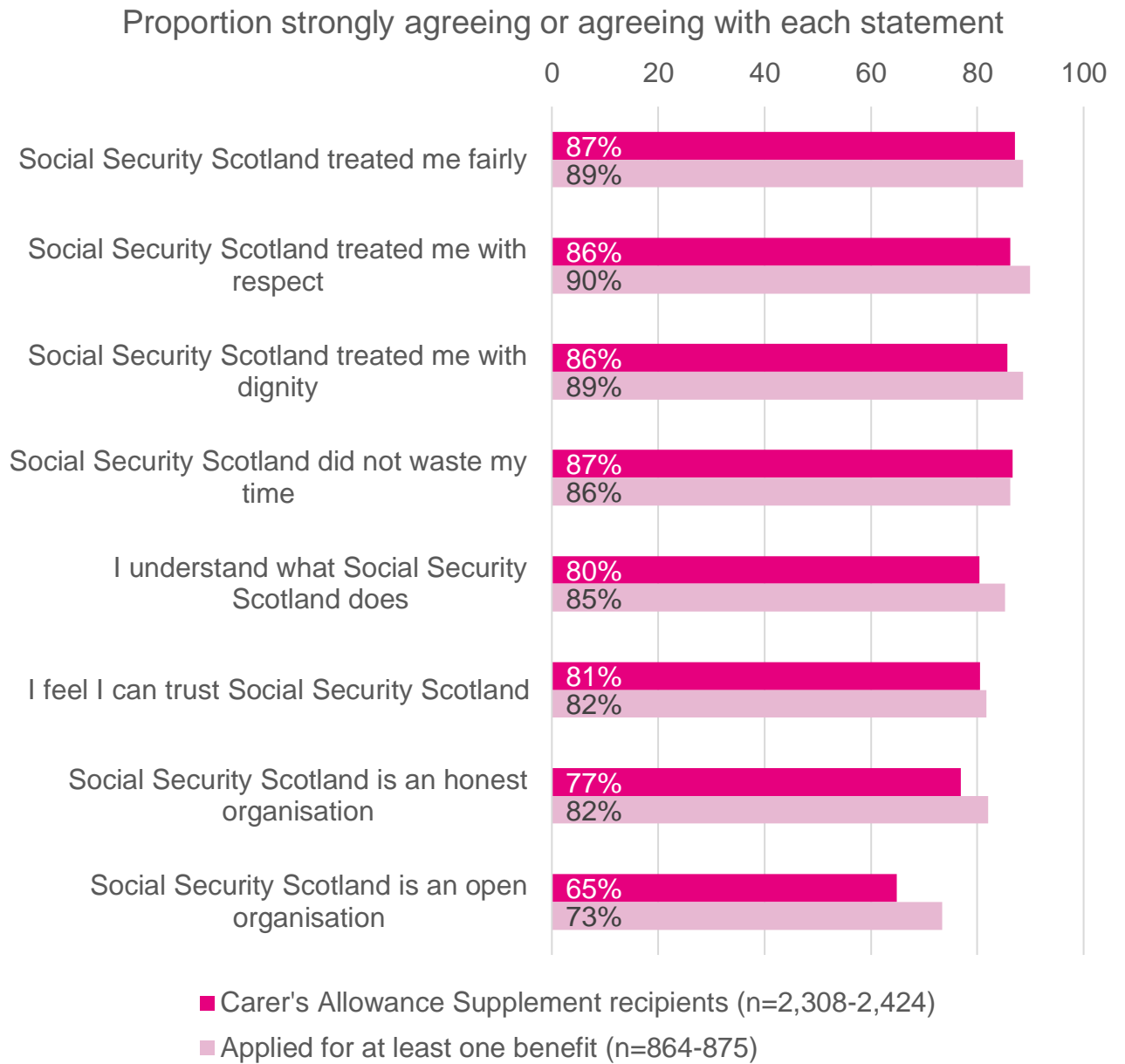
Response options	Carer's Allowance Supplement recipients (n=2,450)	Applied for at least one benefit (n=878)	Best Start Grant/Foods applicants (n=686)	Funeral Support Payment applicants (n=139)	Young Carer Grant applicants (n=71)
Very good or good	90%	89%	89%	85%	97%
Neither poor nor good	8%	6%	6%	10%	3%
Poor or very poor	2%	4%	5%	5%	0%

Figure 3.1 shows results for the more detailed questions on respondents' overall experience for those with experience of Carer's Allowance Supplement and benefit applicants. Views were similar in most cases. For example, 87% of those who had received Carer's Allowance Supplement said they were treated fairly, compared to 89% of those with experience of applying for a benefit.

However, those with Carer's Allowance Supplement experience were less likely to agree that Social Security Scotland is an 'honest' and 'open' organisation. This may be related to the fact that recipients of this benefit typically have less interaction with Social Security Scotland, as no application is required. As such, they may not have formed a strong view on these matters. The fact this group accounts for a large majority of survey respondents in total may also explain the lower agreement with these measures seen in the overall findings.

Figure 3.1: Views on overall experience with Social Security Scotland by benefit experience

All respondents with experience of Carer's Allowance Supplement or applying for benefit



Funeral Support Payment applicants were less likely to agree with some of the statements than those who applied for other benefits. For example, such respondents less commonly agreed they were treated with dignity or fairly (see Table 3.4). However, these differences were often partly driven more by Funeral Support Payment applicants saying ‘neither agree nor disagree’ or ‘don’t know’, as well as a larger proportion disagreeing⁹.

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

All respondents with experience of each benefit; Column percentages

Proportion strongly agreeing or agreeing that:	Best Start Grant/Foods applicants (n=676-686)	Funeral Support Payment applicants (n=137-138)	Young Carer Grant applicants (n=69-71)
Social Security Scotland treated me fairly	89%	83%	94%
Social Security Scotland treated me with respect	90%	88%	94%
Social Security Scotland treated me with dignity	90%	82%	93%
Social Security Scotland did not waste my time	86%	85%	93%
I understand what Social Security Scotland does	86%	82%	89%
I feel I can trust Social Security Scotland	83%	77%	83%
Social Security Scotland is an honest organisation	83%	78%	83%
Social Security Scotland is an open organisation	75%	69%	72%

⁹ For instance, when asked if they felt they had been treated with dignity, 14% of Funeral Support Payment applicants answered ‘neither agree nor disagree’ or ‘don’t know’. This compares to 8% of Best Start Grant/Foods applicants and 7% of respondents who had applied for Young Carer Grant.

3.3 Overall rating of experience – by demographic characteristics

Respondents' overall rating of their experience with Social Security Scotland showed little variation by demographic characteristics and geography. Around nine-in-ten respondents in all groups examined below said their experience was very good or good. The one notable outlier was respondents who did not want to disclose their ethnicity. Just over four-in-five (83%) of this group said their experience with Social Security Scotland was very good or good. Aside from this, the maximum difference between groups was around 4 percentage points.

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

All respondents; Row percentages

Demographic/Geographic group	Proportion saying overall experience was very good or good
Gender identity	
Man (n=929)	90%
Woman (n=2,220)	90%
Long-term health condition	
With long-term physical/mental health condition (n=1,103)	88%
No condition (n=1,869)	91%
Prefer not to say (n=214)	87%
Ethnicity	
White (n=2,788)	90%
Minority ethnic (n=197)	93%
Prefer not to say (n=71)	83%

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

Demographic/Geographic group	Proportion saying overall experience was very good or good
Age	
16-24 (n=105)	90%
25-34 (n=303)	93%
35-44 (n=435)	91%
45-54 (n=576)	91%
55-64 (n=778)	91%
65+ (n=166)	90%
Urban-rural classification	
Urban (n=2,439)	90%
Rural (n=480)	90%

Results for the set of more detailed questions exploring respondents' overall experience were also generally positive across the range of demographic groups. However, some differences did emerge 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. Table 3.6 shows the results broken down by whether respondents have a long-term physical or mental health condition. Other breakdowns are provided in the ['Supplementary document: tables and methods'](#).

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

All respondents; Column percentages

Proportion strongly agreeing or agreeing that:	With long-term physical/mental health condition (n=1,046-1,087)	No condition (n=1,759-1,846)	Prefer not to say (n=207-214)
Social Security Scotland treated me fairly	83%	90%	82%
Social Security Scotland treated me with respect	83%	90%	82%
Social Security Scotland treated me with dignity	83%	89%	81%
Social Security Scotland did not waste my time	84%	88%	82%
I understand what Social Security Scotland does	78%	84%	72%
I feel I can trust Social Security Scotland	78%	83%	74%
Social Security Scotland is an honest organisation	76%	79%	72%
Social Security Scotland is an open organisation	64%	69%	57%

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 Scotland.¹⁰

503 respondents provided a comment. Around a quarter were suggestions for improvement. The rest were general comments about overall experience, of which the majority were positive and less than a fifth negative.

¹⁰ Question 50: Would you like to make any suggestions for improvement or further comments about your overall experience?

The section below presents the most common points made in response to this question. It also draws on comments made in response to open text questions in other sections of the survey where these related to the same theme.

Many positive comments were brief mentions of satisfaction, such as and similar to:

“Very satisfied”

“Good experience”

“Everything fine”

Several respondents said their experience was ‘professional’, ‘caring’ and ‘helpful’. A number believed that nothing or very little could be improved having felt they received a high standard of service.

“From our experience, you could not improve the amazing service you provide.”

“No need for improvement as they are doing a first class service.”

“My overall experience, I would say, was compassionate.”

“It provides a very accessible and professional service.”

Also frequent was positive comparison of experiences with Social Security Scotland to those with the Department for Work and Pensions. Several respondents called for further benefits to be administered by Social Security Scotland and for this to happen as soon as possible, a point that was also made a number of times across the other open text questions.

“Stress free experience unlike dealing with the Department of Work and Pensions. Please can Social Security Scotland deal with all benefits.”

“Social Security Scotland should take over all Department of Work and Pensions functions in Scotland.”

“Speed up the process of taking over all welfare matters from the Department of Work and Pensions.”

Of the negative comments and suggestions for improvement, many were about different aspects of communication. At the practical level, a few respondents raised frustration with not getting a response or call-back and wanted this aspect of the service to be improved. A number of respondents said they were not given enough information or updates when waiting for applications or payments to be processed, something that was raised across the survey more widely. Respondents suggested that Social Security Scotland should provide more information about payment dates and more updates on the status of an application.

“You need to engage with people, respond to queries and try to not delay provision of services.”

“More information regarding targets for payment dates”

“More updates when a delay is long like in my case. Maybe at least one per month so I could be sure you still have my application.”

A number of respondents called for more digital options for correspondence and information, such as email, text or online status updates. Some felt that digital contact would be easier and quicker than receiving letters, and others made specific comments about reducing the use of letters in favour of paperless contact.

“I think if you could confirm that we are eligible via email rather than letter that would be easier and most definitely quicker”

“I’d prefer notifications of entitlement in email form, that’s the only thing I’d change. Save the trees.”

There were also calls for more accessible and simplified language in communications across the service. Several respondents wanted to see clearer information in plain wording and some felt the quality of translation could be improved.

“Plain English would be preferred.”

“Make your wording very clear.”

“Better translation services (letters) to help people understand the services.”

A broader communication issue was lack of awareness about Social Security Scotland’s existence, role, benefits and their requirements. Many respondents said that they had never heard of Social Security Scotland and were only doing so for the first time.

“Not aware of Social Security Scotland”

“I did not even know of the existence of Social Security Scotland until today. I just assumed Carer’s Allowance came from the same place as Universal Credit.”

“I don’t know anything about this organisation other than it’s to do with the Scottish Government and that my counterparts in England do not receive this.”

A possible explanation could be the high proportion of Carer’s Allowance Supplement recipients responding to the survey. For many of this group, their only interaction with Social Security Scotland would likely be through an automatic payment and notification letter twice a year. But across the survey, lack of awareness around Social Security Scotland’s role extended beyond this reason alone. Many other respondents called for Social Security Scotland to make itself more well-known. Respondents also suggested targeted communication campaigns to make sure people do not miss out on benefits.

“More awareness of the organisation as people are missing out due to lack of knowledge”

“Make Social Security Scotland more visible online.”

“They should tell people what they are entitled to without them having to find out themselves.”

The issue of awareness about Social Security Scotland was also highlighted by the large number of comments that described experiences with the Department for Work and Pensions. Details in these comments showed that many respondents were not

aware of the difference between the two organisations. The accounts of experiences with the Department for Work and Pensions and its benefits were mostly negative and related to eligibility requirements, staff manner and feeling mistreated. Some respondents directly raised their confusion between the Department for Work and Pensions and Social Security Scotland. They recognised the two as distinct but did not understand the relationship between them or how to navigate it. They called for more information on what is delivered by each organisation.

“Would like to understand more about what Department of Work and Pensions UK takes care of versus Social Security Scotland, and if there are additional benefits that myself (Carer) or my daughter, who has special needs, may be entitled to.”

“The differences in Social Security Scotland benefit entitlement and the Department of Work and Pensions should be clear.”

As well as greater clarity of roles, a number of respondents wanted to see more direct and streamlined communication between relevant agencies and organisations (namely Social Security Scotland, the Department for Work and Pensions, and HM Revenue and Customs). Some clients believed there should be better interaction between Social Security Scotland and the Department for Work and Pensions. A few Carer’s Allowance Supplement recipients thought that Social Security Scotland should notify HM Revenue and Customs when a client receives the supplement to simplify the process for the client.

“Better links with the Department of Work and Pensions to resolve issues that are caused between the two of them.”

“Work more closely with HM Revenue and Customs and UK benefits agencies.”

“It would be good if Social Security Scotland could communicate directly with the Inland Revenue, rather than having me spend quite a bit of time trying to tell them the details of my Carers’ Allowance Supplement”

Other suggestions for improvement focused on practical matters with the application and payment process. Some respondents suggested that payments should be made on a more regular basis whilst several called for higher payments. Most (but not all) of these comments were made by Carer’s Allowance Supplement recipients.

“Make Carer’s Allowance Supplement payments more regularly.”

“Just that carers should get more money.”

“I suggest to raise the payment of Best Start Foods to be at least £80 monthly.”

A number of respondents disagreed with some of the ways payment amounts and eligibility were affected by other benefits, pensions or income. Disagreement with eligibility also came up in relation to barriers and discrimination. These issues are discussed further in [Sections 10](#) and [11](#).

“I feel that people who get their pension should not be discriminated when it comes to Carer's Allowance Supplement.”

“I would like the qualifying income raised a bit as the benefit does not go far when you cannot work. Many part time jobs of 16 hours goes over earnings limit. Think more needs done regarding carers earnings”

In terms of improving the application process, a few respondents suggested that application forms could be shorter, simpler and easier to understand.

“The application forms could be shorter.”

“Simplify all forms and procedures and take care to be consistent in usage of terminology throughout.”

Respondents offered a few further suggestions in some of the other open text questions which covered more specific aspects of the client experience such as improving particular benefits, staff interaction and decision-making policies. A small number of further suggestions are outlined in more detail in the sections below where relevant.

4. Finding out about Social Security Scotland

The survey opened by asking respondents how they had first found out about Social Security Scotland. They could identify more than one method if applicable.

The most common method noted by respondents was as a result of Social Security Scotland contacting them (such as by phone call or letter). Two-fifths (41%) selected this answer. Other common ways respondents had heard about Social Security Scotland were by word-of-mouth (15%), via the Department for Work and Pensions including Jobcentre Plus (12%), and online or through social media (11%).

Table 4.1: How respondents had first heard of Social Security Scotland

All respondents; Column percentages

Response options	All respondents (n=3,248)
Social Security Scotland contacted me (e.g. phone call or letter)	41%
Word-of-mouth	15%
Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), including Jobcentre Plus	12%
Online or social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook)	11%
Health service (e.g. NHS worker, GP, Health Practitioner, Psychologist)	9%
Citizens Advice Scotland	5%
Community or social care service	5%
News article	4%
Advert (e.g. TV, radio, newspaper)	3%
Leaflet, pamphlet or poster	3%
Other	5%
Can't remember/don't know	8%

Table 4.2 shows that around half (47%) of those with experience of Carer’s Allowance Supplement said they first heard about Social Security Scotland through being contacted by them. In contrast, just a fifth (19%) of respondents who had applied for a benefit said they found out about Social Security Scotland in this way.

The table also shows differences between those with experience of each benefit requiring an application. For example, the health service was a more common factor amongst respondents who had applied for Best Start Grant and/or Foods (19%) than for those with experience applying for Funeral Support Payment (6%) or Young Carer Grant (7%).

Table 4.2: How respondents had first heard of Social Security Scotland by benefit experience

All respondents with experience of each benefit; Column percentages

Response options	Carer’s Allowance Supplement recipients (n=2,473)	Applied for at least one benefit (n=879)	Best Start Grant/ Foods applicants (n=688)	Funeral Support Payment applicants (n=139)	Young Carer Grant applicants (n=70)
Social Security Scotland contacted me (e.g. phone call or letter)	47%	19%	16%	32%	26%
Word-of-mouth	13%	23%	22%	21%	33%
Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), including Jobcentre Plus	14%	10%	8%	23%	6%
Online or social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook)	8%	21%	24%	10%	23%
Health service (e.g. NHS worker, GP, Health Practitioner, Psychologist)	7%	16%	19%	6%	7%

Table 4.2: How respondents had first heard of Social Security Scotland by benefit experience - continued

Response options	Carer's Allowance Supplement recipients (n=2,473)	Applied for at least one benefit (n=879)	Best Start Grant/Foods applicants (n=688)	Funeral Support Payment applicants (n=139)	Young Carer Grant applicants (n=70)
Citizens Advice Scotland	5%	4%	4%	8%	3%
Community or social care service	5%	4%	4%	4%	10%
News article	4%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Advert (e.g. TV, radio, newspaper)	3%	5%	5%	2%	7%
Leaflet, pamphlet or poster	2%	5%	5%	4%	3%
Other	4%	7%	6%	12%	6%
Can't remember/don't know	8%	7%	7%	5%	7%

5. Getting information and advice

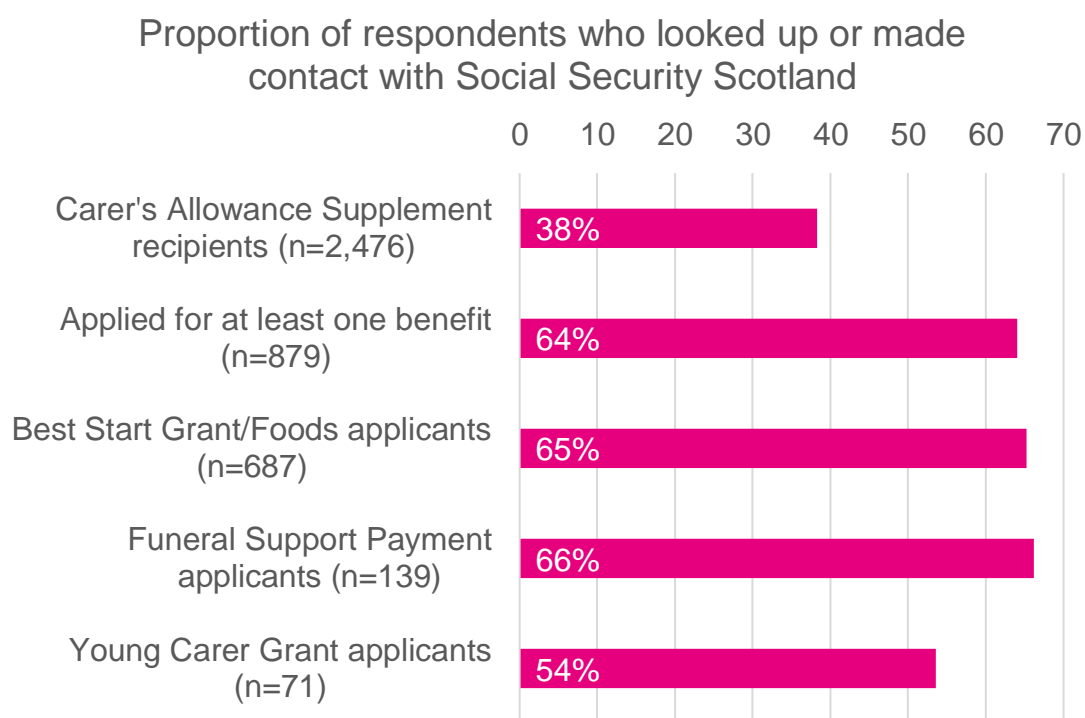
This section explores respondents' experience of getting information and advice from Social Security Scotland about benefits or services provided. It includes findings on how respondents found doing this, including their views on the communication choices available.

5.1 Whether and how respondents had sought information and advice

Respondents were asked if at any point they had looked up or made contact with Social Security Scotland to find out about the benefits or services provided. Just over two-fifths of respondents (43%) said they had. This was true for almost two-thirds of those with experience of applying for a benefit (64%), as Figure 5.1 shows.

Figure 5.1: Whether respondents had looked up or made contact with Social Security Scotland to find out about benefits/services by benefit experience

All respondents with experience of each benefit



Some demographic groups were more likely to report having looked up or made contact with Social Security Scotland to find out about benefits or services, including:

- Women (45% compared to 38% of men)
- Respondents with a minority ethnic background (49% compared to 43% of those who identified themselves as 'white')
- people in younger age groups (for example, 52% of 16 to 24 year olds and 60% of 25 to 34 year olds, compared to 37% of those 65 and older)

Respondents who had looked up or made contact with Social Security Scotland most commonly reported doing so via the internet. For example, the proportion who said they used the website (60%) was double the amount using the phone (29%) – see Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: How respondents looked up or made contact with Social Security Scotland¹¹

All respondents who had looked up or made contact with Social Security Scotland; Column percentages

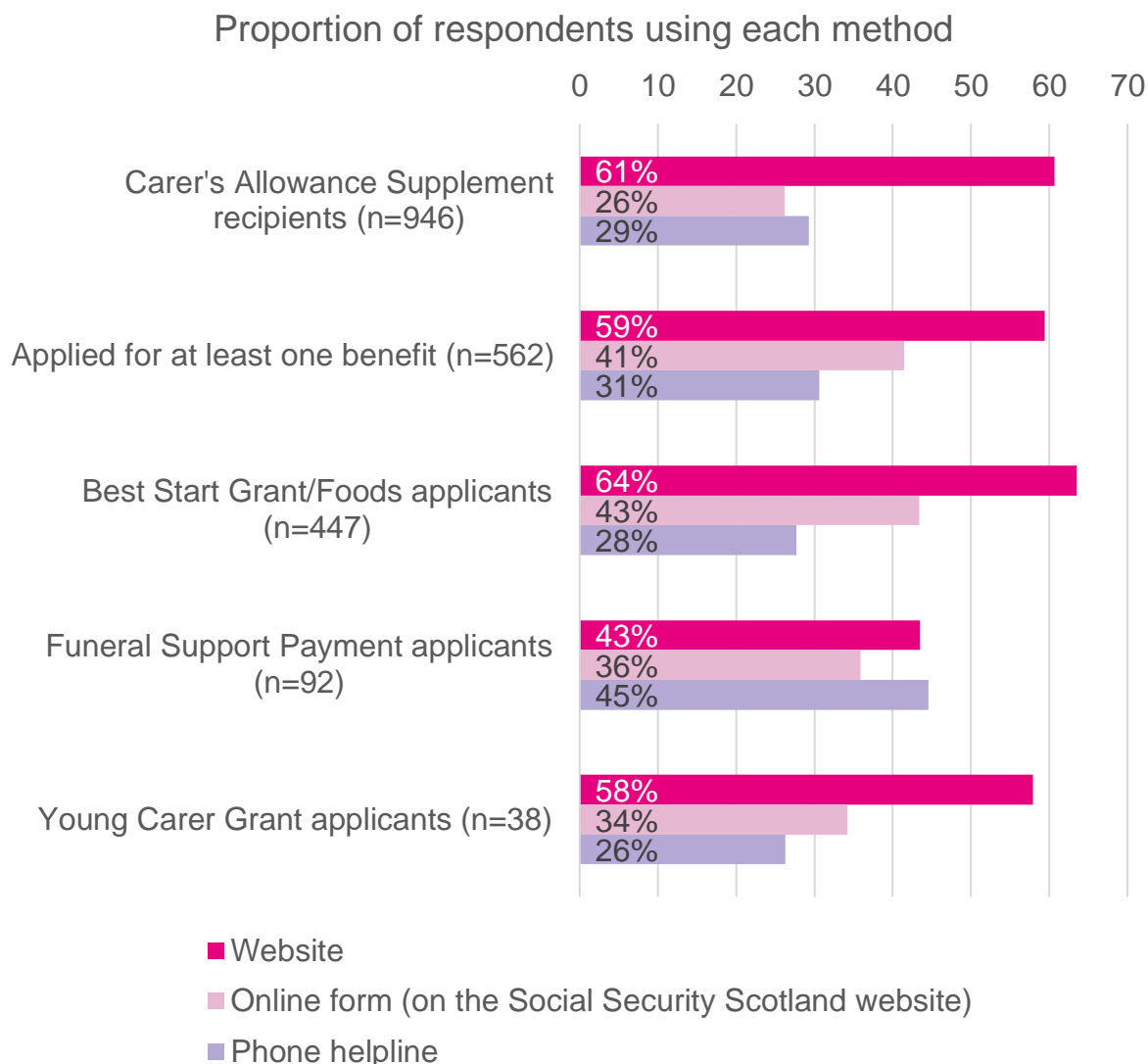
Response options	All respondents (n=1,388)
Website	60%
Online form (on the Social Security Scotland website)	31%
Phone helpline	29%
Postal service	4%
In person	4%
Other	2%

Figure 5.2 shows the proportion of respondents with different benefit experiences using each of the three most common methods of finding out about benefits and services provided. Respondents with experience of applying for Funeral Support Payment applicants were most likely to report having used the phone (45%). In contrast, they were also least likely to have used Social Security Scotland’s website (43%).

¹¹ Respondents could select more than one answer where applicable so figures presented do not sum to 100%.

Figure 5.2: How respondents looked up or made contact with Social Security Scotland by benefit experience

All respondents with experience of each benefit who had looked up or made contact



Methods used to look up or make contact with Social Security Scotland also showed some variation between different demographic groups. For example, minority ethnic respondents were more likely to report using the phone helpline (52%) than those who described themselves as white (28%).

Use of online methods were lowest amongst respondents in the oldest age group. However, they were still the most commonly used method by this group. For example, around half (51%) of respondents aged 65 and over¹² said they used the website to look up or make contact with Social Security Scotland, compared around two-thirds (64%) of those under the age of 35.

¹² n=61

5.2 Experience of getting information and advice

Those who had looked up or made contact with Social Security Scotland to find out about benefits or services were generally positive about their experience. Most respondents said making contact for this purpose was 'very easy' or 'easy' (84%). Around one-in-twenty found it 'difficult' or 'very difficult' (6%). The remaining 10% said it was 'neither easy nor difficult'.

The majority of respondents said they had enough choice about how they communicated with Social Security Scotland, and also how Social Security Scotland interacted with them. Most also agreed that they got the support (information or advice) they needed in the way they wanted, as Table 5.2 shows.

Table 5.2: Views on communication choices and support received

All respondents who had looked up or made contact with Social Security Scotland; Row percentages

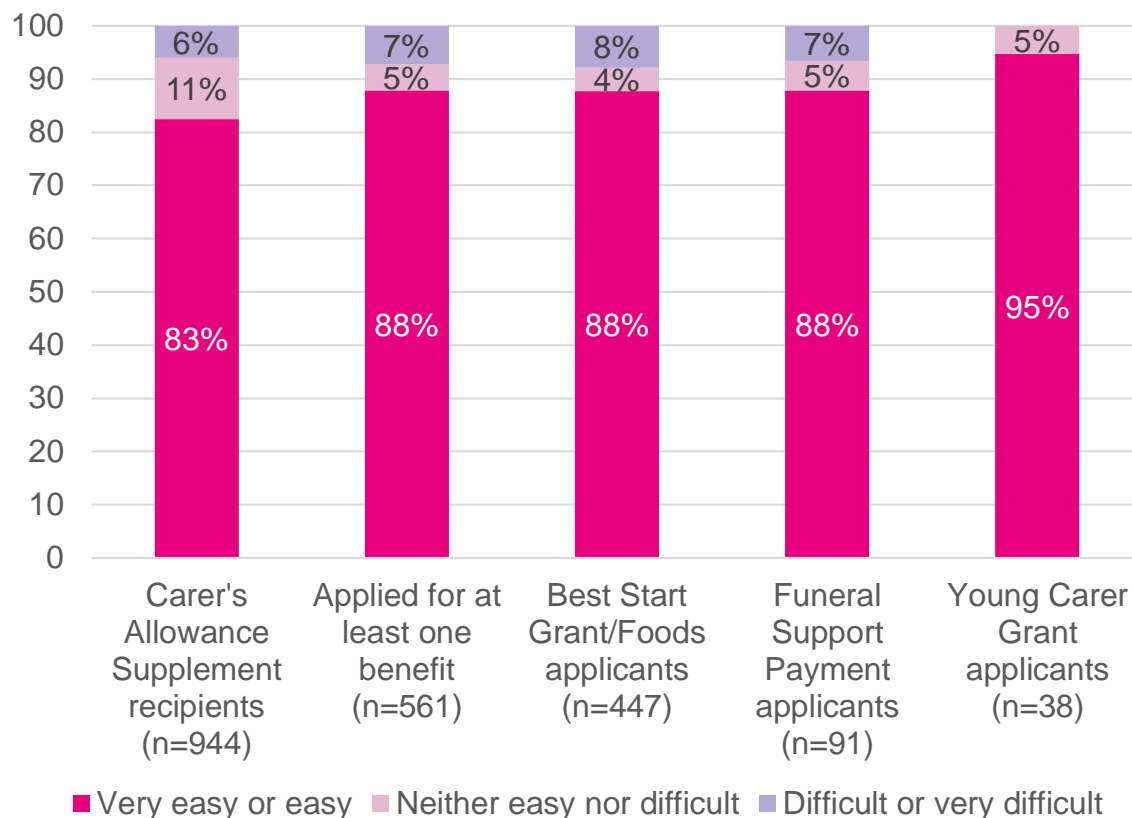
Thinking about when you looked up or made contact with Social Security Scotland, how much do you agree or disagree...	Strongly agree or agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree or strongly disagree	Can't remember/ Don't know
I had enough choice about how I communicated with Social Security Scotland (n=1,359)	86%	8%	4%	3%
I had enough choice about how Social Security Scotland communicated with me (n=1,348)	84%	9%	4%	3%
I got the support (information or advice) I needed (n=1,369)	86%	7%	6%	1%
I got support (information or advice) in the way I wanted (n=1,354)	84%	8%	6%	1%

Just over four-in-five respondents who had experience of Carer's Allowance Supplement said it was easy to look up or make contact with Social Security Scotland (83%). This compares to 88% of those who had applied for a benefit. However, this difference is mainly driven by more 'neither easy nor difficult' responses amongst the group with Carer's Allowance Supplement experience (see Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3: How easy or difficult respondents found looking up or making contact with Social Security Scotland by benefit experience

All respondents with experience of each benefit who had looked up or made contact

Proportion of respondents who found looking up/making contact easy or difficult



A large majority of respondents in each benefit group were also positive about the range of communication choices they had and the support received. The relatively smaller number of respondents with experience of applying for Young Carer Grant or Funeral Support Payment who were asked these questions means results for these groups should be interpreted with caution.

Table 5.3: Views on communication choices and support received by benefit experience

All respondents with experience of each benefit who had looked up or made contact; Proportion in each group agreeing with statement; Row percentages

Benefit group	I had enough choice about how I communicated with Social Security Scotland	I had enough choice about how Social Security Scotland communicated with me	I got the support (information or advice) I needed	I got support (information or advice) in the way I wanted
Carer's Allowance Supplement recipients (n=913-934)	85%	84%	87%	85%
Applied for at least one benefit (n=553-557)	88%	88%	86%	85%
Best Start Grant/Foods applicants (n=439-444)	89%	87%	85%	85%
Funeral Support Payment applicants (n=91-92)	87%	89%	89%	82%
Young Carer Grant applicants (n=37-38)	89%	95%	92%	97%

Some demographic groups were less positive about their experience of looking up or making contact with Social Security Scotland than others. For example, groups less likely to say they found this easy included:

- respondents with a long-term health condition (80% compared to 87% of those with no condition)
- those aged 65 and over¹³ (67% compared to at least 83% in all other groups)
- respondents living in rural areas (80% compared to 86% of those in urban areas).

Results in full and for other demographic groups are provided in the '[Supplementary document: tables and methods](#)'.

Respondents with a long-term condition and those aged 65 and over were also less likely to answer positively about the range of communication choices available. For example, 81% of those with a long-term condition agreed they had enough choice about how they communicated with Social Security Scotland. This figure increased to 89% of respondents with no condition. [Annex B](#) provides the results in full (Tables B1.1 and B1.2).

5.3 Comments about getting information and advice

Respondents who had looked up or made contact with Social Security Scotland were given the chance to say more about their experience.¹⁴

394 responses were given. Just under half of these were positive. Less than a third were negative.

Many positive comments expressed brief overall satisfaction:

“Very helpful”

“Easy to use”

“Everything fine”

¹³ n=61

¹⁴ Question 7: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience of getting information or advice from Social Security Scotland?

Respondents also mentioned finding information clear and easy to locate, or having a good experience contacting and getting advice from staff (including some accounts of doing so via letter). Many comments about staff complimented their helpfulness and friendliness. A number of respondents favourably compared getting information and advice with Social Security Scotland to doing so with the Department for Work and Pensions.

“The information was easy to understand. There was not a lot to it. Pretty straight forward.”

“When I phoned for help and advice I got it no problem at all.”

“As always polite, friendly, professional, very helpful and approachable. Thank you :-)”

“I received a letter which explained everything I had queried in plain English”

“A much easier, less stressful route than dealing with the Department of Work and Pensions.”

However, as in the overall comments covered in [Section 3.4](#), some respondents felt like they did not have enough information about Social Security Scotland’s role, services and benefits. A number of respondents suggested more advertising and targeted campaigns.

“Not enough information about other possible entitlement when you receive one, you have to find this out yourself”

“I think there should be a way for more new parents to be told about Social Security Scotland and what they could be entitled to. I was mostly made aware by my midwife and my family member. I feel that those on benefits or that are eligible could be possibly made more aware.”

Common themes mentioned in the negative comments were the helpline waiting time and voice messages not being responded to. Several respondents mentioned Covid-19 in relation to their waiting time with a few making comparison to their pre-Covid experiences.¹⁵

“Phone lines are often very busy and it is hard to get through”

“I have spent many hours trying to contact yourselves through online chat and telephone and have never gotten through. I understand with Covid there are less staff but of all the companies etc I've called yours has been the worst by far.”

“My experience last year was better than this year but that was due to Covid-19. Otherwise they have been fantastic and I so appreciate the help :)”

Some respondents said they received inaccurate or inconsistent information.

“Was given wrong advice on what benefits I was entitled to”

“Each representative I spoke to gave me differing information, so misleading”

“Website is giving incorrect timelines”

As in the overall comments discussed earlier ([Section 3.4](#)), a small number of respondents called for more accessible language to be used in communications. Some respondents said that they had had external assistance, such as from the Citizens Advice Bureau, in getting information.

“With the help of Citizens Advice Bureau Scotland I got the advice I needed quickly and efficiently. Without their help, I think it would have been more difficult for myself.”

¹⁵ [Section 2.5](#) provides further information on the impact of Covid-19 on the survey and Social Security Scotland as an organisation.

6. Experiences with staff

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

6.1 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 or over the phone, including through an interpreter.

Three-in-ten respondents (31%) said they had been in contact with a member of staff. This figure varied notably by benefit experience. Almost half of those who said they had applied for a Social Security Scotland benefit reporting contact with staff (47%), compared to around a quarter (27%) of Carer's Allowance Supplement recipients.

Looking at individual benefits, respondents who had applied for Funeral Support Payment were most likely to have been in contact with staff (70%). There was little difference between respondents who had applied for Best Start Grant and/or Foods (43%) and Young Carer Grant (39%) applicants.

Demographic groups who more frequently reported contact with staff included:

- women (32% compared to 27% of men)
- minority ethnic respondents (38% compared to 30% of white respondents)
- those living with a long-term health condition (34% compared to 29% of those with no condition).

6.2 Views on contact with staff

Almost nine-in-ten respondents who had been in contact said their overall experience with staff was good or very good (88%).

Table 6.1: Overall rating of experience with staff

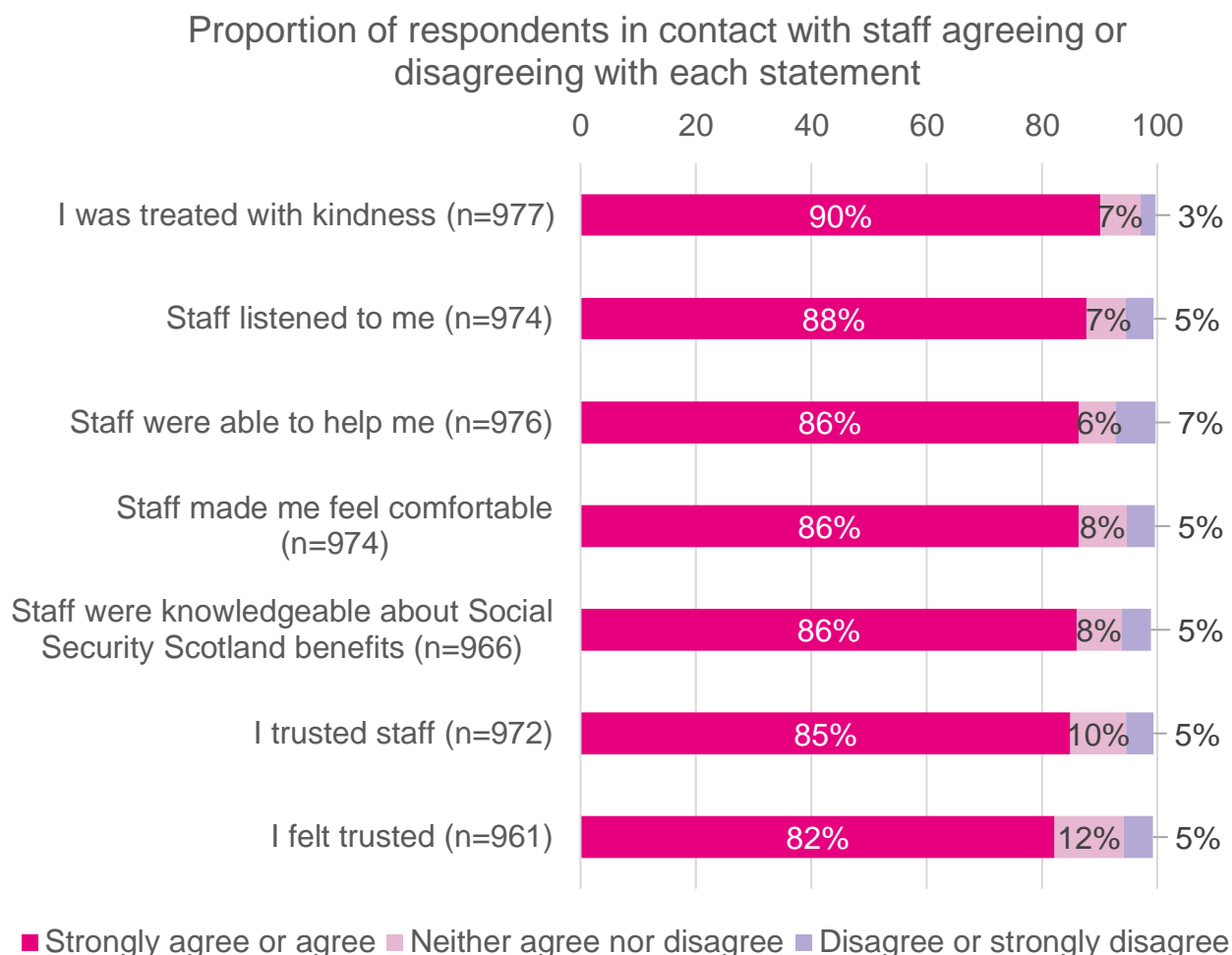
All respondents who had been in contact with Social Security Scotland staff; Column percentages

Response option	All respondents in contact with staff (n=987)
Very good	58%
Good	30%
Neither poor nor good	7%
Poor	4%
Very poor	2%

In related questions about their experience, 90% of respondents said staff treated them with kindness (see Figure 6.1 below). Most also said staff listened to them (88%), made them feel comfortable (86%) and were able to help them (86%).

Figure 6.1: Views on interactions with Social Security Scotland staff

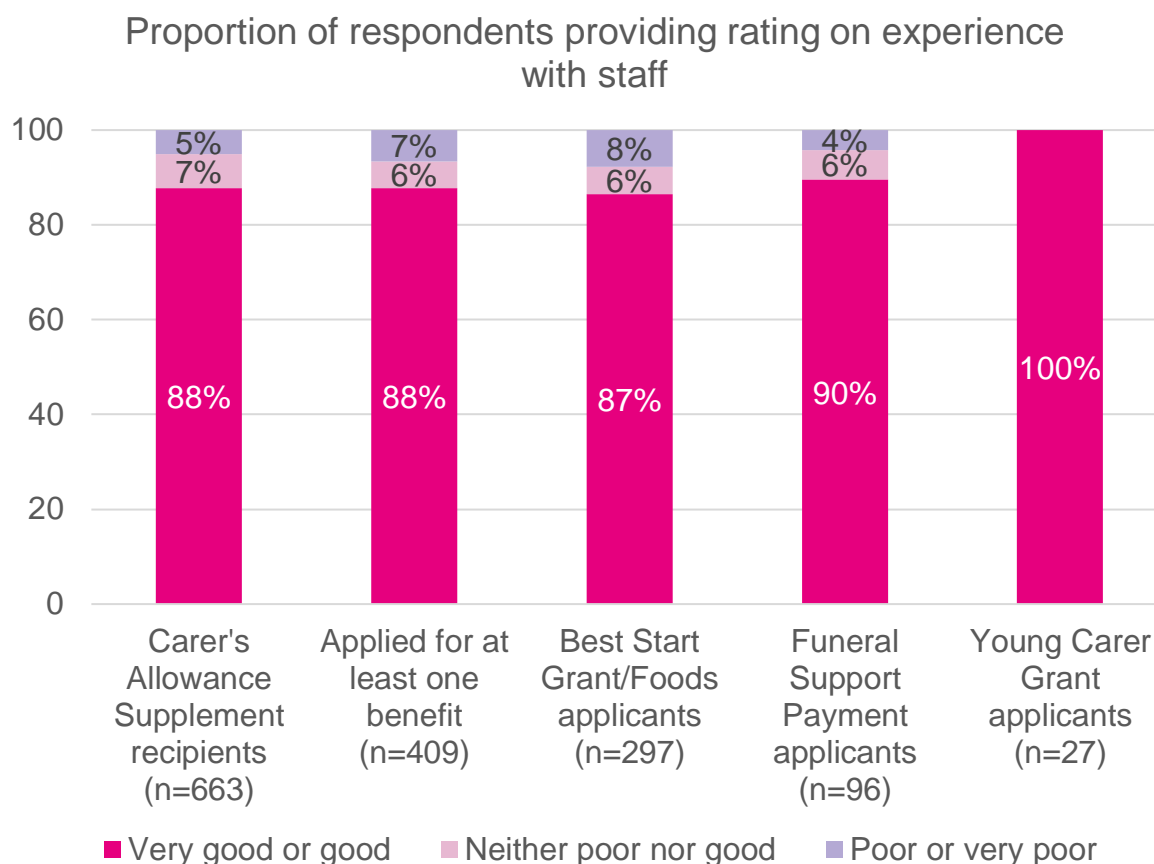
All respondents who had been in contact with Social Security Scotland staff



Respondents were very positive about staff regardless of their benefit experience. For instance, 88% of both those with experience of Carer’s Allowance Supplement and those who had applied for a benefit described their experience as ‘very good’ or ‘good’ (see Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2: Overall rating of experience with staff by benefit experience

All respondents with experience of each benefit who had been in contact with staff



Responses to follow up questions were similar between those who were Carer's Allowance Supplement recipients and benefit applicants. The most notable difference was that 89% of those with Carer's Allowance Supplement experience said staff they had been in contact with were able to help them. This figure dropped to 82% among benefit applicants (see Table 6.2).

Young Carer Grant applicants were particularly likely to reflect favourably on interactions with staff. However, the relatively small number of respondents in this group should be taken into account.

Table 6.2: Views on interactions with Social Security Scotland staff by benefit experience

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

Proportion agreeing with statement:	Carer's Allowance Supplement recipients (n=648-659)	Applied for at least one benefit (n=396-405)	Best Start Grant/Foods applicants (n=286-296)	Funeral Support Payment applicants (n=93-96)	Young Carer Grant applicants (n=26-27)
I was treated with kindness	89%	91%	90%	94%	100%
I felt trusted	81%	85%	85%	84%	96%
I trusted staff	85%	85%	83%	92%	100%
Staff listened to me	89%	86%	84%	90%	100%
Staff made me feel comfortable	86%	88%	86%	91%	100%
Staff were able to help me	89%	82%	80%	83%	100%
Staff were knowledgeable about Social Security Scotland benefits	87%	85%	85%	85%	93%

People living with a long-term health condition were slightly less likely to rate their experience with staff as 'very good' or 'good' (85%) than those without such a condition (90%). A smaller proportion of these respondents also agreed that staff:

- listened to them (84% compared to 91% of those without a condition)
- were able to help them (84% compared to 89%)
- made them feel comfortable (83% compared to 89%).

Some differences emerged across other breakdowns too. For instance, of those in contact with staff:

- 92% of men agreed that staff listened to them, compared to 87% of women
- 88% of minority ethnic respondents¹⁶ said that they felt trusted, compared to 82% of white respondents
- Respondents aged 65 and over¹⁷ were much less likely to report feeling trusted (71%) than those in younger age categories – for example, 95% of 16 to 24 year olds¹⁸ and 93% of those aged 25 to 34 said they felt trusted.

6.3 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. A quarter (25%) of respondents said this was the case. However, around three-in-ten said that they would have liked to have been told about other benefits by staff but were not (31%). This issue was also raised in some of the open-text comments in this part of the survey (see [Section 6.4](#) below). 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 too, as outlined in Figure 6.3. Of those who did receive pointers towards other sources, the most common suggestions respondents noted were: Citizens Advice Bureau (60%), welfare rights such as the local council (31%), housing support (30%) and Carers Centre (28%).

¹⁶ n=67

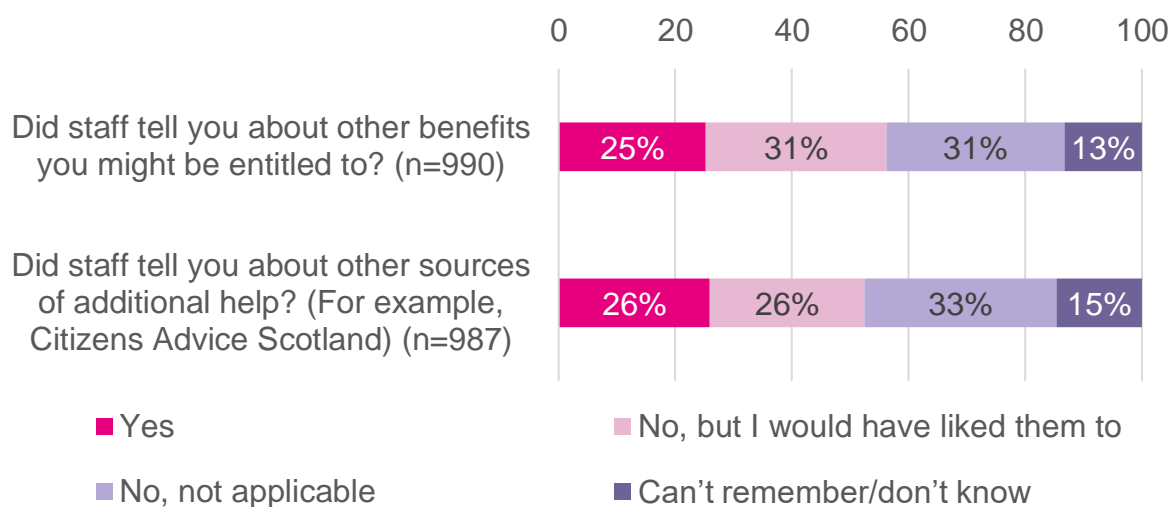
¹⁷ n=51

¹⁸ n=38

Figure 6.3: Whether respondents were told about other benefits or sources of help

All respondents who had been in contact with staff

Proportion of respondents reporting whether or not they were told about other benefits/sources of help



People living with a long-term health condition were more likely than those without such a condition to say that they were not informed about other benefits but would have liked staff to have told them (35% compared to 28% respectively).

Respondents who said they were told about other benefits or potential sources of help were much more likely to rate their overall experience with staff positively. For example, 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 70% for respondents who said they would have liked to have been told about other benefits but were not (see Table 6.3).

Table 6.3: 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/other sources of support	Very good or good	Neither poor nor good	Poor or very poor
% of those told about other benefits (n=245)	98%	2%	0%
% of those who would have liked to have been told about other benefits but were not (n=306)	70%	16%	14%
Services			
% of those told about other services (n=249)	97%	1%	2%
% of those who would have liked to have been told about other services but were not (n=261)	67%	18%	15%

6.4 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 experience.¹⁹

290 responses were given. Over half of the comments were positive and less than a quarter were negative.

Most comments about staff mentioned their helpfulness and friendly or professional manner. Many respondents also spoke of the efficiency and ease of dealing with staff, of getting information that they needed, and finding staff reliable in their knowledge and help.

“Everybody was very helpful and supportive”

“Staff were knowledgeable and handled my query in a professional and timely manner.”

¹⁹ Question 14: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience with our staff?

“Staff were courteous and easy to understand”

“Prompt advice, kindly given. Promised a call back and got it when i was told it would be.”

Most negative comments were about not getting adequate help from staff. These included where a staff member made an error or did not have the right knowledge or information to help.

“Staff should be more aware of procedures. They were quite taken aback when I made them aware of my knowledge of the procedures. The information that I was given by the managers was incorrect. From my previous working experience in finance procedures I knew that the information was incorrect and this was eventually proved right.”

Some respondents were frustrated by not being able to get application updates from staff.

“They weren’t much help at all. Once I finally spoke to someone she told me she didn’t know how much longer I’d be waiting to hear about my application despite it already being 4 months of hearing nothing.”

Several respondents were dissatisfied with staff attitude and their treatment.

“Not all were polite. Felt like I was doing something wrong when speaking to them. When you have had a bad day the last thing you need is someone speaking down to you.”

Most mixed comments combined negative and positive comments, such as complimenting staff while expressing dissatisfaction with the process or outcome. A few mentioned Covid-19 factors causing delays, although they did not say to what (helpline waiting, application process, and so on).

“They were all lovely, but no one could give me an exact update on my query.”

“Other than time wise just now, with the situation with coronavirus, it is good.”

Supporting the findings discussed above, several comments requested greater effort from staff to let clients know about other benefit entitlements or information that might be relevant to their circumstances.

“Being referred to additional information would be beneficial.”

“Should help with other benefits especially if not applied before, you don’t know!”

One respondent to this question wanted the option of in-person contact and several other respondents made this request elsewhere in the survey.

“I would like staff of Social Security Scotland to meet clients in person not via phone or email. The person would be able to explain his or her circumstances there by exploring other possible ways of helping that individual.”

7. Applying for Social Security Scotland benefits

This section presents findings on how respondents who had applied for a Social Security Scotland benefit found the experience.

7.1 Applying for benefits and success rate

27% of respondents said they had experience of applying for a Social Security Scotland benefit – at least one of Best Start Grant and/or Foods, Funeral Support Payment, or Young Carer Grant.²⁰ The proportion applying for each was:

- Best Start Grant and/or Foods – 21%
- Funeral Support Payment – 4%
- Young Carer Grant – 2%.

The vast majority of respondents who applied for each said they had been successful (see Table 7.1).

Table 7.1: Application success rate

All respondents who had applied for each benefit; Row percentages

Benefit	Proportion of applicants who were successful
Best Start Grant/Foods (n=673)	93%
Funeral Support Payment (n=134)	87%
Young Carer Grant (n=70)	99%

The small number of respondents reporting an unsuccessful application means it is not possible to split results to other survey questions based on whether or not respondents had a successful application.

The findings presented in the section below relate only to respondents who had applied for a benefit. Anyone who had only received Carer's Allowance Supplement did not answer these questions. The '[Supplementary document: tables and methods](#)' outlines the benefit experience of survey respondents in more detail.

²⁰ The proportions applying for any and each benefit shown in section 7.1 relate to all 3,253 respondents, including a small number who skipped the benefit experience questions. The benefit experience of respondents is discussed in more detail in [Section 2.5](#).

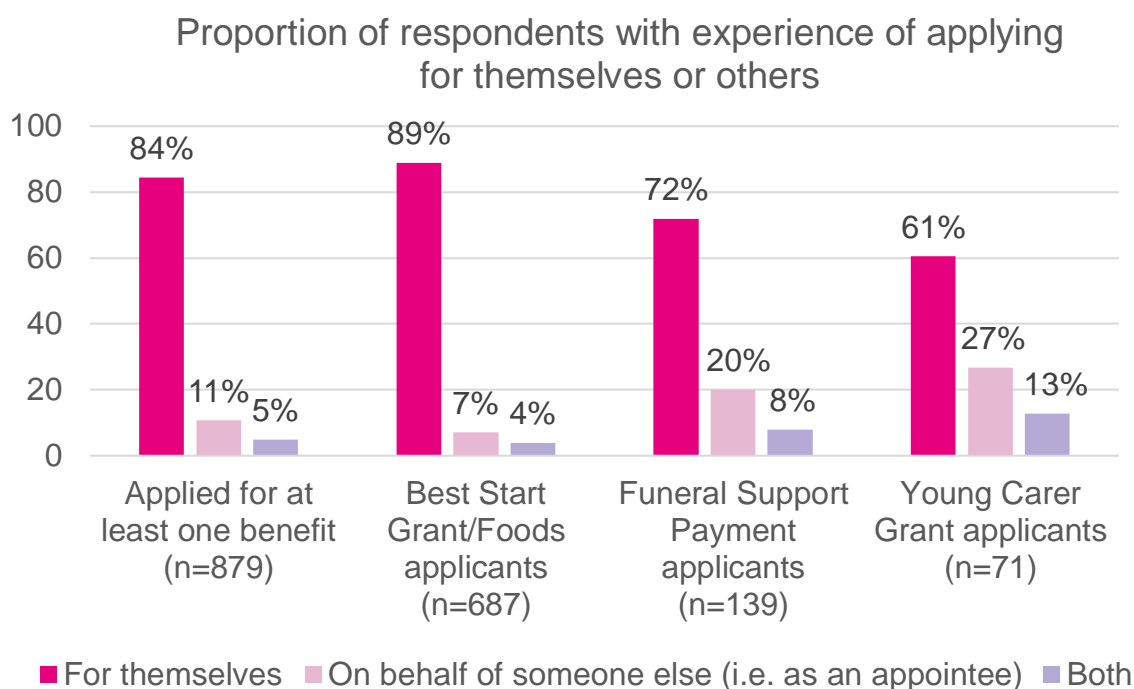
7.2 Who respondents applied for

Most respondents said they had applied for themselves (84%). Around one-in-ten (11%) had applied on behalf of someone else (i.e. as a carer or an appointee). One-in-twenty (5%) said they applied for both themselves and someone else.

Respondents with experience of applying for Funeral Support Payment or Young Carer Grant were much more likely to have experience of applying for someone else, as shown in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1: Who respondents applied for, by benefit experience

All respondents who had applied for each benefit



The likelihood of having applied on behalf of other people²¹ varied by demographic characteristics. Such actions were more commonly reported by groups including:

- men (31% applying on behalf of someone else, compared to 13% of women)
- respondents with a minority ethnic background (22% compared to 15% of white respondents).

7.3 Application method

Respondents most commonly reported applying for benefits online (83%). 16% said they had applied over the phone, whilst one-in-ten (10%) did so by post. Only 1% of respondents reported applying in person. Respondents could select more than one option to capture complex interactions or multiple applications where relevant.

²¹ This could be exclusively or as well as applying for themselves.

In comparison to respondents who had applied for Best Start Grant and/or Foods or Young Carer Grant, Funeral Support Payment applicants were much less likely to have applied online (see Table 7.2). Such respondents used the phone more often than other benefit groups.

Table 7.2: Application methods used by benefit experience

All respondents who had applied for each benefit; Column percentages

Method used to apply	Respondents who applied for at least one benefit (n=877)	Best Start Grant/Foods applicants (n=685)	Funeral Support Payment applicants (n=139)	Young Carer Grant applicants (n=70)
Online	83%	90%	47%	89%
Phone	16%	9%	52%	10%
Post	10%	10%	14%	14%
In person	1%	1%	3%	1%

7.4 Date of most recent application

Respondents were asked when they had made their most recent application. 92% gave the year (from 2018 to 2020), with most also specifying the relevant month. 8% of benefit applicants skipped the question, or said they could not remember or were unsure when their most recent application had been.

The majority of respondents who had applied for a benefit said their most recent application was during 2020 (59%) – see Table 7.3.

Table 7.3: Year of most recent application

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

Year	All benefit applicants (n=880)
2018	4%
2019	28%
2020	59%
'Can't remember/don't know', 'prefer not to say' or skipped question	8%

We cannot be sure whether respondents' responses were based on their most recent application only. Therefore, this report does not present detailed results broken down by the date of respondents' most recent application.

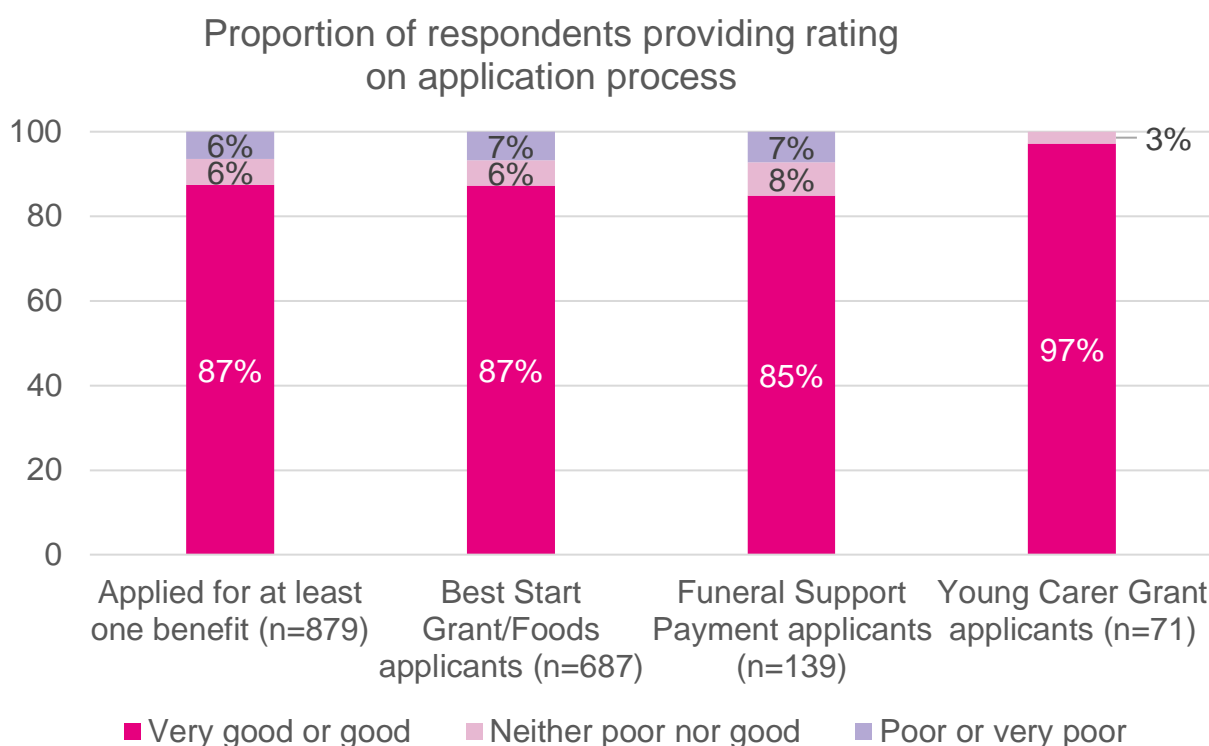
7.5 Views on application process

Almost nine-in-ten respondents (87%) who had applied for a Social Security Scotland benefit said their experience of the application process overall was 'very good' or 'good'.

Figure 7.2 presents the findings broken down by benefit experience. It shows a positive experience across the board but that those with experience of applying for Young Carer Grant provided particularly favourable feedback.

Figure 7.2: Overall rating of application process by benefit experience

All respondents who had applied for each benefit



A substantial majority (at least 80%) of respondents in each demographic sub-group described the application process as 'very good' or 'good'. These results can be seen in full in the ['Supplementary document: tables and methods'](#). Results were often similar across groups, however:

- white respondents (87%) were less likely to say their experience was 'very good' or 'good' than ethnic minority respondents (93%)
- women were more likely to say they had a 'poor' or 'very poor' experience (7% compared to 1% of men).

Nine-in-ten respondents who had applied for a benefit said that the application process was clear (90%) (see Table 7.4). Most also agreed that they were only asked relevant questions (87%).

A smaller proportion of respondents said their application was handled in a reasonable time frame (79%), whilst two-thirds (66%) agreed they got enough progress updates. Lack of updates was also a common issue highlighted in open-text comments in this section of the survey (see [Section 7.7](#)).

Table 7.4: Views on application process

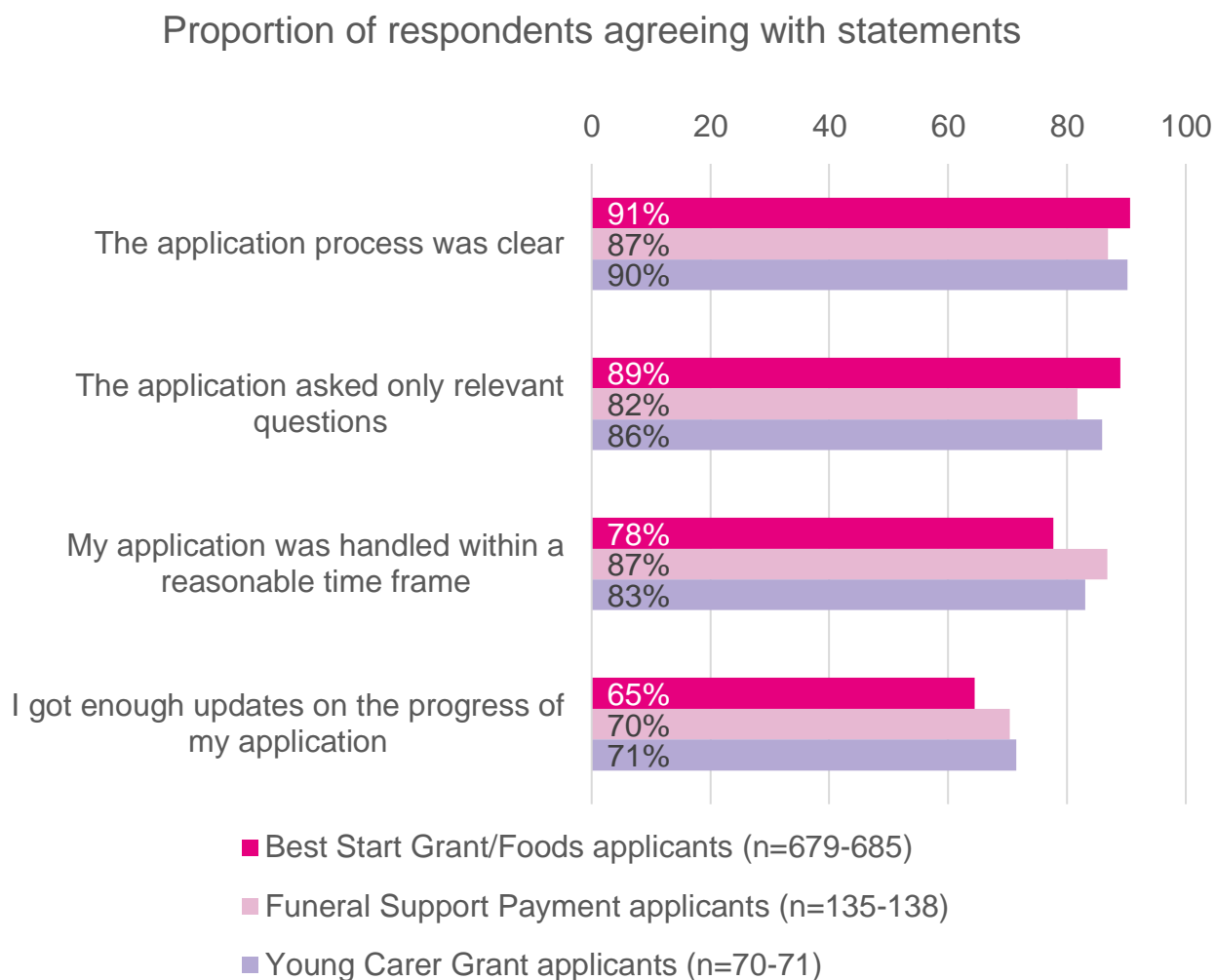
All respondents who had applied for at least one benefit; Row percentages

Thinking about when you applied...	Strongly agree or agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree or strongly disagree	Can't remember / Don't know
The application process was clear (n=876)	90%	5%	4%	1%
The application asked only relevant questions (n=874)	87%	5%	3%	5%
My application was handled within a reasonable time frame (n=872)	79%	7%	12%	1%
I got enough updates on the progress of my application (n=866)	66%	12%	19%	4%

Respondents who had applied for Best Start Grant and/or Foods were less likely than those who had applied for other benefits to agree that their application was handled in a timely way. A smaller proportion of this group also thought that they received sufficient updates – see Figure 7.3.

Figure 7.3: Views on application process by benefit experience

All respondents who had applied for each benefit



Results showed some variation when broken down by respondents' demographic characteristics. For example, analysis found:

- people living with a long-term health condition were less likely to agree with each of the statements - for example, 84% of those with a long-term condition agreed they were asked only relevant questions, compared to 89% of respondents with no condition
- white respondents (65%) were less likely than those with a minority ethnic background (76%) to say that they got enough updates on the progress of their application.

Views on the application process showed a more complex pattern when examined by gender identity. For instance, men were:

- more likely to say their application was handled in a reasonable time frame (84% compared to 79% of women)
- less likely to think the application process was clear (85% compared to 91% of women) or that the application asked only relevant questions (77% compared to 90% of women).

7.6 Following-up applications for updates or to make changes

Around a third of respondents who had applied for a benefit said they made contact with Social Security Scotland to find out about the progress (35%) or result (31%) of their application(s). One-in-ten (9%) had been in touch to change details after the result of an application.

Respondents who had applied for Best Start Grant and/or Foods were most likely to report following up with Social Security Scotland for a progress update on their application (see Table 7.5). This aligns with the finding discussed above that such respondents were also least likely to agree they got enough progress updates from Social Security Scotland.

Table 7.5: Whether respondents followed up their application for progress updates or to change details, by benefit experience

All respondents who had applied for each benefit; Column percentages

Did you contact Social Security Scotland to...	Applied for at least one benefit (n=860-878)	Best Start Grant/Foods applicants (n=677-687)	Funeral Support Payment applicants (n=130-138)	Young Carer Grant applicants (n=71)
Find out about the progress of your application(s)	35%	37%	30%	24%
Find out the result of your application(s)	31%	30%	29%	37%
Change details after the result of an application	9%	10%	5%	11%

7.7 Comments about applying for Social Security Scotland benefits

Anyone who had applied for any of Best Start Grant and/or Foods, Funeral Support Payment or Young Carer Grant was given the chance to comment on their experience²².

192 responses were given. Positive and negative comments were evenly split, each making over a third of the responses. This suggests respondents with negative points to raise were more likely to make a comment.

Most positive comments said the application process was straightforward, clear and easy. Several mentioned getting help from staff.

“Was a straightforward application. I’ve fortunately never found myself claiming any benefits before so was unsure on how it works but it was straightforward.”

“Funeral support staff were excellent and made the process clear”

A number of positive comments were more general, touching upon service, experience, staff or benefits themselves.

“Excellent service from start to finish. Ease of access to information.”

“Really qualified staff”

“The funeral grant really saved me. Thank you so much.”

The largest group of negative comments were about communication and the application process. Respondents frequently raised a lack of communication around receipt, updates or timeframes for applications and payments, especially in cases where they felt they had to wait too long for an outcome.

“Could have done with more updates or it being a lot quicker”

“No approximate processing time frame was indicated”

²² Question 24: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience applying for Social Security Scotland benefits?

A number mentioned they were still waiting for updates or outcomes, indicating recent experience during the Covid-19 outbreak.

“While it took longer to process and let me know the outcome of my application due to coronavirus and the lockdown, I did not hear from Social Security Scotland in any way about my application until I contacted it. This was a frustrating and stressful experience. My experience of the post-application process would have been better and at any rate, more positive with regard to my mental health if Social Security Scotland had contacted me in some way to advise there was a delay in processing my application due to coronavirus and the lockdown.”

Some respondents told of issues caused by getting inaccurate information, including about evidence, timing and outcomes.

“I got the payment in my bank account before I even had any communication about my application (letter of confirmation etc). I did get a call a few days before to confirm some information but it did not mention my application was approved. I think it would have been nice to get the letter before the payment to understand and be aware it was expected.”

A number of respondents found issue with the ‘Best Start’ application processes. Some found the timing windows for applying complicated or restrictive.

“I applied for the Best Start Grant in June and was told I was not eligible and to reapply in July. I understand I didn't meet the criteria at that point in time but I was weeks away from being eligible. Why couldn't my application have been approved and the funds released when I was eligible? Rather than have to apply twice? It makes no sense.”

A number of respondents criticised the way in which the Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods applications are combined. The combined application also led to issues with then receiving decisions for both benefits, as was also raised by respondents in later comments about decisions (see [Section 9.3](#)).

“I believe I had to apply for the food grant and the Best Start Grant together. I knew I wasn't eligible for the food grant so it seemed silly to apply and it was upsetting to get a letter saying I wasn't eligible. I felt like I had made a fraudulent application even though I knew I wasn't entitled. I also wasn't sure which grant the letter saying I wasn't entitled to referred to so was unclear if I would get the Best Start Grant.”

"[...] Best Start Grant and Foods should be separate I feel. As I applied for Best Start Grant [...] 2019, then for Best Start Foods when it first became available after this, and had a letter declining application. Upon ringing I was told that was for the grant, which I had not applied for as I understand it's a one off payment. Similarly the same issue arose in [...] 2020 when I applied for the Best Start Foods again (for the pregnancy part) I got a letter declining saying I'd already had the grant payment. I understand it's the system but having this as separate applications would cause less confusion I feel."

Further to calls across the survey for more publicity or advice about benefits (as discussed in [Section 3.4](#)), several respondents specifically called for better communication and clearer information about Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods.

"Providing more information regarding deadlines so that clients do not miss out on applying for their child."

"Can't get answers or update on school age grant. Generic answers on chat."

Several respondents called for more digital communication options during the application process. This is in addition to suggestions made throughout the survey for more digital correspondence in general ([Section 3.4](#)). One respondent wanted an option to monitor the progress of an application through an online webpage.

"I think you should have a page where you can enter details and access your application to see the progress of current application"

One suggestion was also to make it possible to provide evidence digitally²³:

"Make it possible to upload forms online. Having to send originals by post is inconvenient."

²³ Since the end of March 2020, it is now possible to upload evidence online using the [evidence uploading webpage](#).

8. Receiving payment

This section presents results on respondents' experience of receiving benefit payments.

8.1 Receiving payments from Social Security Scotland

Regardless of their response to other questions, all respondents were asked if they had received any benefit payments from Social Security Scotland. 86% of respondents said they had, whilst 14% had not.²⁴ A small proportion skipped the question (0.6%).

Those who had received a payment were asked which benefits this related to. Results largely mirrored the overall benefit experience indicated by respondents elsewhere in the survey. For example, most said they had received Carer's Allowance Supplement payments (80%), whilst 24% had received benefits requiring an application. Around one-in-five had received Best Start Grant (18%) whilst one-in-ten had received Best Start Foods payments (9%).²⁵ Much smaller proportions had received payments for Funeral Support Payment (3%) and Young Carer Grant (1%).

8.2 Overall experience of receiving benefit payments

The vast majority of respondents (93%) said that their overall experience of receiving benefit payments from Social Security Scotland was 'very good' or 'good'. Only 2% described their experience as 'poor' or 'very poor' (see Table 8.1).

Table 8.1: Overall rating of experience of receiving payments

All respondents who had received benefit payments from Social Security Scotland; Column percentages

Response options	All payment recipients (n=2,777)
Very good	72%
Good	21%
Neither poor nor good	5%
Poor	1%
Very poor	1%

²⁴A small proportion (3%) of those who reported they had received a payment here (n=2790) did not indicate they had received Carer's Allowance Supplement or applied for a benefit in earlier questions. These respondents have been kept in the analysis of those who have received a payment. This makes little to no difference to the figures reported.

²⁵ Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods were split as response options in this question only.

A substantial majority of respondents with experience of receiving payments for each individual benefit also described their experience as good (see Table 8.2). Whilst most were still positive, recipients of Funeral Support Payment were less likely to provide a good rating (83%) than those in other benefit groups (at least 90%). However, it should be noted that most of this difference was due to a larger proportion of such respondents saying their experience was ‘neither good nor poor’.

Table 8.2: Overall rating of experience of receiving payments by benefit experience

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

Response options	Carer’s Allowance Supplement recipients (n=2,221)	Best Start Grant recipients (n=506)	Best Start Foods recipients (n=248)	Funeral Support Payment recipients (n=95)	Young Carer Grant recipients (n=33)
Very good or good	94%	92%	90%	83%	97%
Neither poor nor good	5%	5%	7%	13%	3%
Poor or very poor	2%	3%	4%	4%	0%

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’](#).

8.3 Timing and accuracy of benefit payments

The vast majority (94%) of respondents who had received a payment said they got it when Social Security Scotland said they would. A similar proportion said that they were paid the right amount ‘first time’ (95%) and, where relevant, the right amount ‘every time’ (94%).

These figures varied slightly by benefit experience however, as shown in Table 8.3. For instance, the proportion saying they got their payment when expected fell to 88% amongst Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods recipients.

Table 8.3: Whether payments were on time and accurate

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

Benefit group	Received payment when Social Security Scotland said they would	Received right amount first time	Received right amount every time
Carer's Allowance Supplement recipients (n=2,081-2,211)	95%	95%	96%
Best Start Grant recipients (n=350-503)	88%	94%	89%
Best Start Foods recipients (n=233-247)	88%	91%	87%
Funeral Support Payment recipients (n=48-93)	94%	96%	92%
Young Carer Grant recipients (n=19-33)	88%	97%	89%

Ethnic minority respondents (88%) were less likely to say they had received their payment when expected compared to white respondents (95%). However, this difference was driven by a greater proportion saying they could not remember whether this had been the case. Similarly, respondents with a minority ethnic background were less likely to report receiving the right amount 'every time' than white respondents (86% compared to 95% respectively).

The likelihood of having received payment on time also differed by age of respondent. For example, 79% of 16-24 year olds said they had received payment when Social Security Scotland said they would, as did 90% of 25-34 year olds. This compares to 98% of those aged 65 and over. However, once again, a large proportion (but not all) of this difference is because younger respondents more often said they 'couldn't remember'. These differences in experience by age may also be related to younger age groups being more likely to have experience of Best Start Grant and/or Foods.

8.4 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 reported a high impact from their benefit payments, as outlined in Table 8.4.

The table also shows the average score given in response to each statement ranged from 7.8 for payments 'helping '[respondents] to control [their] finances' to 8.5 for 'helping to make a difference to [the recipient's] life'.

Table 8.4: Impact of benefit payments

All respondents with experience of receiving payments; Column percentages and average 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 (n=2,763)	Helped you to control your finances (n=2,734)	Helped you to pay for what you needed (n=2,749)
Proportion saying zero to three	5%	10%	8%
Proportion saying four to seven	19%	23%	20%
Proportion saying eight to ten	76%	66%	72%
Average (mean) rating	8.5	7.8	8.2

The average impact ratings given in response to the three statements were similar across the different benefit groups, as Table 8.5 shows.

Table 8.5: Average impact rating by benefit experience

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

Benefit received	How much benefit payments have:		
	Helped make a difference to your life	Helped you to control your finances	Helped you to pay for what you needed
Carer's Allowance Supplement recipients (n=2,188-2,211)	8.5	7.9	8.2
Best Start Grant recipients (n=499-504)	8.5	7.6	8.5
Best Start Foods recipients (n=246-247)	8.4	7.5	8.2
Funeral Support Payment recipients (n=93-95)	8.3	7.8	8.0
Young Carer Grant recipients (n=33)	8.3	7.2	8.3

The more detailed results for each statement grouped into the low, medium and high categories for each benefit group are provided in [Annex B](#). They confirm that a majority of respondents in all groups gave a high impact rating in response to each statement.

However, there was also some difference in the spread of scores between groups. For example, although most indicated a high impact, 13% of Funeral Support Payment applicants selected a score between zero and three when asked how much their benefit payments had made a difference to their life. This compared to around 5% of respondents in other benefit groups.

The ratings given showed some difference between demographic groups. For example, respondents living with a long-term health condition were more likely to give a high impact rating than those with no condition (see Table 8.6).

Table 8.6: Proportion giving impact of rating of 8-10 by demographic group
All respondents with experience of receiving payments in each demographic group; Proportion in row giving rating of 8-10 against each impact statement

Demographic group	Proportion providing rating of 8-10 for extent to which benefit payments have:		
	Helped make a difference to your life	Helped you to control your finances	Helped you to pay for what you needed
Gender identity			
Man (n=805-814)	72%	67%	68%
Woman (n=1,864-1,884)	78%	66%	74%
Long-term health condition			
With long-term physical/mental health condition (n=963-979)	81%	71%	75%
No condition (n=1,553-1,563)	74%	64%	71%
Ethnicity			
White (n=2,369-2,393)	78%	68%	74%
Minority ethnic (n=172-174)	61%	55%	60%

8.5 Comments about receiving benefit payments

Anyone who had received a benefit payment had the chance to offer views on their experience.²⁶

866 respondents provided comments. This was the most to any open text question by some distance. A large number of these respondents were people who had only received Carer's Allowance Supplement, so receiving these payments would likely be their main experience with Social Security Scotland.

²⁶ Question 31: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience receiving benefit payments?

Nearly two-thirds of comments were positive and less than one-in-five were negative.

Many positive comments expressed appreciation for benefit payments, including accounts of what they were used to pay for.

“The extra money helps me from going into debt and helps pay some bills”

“It was a life saver, thanks”

“It was a nice surprise and helped me to buy a new cooker outright instead of on finance, as mine had just broken and with having two young children it was a relief from the stress of having to afford one.”

Respondents also made positive comments about the ease, accuracy or timing of payments.

“I could not fault the service and accuracy.”

“The dates given are very accurate and this makes budgeting on a low income a lot easier. It makes such a difference in buying items my partner needs like clothing and bedding for example.”

“What they said they would do they kept to their word and payments were received.”

Among negative comments, respondents mentioned unhappiness with payment amounts or timing, long waits for payments or issues with communication and information about payments.

“Just the length of time I had to wait without money. I waited months.”

“Far too little money.”

“I wish payment was twice a month”

“Never sure when it is to be paid”

“It would have been a surprise payment if I hadn’t been told by a friend who had also applied for the Best Start Grant to keep an eye on my bank account. I received a letter by post several days after my account had been credited. In addition to a letter, I feel an email should have been sent at the same time as payment was made.”

Given the high volume of Carer’s Allowance Supplement respondents, it was specifically mentioned in many comments. In positive comments, respondents expressed thanks for the support and many saw it as a sign of recognition of their value as carers. Some liked the fact it didn’t require an application and the timing of the payments.

“Carer’s Allowance Supplement has been a welcome bonus in recognition of the many, many hours I spend caring for my mother.”

“The extra money made me feel more valued as a carer.”

“Was great how it was all paid automatically from information taken from the Department of Work and Pensions Carer’s Allowance rather than having to apply to make a claim”

“It was great getting the Carer’s Supplement in lump sums so I could put it straight towards a holiday when I found respite care for the person I’m looking after.”

“It was nice to get a lump sum to treat myself with”

“The timing of the two payments are a great help”

Carer’s Allowance Supplement was often mentioned among the smaller number of negative comments. These respondents felt the supplement was too low, as too was the amount carers receive in general. Some did not like the payment timing or having to wait for back payment dates.

“Carer’s Allowance and Carer’s Allowance Supplement levels are an utter disgrace”

"I'm surprised you think that £230 every six months is a life changer"

"Carer's Supplement should be paid more frequently and should be more."

"The money I am due would have made a massive difference to my life. But unfortunately I'm not allowed my three payments of £230 until December so I'm just sitting here getting into debt. Maybe if Social Security Scotland had actually paid me in a timely manner we wouldn't have terrible credit scores."

"Chatted on the phone. First person was just like 'you can't have it till December, that's just the way it's done'. Pathetic response."

A number of respondents suggested changes to the timing of Carer's Allowance Supplement.

"Would prefer Carer's Supplement to be paid quarterly."

Mixed comments tended to cover the same Carer's Allowance Supplement points, such as appreciating the additional support but feeling the amount was too low.

"Very grateful, but still inadequate."

"It's nice that carers receive the extra money twice a year. It helps a little for the care we give our loved ones. Sadly it's not enough money we receive monthly for the care and work we do. What other job pays that amount per week? Nobody. It's out of love we do it. We deserve to get paid at least the minimum wage per hour, not less than £10 per day."

Among the respondents with experience of Carer's Allowance Supplement, many commented on Carer's Allowance specifically (not the Supplement) and the Department for Work and Pensions. Among these, some did recognise the distinction with Social Security Scotland, and some favourably compared their experiences.

"MUCH easier to deal with Social Security Scotland than the Department of Work and Pensions."

However, some were not aware of or were confused by the roles of the different organisations.

“The benefits are confusing because I don't know who pays what”

“I didn't know you existed and I didn't know where the money came from.”

9. Application decisions

9.1 Views on and agreement with decisions

Respondents who had applied for a Social Security Scotland benefit were asked a series of questions relating to their experience of receiving a decision on their application.

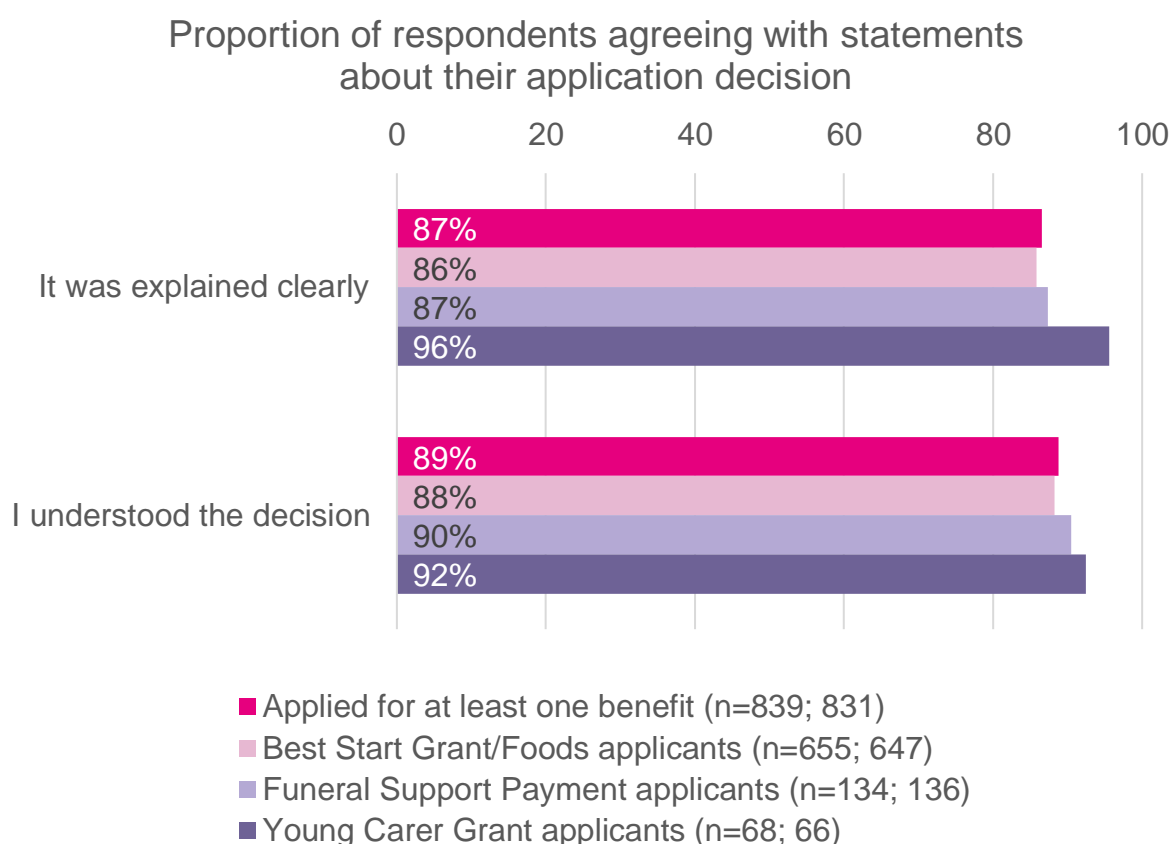
Almost nine-in-ten respondents agreed that the decision on their application was 'explained clearly' (87%). A similar proportion said they 'understood the decision' (89%). One-in-twenty (5%) disagreed with each of these points, with the remainder saying they 'neither agreed nor disagreed'.

The vast majority of respondents (92%) said they agreed with the decision made on their application(s) for a benefit. This means just under one-in-ten (8%) disagreed.

Figure 9.1 shows results across different benefits. Young Carer Grant applicants were most likely to say their decision was explained well and they understood it, although the relatively smaller number of respondents in this category should be considered when interpreting apparent differences between groups.

Figure 9.1: Views on application decisions by benefit experience

All respondents who had applied for each benefit



Young Carer Grant applicants were most likely to say they agreed with the decision, as shown in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1: Agreement with application decisions by benefit experience

All respondents who had applied for each benefit; Column percentages

Response option	Applied for at least one benefit (n=860)	Best Start Grant/Foods applicants (n=672)	Funeral Support Payment applicants (n=138)	Young Carer Grant applicants (n=68)
Yes	92%	92%	91%	99%
No	8%	8%	9%	1%

Agreement with application decisions was largely similar across demographic groups. However, views on whether decisions were explained clearly did show greater variation between some groups. For example, groups less likely to agree with this point included:

- men (82% compared to 88% of women)
- white respondents (86% compared to 91% of ethnic minority respondents)
- respondents with a long-term health condition (81% compared to 90% of those with no condition).

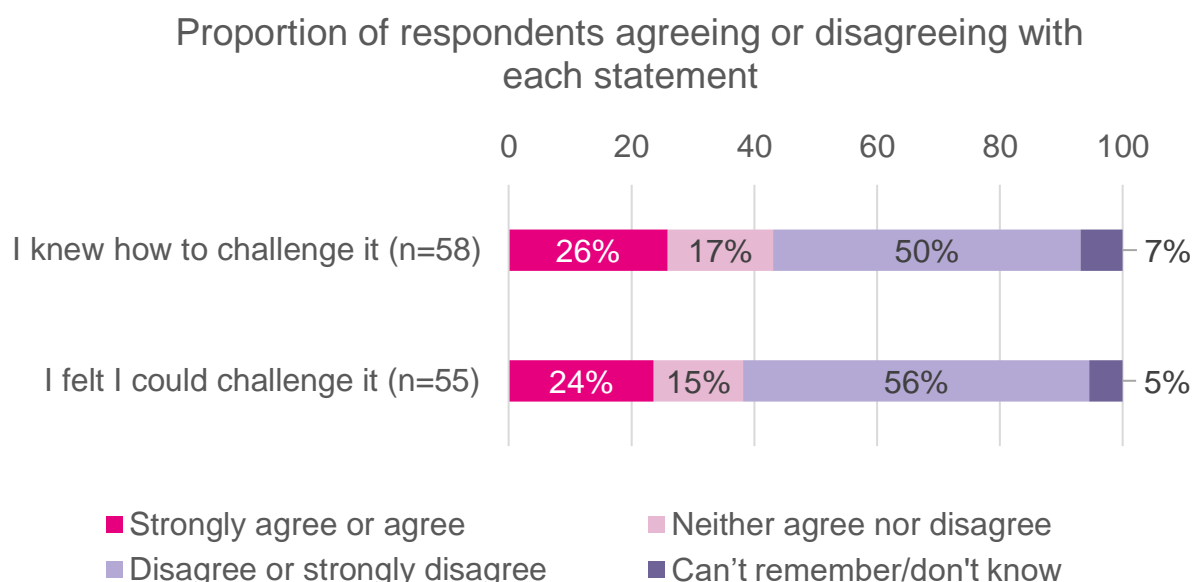
9.2 Challenging decisions

Those who disagreed with a decision were asked some follow-up questions to explore their experience in more depth. However, given the relatively small number of respondents who said they disagreed with the decision on their application, the results presented below should be interpreted with caution.

Where respondents disagreed with the decision (n=67), this was most commonly noted as being related to Best Start Grant (58%) or Best Start Foods (40%). Around one-in-five (18%) said it was about Funeral Support Payment, whilst just 1% identified an issue with a Young Carer Grant application. This distribution is likely to be related to the fact that Best Start benefits were much more commonly applied for by survey respondents, reflecting the wider Social Security Scotland client base.

Only one-in-four respondents who disagreed with the decision on their application agreed that they ‘knew how to challenge it’ (26%) and ‘felt [they] could challenge it’ (24%) – see Figure 9.2. Similarly, only 24% of those who disagreed with a decision said they did challenge it.

Figure 9.2: Whether respondents knew how and felt able to challenge decisions
All respondents who disagreed with an application decision



9.3 Comments about application decisions

Anyone who had applied for any of Best Start Grant and/or Foods, Funeral Support Payment or Young Carer Grant was asked to comment about their experience with an application decision.²⁷

Although all recipients of the survey invite should have reached a decision stage for an application or have received Carer’s Allowance Supplement, a number stated that they had not yet received a decision. It is possible these comments might refer to another more recent application. Equally, some people who had received Carer’s Allowance Supplement and applied for a benefit may not have had their application decision at the point they completed the survey. These comments were marked as neutral unless they included other factors such as frustration at a long wait or not being able to get an update.

²⁷ Question 37: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about a decision made on your application for a Social Security Scotland benefit?

136 responses were made. Over a third of comments were neutral, under a third negative, and under a quarter positive.

Most positive comments were brief expressions of happiness with the process and/or outcome.

“The decision was very good and fair.”

“It was very straightforward. No hassle.”

“I was just happy to get the help”

Several respondents spoke of difficulties challenging the decision.

“I tried to challenge it and got nowhere”

“Couldn’t challenge due to no reply”

Most negative comments mentioned similar communication issues to those raised in respect to the application process: long waits, not receiving or being able to get updates, or, in some instances, getting incorrect information.

“It took 3 months to make it”

“Had to apply on a few occasions as after months I didn’t hear any news”

“Chased numerous times and still heard nothing”

“Not enough updates”

“I could and should have been kept informed throughout its processing in addition to acknowledging the application’s submission”

“There was some confusion as I had received a letter to say I was not entitled then a couple days later received another that said I was”

As discussed in [Section 7.7](#), some respondents criticised having to make a combined application for Best Start Foods or Best Start Grants. When it came to receiving decisions, they felt confused at receiving a rejection for one of the benefits they did not want or expect, and then uncertainty about the result for the benefit they did want. There were also more negative comments about the deadlines and requirements for applying for these benefits.

“There was some slight procedural misunderstanding during the Best Start Food grant where it seemed to have been misinterpreted as an attempt to get some additional /ad hoc Best Start Grant payment as well (that wasn't our intention- we got the Best Start Grant in 2018, as appropriate, and another school age payment recently). So we received a rejection (and appeal) letter for our alleged "Best Start Grant" application, then confirmation of the Best Start Food grant thereafter.”

“When applying for Best Start Foods I received a letter saying I wasn't entitled to the pregnancy [Best Start] grant as I'd already received it. I found this confusing as it's not what I'd applied for. It made me wonder if there was an error and if the letter meant I wasn't entitled to Best Start Foods.”

“Felt let down because my child missed the back to school payment by a month”

“Had to reapply as I was one week early with the original application so was declined”

A few respondents called for Universal Credit not to be used to determine eligibility.

“Social Security Scotland should not base its benefit on Universal Credit. Universal Credit is universally acclaimed to be unfit for purpose. My first application was refused even when my household income was below £1000 (household of 3 people).”

10. Barriers

All respondents were asked if they had faced any barriers getting help from Social Security Scotland. This section presents the results on how many said they had experienced barriers, and whether those affected sought help.

10.1 Experience of barriers

7% of respondents said they had experienced some sort of barrier when getting help from Social Security Scotland.

Around one-in-ten who had applied for at least one benefit said they had faced barriers when dealing with Social Security Scotland (11%). This is in contrast to 6% of respondents who had received Carer's Allowance Supplement. As highlighted previously, the vast majority of Carer's Allowance Supplement recipients said they had not applied for any other Social Security Scotland benefits. As such, they may be less likely to encounter barriers due to more limited engagement with Social Security Scotland.

Amongst benefit applicants, barriers were most commonly reported by those who had applied for Funeral Support Payment (16%) as Table 10.1 shows.

Table 10.1: Whether respondents faced any barriers getting help from Social Security Scotland by benefit experience

All respondents with experience of each benefit; Column percentages

Response options	Carer's Allowance Supplement recipients (n=2,467)	Applied for at least one benefit (n=876)	Best Start Grant/ Foods applicants (n=684)	Funeral Support Payment applicants (n=139)	Young Carer Grant applicants (n=71)
Yes	6%	11%	11%	16%	7%
No	94%	89%	89%	84%	93%

Just under one-in-ten (9%) of those living with a long-term physical or mental health condition said they had experienced barriers compared to 6% of respondents with no condition. Issues were also most commonly reported by respondents aged 65 and over (12%).

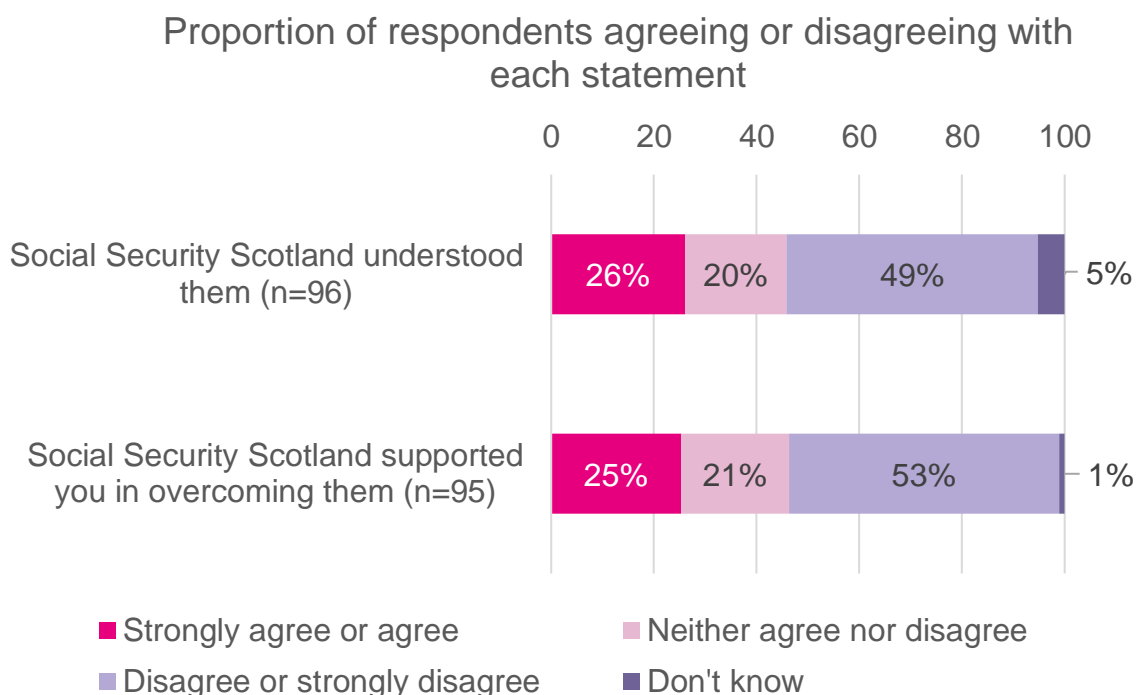
Results by other breakdowns were broadly similar. However, 16% of the relatively small group of respondents who said they would 'prefer not to say' what their ethnic background is reported experiencing barriers.

10.2 Tackling barriers

Just over two-in-five of those who experienced barriers said they told Social Security Scotland about them (43%).

Where respondents had highlighted barriers, only around a quarter agreed that Social Security Scotland 'understood them' (26%, n=96). A similar proportion said Social Security Scotland 'supported [the respondent] in overcoming them' (25%, n=95) – see Figure 10.2.

Figure 10.2: Whether respondents who reported barriers felt they were understood and supported to overcome them
All respondents who reported barriers to Social Security Scotland



10.3 Comments about barriers

Respondents were given the chance to comment on any barriers they face in general or encountered in their experience with Social Security Scotland.²⁸ This opportunity was presented to all respondents regardless of their answer to the closed question about whether they had experienced barriers (discussed above).

Of the 567 responses, a high proportion were neutral.²⁹ This left 277 substantive comments, about half of which were negative and a quarter positive.

Most positive comments were of a brief and general nature, relating to the absence of any issues or good overall experience:

“Never had any issues in any shape or form so very happy”

“No barriers, very streamlined process.”

“No barriers, full transparency.”

“I have not come up against barriers. I was treated fairly with the utmost dignity and respect.”

Negative comments varied greatly, as respondents interpreted ‘barriers’ widely. Many issues mentioned elsewhere reoccurred here, from staff treatment to lack of updates. Most prominent was mention of helpline waiting times and respondents also raised processing times.

“The only barrier experienced that made life difficult was the waiting time for phone calls to be answered.”

“The only barrier was how long the whole process took and that I had to fix the issue where the money was paid to the funeral director when I had given a revised instruction to pay the money to me.”

“Timeframe is the biggest barrier - no clue when you receive an outcome”

²⁸ Question 41: Is there anything you want to tell us about barriers you face and your experience with Social Security Scotland?

²⁹ Most neutral comments were respondents writing in no-comments, such as or similar to: ‘None,’ ‘Nothing,’ ‘No issues,’ ‘So far not had a problem,’ or ‘Nothing negative to report.’ While non comments on barriers could be a positive indicator, measure of this is better captured in the closed questions.

Not knowing about Social Security Scotland and its services also came up as a barrier.

“My only issue was that the Department of Work and Pensions didn't tell me you existed. You could make yourself more visible.”

“I didn't know about them. That was the main barrier.”

“Know what services and help is available.”

A number of respondents raised written or verbal language barriers, or struggling with not having enough digital literacy or access.

“I find reading and navigating the site difficult. It can be easier phoning but the phone lines are rarely available when I am free.”

“The biggest obstacle that I faced is the lack of understanding of the English language when contacting you or if you did contact me”

“I've got bad speech and because of that they cannot understand me”

“You offered correspondence in British Sign Language - I do not think I got any.”

“Some things are quite lengthy to read and as I suffer from Dyslexia I find it difficult to read through just once. It takes several read-throughs to understand.”

“I struggle with using the Internet. I've had to learn how to use the Internet.”

“Feel that most forms of communication are rooted for online use. I am not able to use these services.”

A large number of comments were about negative experiences with the Department for Work and Pensions or factors external to Social Security Scotland. Some had implications or connections with Social Security Scotland services, such as those about Carer's Allowance eligibility.

“My Carer's Allowance stopped when I became eligible to receive my State Pension”

“Just that I was unable to get the Social Security Scotland Carer's Allowance Supplement because the Department of Work and Pensions stopped my Carer's Allowance as they define my part-time MSc course as having full-time hours commitment.”

11. Discrimination

This section presents results on respondents' experiences of discrimination when dealing with Social Security Scotland, including what issues were faced and whether respondents reported problems.

11.1 Experience of discrimination

In addition to barriers, respondents were asked if they felt they had been discriminated against at any point during their experience with Social Security Scotland. Around one-in-fifty (2%) said they had experienced discrimination, with a further 3% selecting the 'prefer not to say' response option.

Table 11.1: Whether respondents faced any discrimination when dealing with Social Security Scotland

All respondents; Column percentages

Experience of discrimination	All respondents (n=3,244)
Yes	2%
No	95%
Prefer not to say	3%

The proportion who had experienced discrimination was relatively similar across different benefit groups (see Table 11.2).

Table 11.2: Experience of discrimination by benefit experience

All respondents with experience of each benefit; Column percentages

Response options	Carer's Allowance Supplement recipients (n=2,470)	Applied for at least one benefit (n=878)	Best Start Grant/Foods applicants (n=687)	Funeral Support Payment applicants (n=139)	Young Carer Grant applicants (n=70)
Yes	2%	2%	2%	4%	1%
No	95%	94%	94%	94%	94%
Prefer not to say	3%	4%	4%	2%	4%

A greater proportion of respondents living with a long-term physical or mental health condition said they had been discriminated against than those without a condition (4% compared to 1% respectively). Results were broadly similar across other key

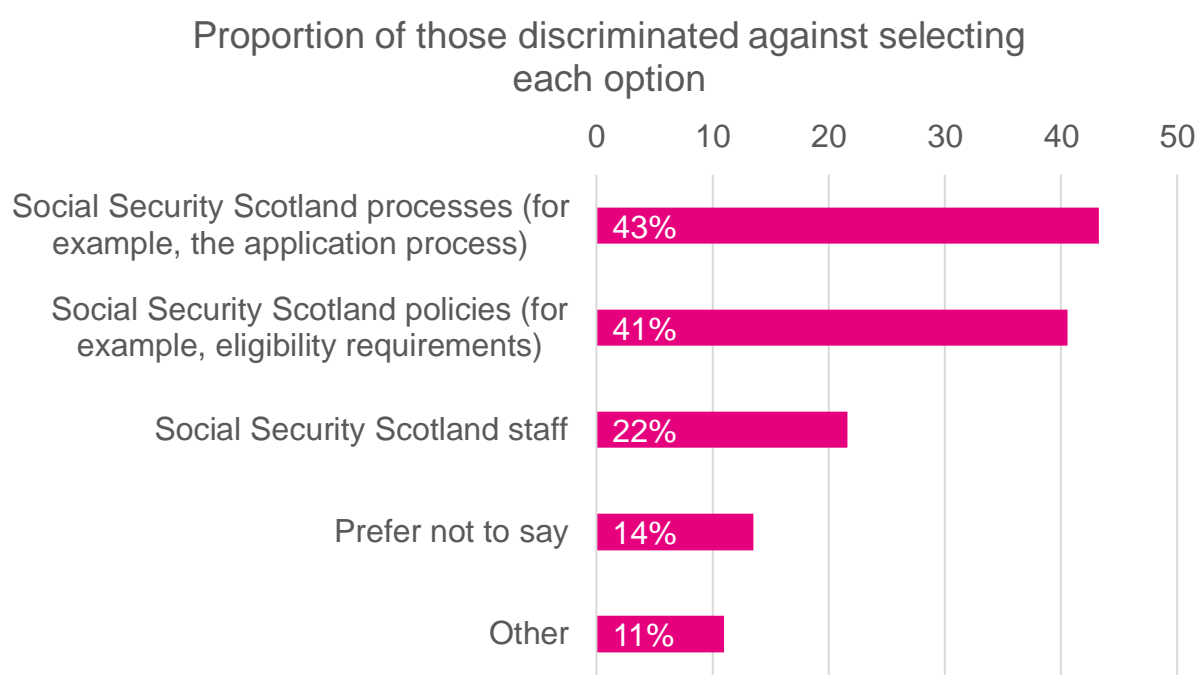
demographic breakdowns. They are outlined in full in '[Supplementary document: tables and methods](#)' available alongside this report. However, similar to the trend seen in relation to barriers, respondents who said they would 'prefer not' to disclose their ethnicity were more likely to say they had encountered discrimination.

11.2 Nature of discrimination

Respondents who had experienced issues were asked who or what they felt was discriminatory towards them. They could select more than one option if they wished. The most commonly highlighted issues were Social Security 'processes' and 'policies' which were both mentioned by around two-in-five respondents – see Figure 11.1.

Figure 11.1: Who or what respondents felt discriminated by

All respondents who said they had experienced discrimination (n=74)

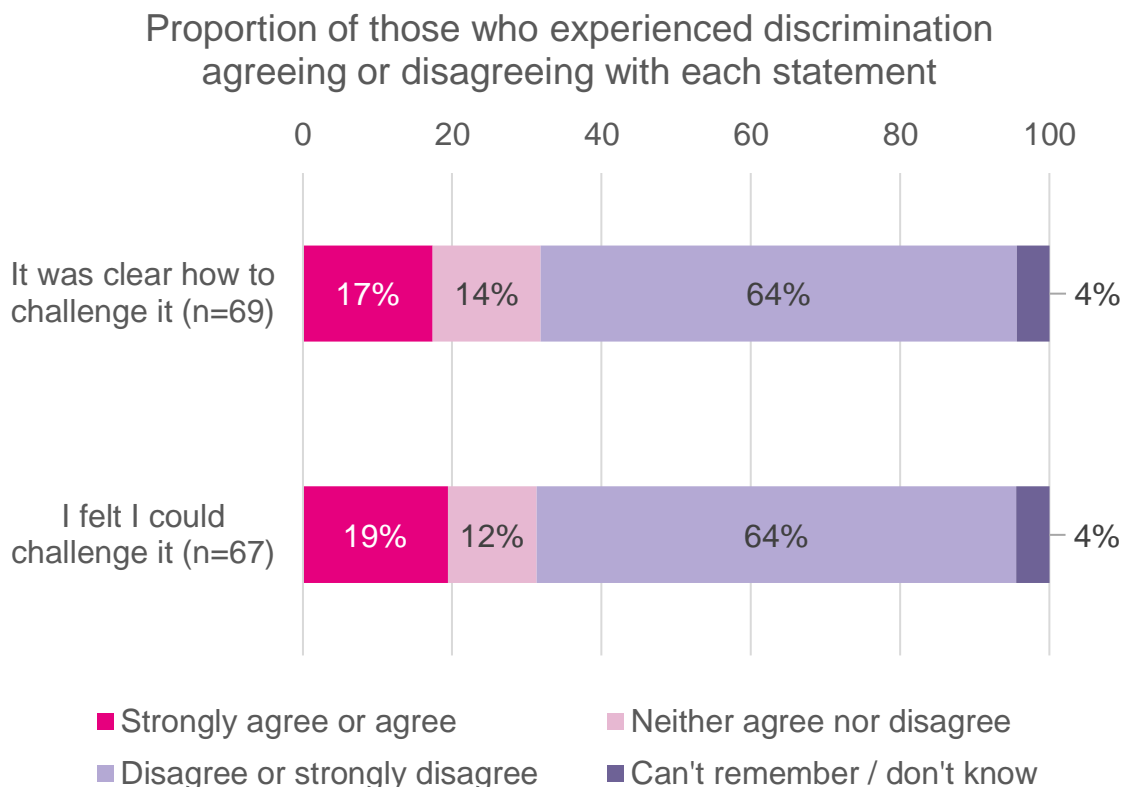


11.3 Tackling discrimination

Most 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’ (both 64%). Just under one-in-five agreed with these statements, as Figure 11.2 outlines.

Figure 11.2: Whether respondents knew how and felt able to challenge discrimination

All respondents who said they had experienced discrimination



Relatedly, only one-fifth of respondents said they told Social Security Scotland about the discrimination they faced (21%), whilst one-in-ten (10%) selected the ‘prefer not to say’ option. This means the majority (70%) said they did not report the discrimination they felt they had encountered.

Those who reported their experiences of discrimination were asked if Social Security Scotland took the action needed. However, only 15 respondents were asked this question in this initial round of the survey. This means it is not possible to provide meaningful results to this question. In future, a larger overall response number as Social Security Scotland’s client base continues to grow may make it possible to look at findings here.

11.4 Comments about discrimination

Regardless of their answers to the related closed questions, all survey respondents were given the chance to comment on discrimination in connection to their experience with Social Security Scotland.³⁰

Of the 402 responses, a high proportion were neutral.³¹ 103 were substantive comments. Slightly more comments were negative than positive.

Most positive comments expressed good overall experiences or satisfaction, including with staff.

“Completely satisfied.”

“A very inclusive service.”

“No, I can think of no problems I have had or questions not answered fairly and honestly.”

“Absolutely none whatsoever. The worker listened to what I had to say and took it on board.”

A large number of the negative comments were about disagreement with eligibility requirements.

“I think the earnings limit is set too low given the cost of living in today’s society and everywhere I look I see people who make no effort to work/contribute getting rewarded for nothing yet my earnings entitle me to basically nothing. I feel pushed down and unappreciated by the Scottish Government for being working class.”

“I did feel that it was unfair that I did not qualify for the Best Start School payment since my only income is Carer’s Allowance.”

³⁰ Question 47: Is there anything you want to tell us about discrimination and your experience with Social Security Scotland?

³¹ Most neutral comments were respondents writing in no-comments, such as or similar to: ‘No,’ ‘No discrimination,’ ‘No issues,’ ‘Nothing to report.’ While non comments on discrimination could be a positive indicator, the measure of this is better captured in the closed questions.

As with the Barriers section and elsewhere in the survey, respondents mentioned disagreement with some eligibility factors external to Social Security Scotland. Factors such as no longer being eligible for Carer's Allowance – and therefore the Carer's Allowance Supplement – once receiving a state pension, were considered discriminatory.

“Inherent age discrimination in policy regarding Carer's Allowance Supplement. Carer activity does not cease at State Pension age. If intended to supplement benefit received where carer activity is undertaken, fails to do so beyond State Pension age.”

“There might come a point when State Pension is payable and as a result I might lose Scottish Carer's Supplement due to the Department of Work and Pensions' rules on overlapping benefits which is unfair to say the least. A person should not lose Carer's Allowance as soon as State Pension starts.”

Most remaining negative comments related to experiences considered unfair, of feeling generally mistreated as a benefit claimant, or issues with general process:

“My daughter was discriminated against due to her age and situation - there was obviously no process for staff to follow and we were simply ignored.”

“I'm disabled. Disabled people are scum, aren't they? What can I say?”

“When I got a response I had actually forgot what I had contacted them about as it took about 5 months for a reply.”

Two respondents mentioned language or understanding difficulties (one as a mixed comment):

“It was fantastic that you mentioned British Sign Language - I felt you knew that Deaf people communicated in a different way. The reality was I needed my signing social worker's assistance to apply.”

“It's not really geared to help people with difficulty in understanding”

A high portion of comments for this question were directly about experiences with the Department for Work and Pensions or beyond Social Security Scotland.

“In the UK system I feel discriminated against because of age and caring for an elder person.”

“I failed my Personal Independence Payment assessment because the Department of Work and Pensions did not take my doctors letters into account.”

“I felt as if the staff didn’t understand my condition. If forms were resubmitted they would stop the benefits as they would say I am not ill enough. Even with letters from psychiatrists.”³²

³² None of the live benefits available at the time of the survey had illness related conditions.

12. 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.

Annex A: Client Panels - characteristics of members

As outlined in [Section 2](#), just over 1,000 Social Security Scotland clients signed up to the newly established Client Panels through the initial round of the Client Survey. An overview of the demographic characteristics of Panel members is provided in the tables below.

Table A1.1: Gender identity of Client Panels members

All Client Panels members; Column percentages

Gender identity	Proportion of members
Man	31%
Woman	68%
In another way	0.1%
Prefer not to say	0.5%
Skipped question	0.6%

Table A1.2: Age of Client Panels members

All Client Panels members; Column percentages

Age group	Proportion of members
16-24	3%
25-34	11%
35-44	15%
45-54	21%
55-64	23%
65+	6%
Skipped question / missing data	21%

Table A1.3: Ethnicity of Client Panels members

All Client Panels members; Column percentages

Ethnic group	Proportion of members
White	89%
Minority ethnic	7%
Prefer not to say	2%
Skipped question	3%

Table A1.4: Proportion of Client Panels members with long-term physical or mental health conditions

All Client Panels members; Column percentages

Health status	Proportion of members
With long-term physical/mental health condition	42%
No condition	53%
Prefer not to say	5%
Skipped question	0.4%

Table A1.5: Sexual orientation of Client Panels members

All Client Panels members; Column percentages

Sexual orientation	Proportion of members
Heterosexual	89%
Gay / lesbian / bisexual	5%
In another way	1%
Prefer not to say	5%
Skipped question	1%

Table A1.6: Proportion of Client Panels members identifying as 'trans'

All Client Panels members; Column percentages

Whether identify as 'trans'	Proportion of members
Yes	1%
No	96%
Prefer not to say	2%
Skipped question	1%

Table A1.7: Geographic spread of Client Panels members

All Client Panels members; Column percentages

Urban or rural area	Proportion of members
Urban	82%
Rural	15%
Partial or non-matching postcode	0.1%
Skipped question	3%

Annex B: Additional tables

Table B1.1: Views on communication choices and support received by age

All respondents who had looked up or made contact with Social Security Scotland; Column percentages

Proportion agreeing:	16-24 (n=54-56)	25-34 (n=177-180)	35-44 (n=215-219)	45-54 (n=208-214)	55-64 (n=273-281)	65+ (n=58-61)
I had enough choice about how I communicated with Social Security Scotland	94%	92%	86%	89%	87%	75%
I had enough choice about how Social Security Scotland communicated with me	93%	92%	83%	88%	86%	71%
I got the support (information or advice) I needed	93%	89%	85%	88%	90%	79%
I got support (information or advice) in the way I wanted	95%	91%	83%	87%	87%	68%

Table B1.2: Views on communication choices and support received by whether respondents have a long-term health condition

All respondents who had looked up or made contact with Social Security Scotland; Column percentages

Proportion agreeing:	With long-term physical/mental health condition (n=470-480)	No condition (n=764-777)	Prefer not to say (n=100-102)
I had enough choice about how I communicated with Social Security Scotland	81%	89%	85%
I had enough choice about how Social Security Scotland communicated with me	80%	87%	84%
I got the support (information or advice) I needed	82%	90%	83%
I got support (information or advice) in the way I wanted	79%	88%	86%

Table B1.3: How much payments have ‘helped make a difference to your life’

All respondents with experience of receiving payments for each benefit; Column percentages and average rating

Rating of impact of benefit payment in relation to statement from zero (‘not at all’) to ten (‘a lot’)	Carer’s Allowance Supplement recipients (n=2,211)	Best Start Grant recipients (n=504)	Best Start Foods recipients (n=247)	Funeral Support Payment recipients (n=94)	Young Carer Grant recipients (n=33)
Proportion saying zero to three	5%	5%	5%	13%	3%
Proportion saying four to seven	18%	18%	20%	7%	27%
Proportion saying eight to ten	77%	77%	75%	80%	70%
Average (mean) rating	8.5	8.5	8.4	8.3	8.3

Table B1.4: How much payments have ‘helped you to control your finances’

All respondents with experience of receiving payments for each benefit;
Column percentages and average rating

Rating of impact of benefit payment in relation to statement from zero (‘not at all’) to ten (‘a lot’)	Carer's Allowance Supplement recipients (n=2,188)	Best Start Grant recipients (n=499)	Best Start Foods recipients (n=246)	Funeral Support Payment recipients (n=93)	Young Carer Grant recipients (n=33)
Proportion saying zero to three	9%	11%	12%	17%	6%
Proportion saying four to seven	23%	25%	26%	9%	42%
Proportion saying eight to ten	68%	64%	61%	74%	52%
Average (mean) rating	7.9	7.6	7.5	7.8	7.2

Table B1.5: How much payments have ‘helped you to pay for what you needed’

All respondents with experience of receiving payments for each benefit;
Column percentages and average rating

Rating of impact of benefit payment in relation to statement from zero (‘not at all’) to ten (‘a lot’)	Carer's Allowance Supplement recipients (n=2,196)	Best Start Grant recipients (n=504)	Best Start Foods recipients (n=247)	Funeral Support Payment recipients (n=95)	Young Carer Grant recipients (n=33)
Proportion saying zero to three	8%	6%	7%	15%	3%
Proportion saying four to seven	20%	15%	22%	12%	24%
Proportion saying eight to ten	72%	79%	71%	74%	73%
Average (mean) rating	8.2	8.5	8.2	8.0	8.3

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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