

National Customer Satisfaction Survey to Support the Building Standards Verification Performance Framework

2021 National Survey Findings

December 2021



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1. Executive Summary

1.1. Executive Summary

1. The remit of the building standards system in Scotland is to protect the public interest by setting out the standards to be met when building or conversion work takes place, to the extent necessary to meet the building regulations.
2. In 2021, the Scottish Government commissioned Pye Tait Consulting to undertake the eighth annual national customer satisfaction survey for building standards.¹ The purpose of the annual survey is to obtain nationally consistent customer satisfaction data across all 32 local authorities in Scotland and to enable comparison analysis between years.
3. The survey aligns with Key Performance Outcome 4 (KPO4) of the 'Building Standards Performance Framework for Verifiers' (operational from May 2017).² The purpose of KPO4 – titled 'Understand and respond to the customer experience' – is for local authority verifiers to monitor customer satisfaction with the building standards service and ensure it meets or exceeds customer expectations.

1.2. Approach to delivering the survey:

- The 2021 survey questionnaire was slightly shortened compared to the 2020 version (a copy is presented in Appendix 2) to remove some questions no longer fit-for-purpose and to boost response rates. Some small changes were also made to reflect that work is undertaken virtually due to Covid-19.
- The scope of the survey was all building standards customers between 1st April 2020 and 31st March 2021, defined as:
 - Applicants for building warrants (including any agents);
 - Submitters of completion certificates (including any agents); and
 - Others that have interacted with the building standards service.
- Local authorities supplied their customers' contact details (name and email address only) to Pye Tait Consulting for the express purpose of being invited to participate in the survey.
- The survey opened on 4th October 2021 and closed on 4th November 2021. It was hosted online and customers with email addresses were directly invited by Pye Tait Consulting to participate.

¹ The seventh national customer survey took place in 2020 and the final report is available at: [Building standards verification performance framework 2020: national survey findings](#)

² The Scottish Government (2017) Building Standards Performance Framework for Verifiers. Available [Performance Framework for Verifiers](#)

- Local authorities were at liberty to promote the survey link to their own customers (i.e. those within scope) as appropriate.
- For customers of one local authority verifier, the survey automatically assigned their responses to that local authority, while customers of multiple local authorities were presented with links for each local authority verifier of which they had been a customer and thus could complete the survey multiple times, once for each local authority.

1.3. Achieved sample:

Total email addresses supplied to Pye Tait from local authorities: **27,519**³

Total survey invitation emails sent by Pye Tait: **22,493**⁴

Total survey responses received: **3,259**

Response rate: **14.5%**⁵ (against 22,493 emails sent).

1.4. Respondent profile:

- The majority of surveyed customers (72%) stated that they were direct building warrant applicants and/or direct submitters of completion certificates during the 2020/21 financial year (the period in scope of the survey).
- A fifth (19%) classified themselves as agents, i.e. acting on behalf of applicants.
- A small minority (7%) classified themselves as both agents and applicants, while 2% defined themselves as an ‘other’ customer type.
- The majority of customers (80%) had submitted applications for domestic work only, 10% submitted applications for non-domestic work only and 11% submitted applications for both domestic and non-domestic work.

Table 1.4.a 2021 headline results and comparisons

Key	Numerical rating questions	Percentage questions
Green (G)	7.5 and higher	75% and higher
Amber (A)	Between 6.5 and 7.4	Between 65% and 74%
Red (R)	6.4 and below	64% and below

Note that the colour-coding metrics used reflect The Scottish Government’s updated performance measurement requirements.

³ This number includes repeat email addresses supplied by more than one local authority verifier.

⁴ Unique customers, i.e. following a de-duplication of customer email addresses supplied by all 32 local authorities.

⁵ For comparison purposes, the national response rate in 2020 was 14.5%. However, higher volumes of customer email addresses were supplied by local authorities this year than in 2020, resulting in the highest number of responses to date since the survey was first run.

Scotland	Scotland 2021	Scotland 2020	Scotland 2019
Overall Satisfaction			
Overall satisfaction with the service (score out of 10)	7.1 (A)	7.5 (G)	7.4 (A)
Extent to which service met expectations (score out of 10)	7.2 (A)	7.5 (G)	7.4 (A)
Very/fairly satisfied with the timeliness of various aspects of the service	54% (R)	58% (R)	60% (R)
Kept very/fairly well informed about the progress of an application or submission	59% (R)	61% (R)	61% (R)
Strongly agree/agree to some extent that sufficient advice and guidance was received to meet needs	63% (R)	67% (A)	69% (A)
Strongly agree/agree to some extent that building standards service staff were polite and courteous	80% (G)	82% (G)	84% (G)
Very/fairly satisfied with the quality of the advice and guidance received from inspection staff	60% (R)	55% (R)	77% (G)
Satisfied with the <u>accuracy</u> of written information (score out of 10)	7.9 (G)	8.1 (G)	8.1 (G)
Satisfied with the <u>quality</u> of written information (score out of 10)	7.8 (G)	8.0 (G)	8.0 (G)
Building standards service staff are accessible if I want to meet them in person	48% (R)	51% (R)	59% (R)
Building standards service staff are approachable	66% (A)	72% (A)	74% (A)

Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

2.Introduction

2.1. Background to the Survey

1. The building standards system in Scotland was established under the Building (Scotland) Act 2003. The Act gives powers to Scottish Ministers to make building regulations, procedure regulations, fees regulations and other supporting legislation as necessary to fulfil the purposes of the Act. The purposes include setting building standards and dealing with dangerous and defective buildings.
2. The remit of the building standards system is to protect the public interest by setting out the standards to be met when building or conversion work takes place, to the extent necessary to meet the building regulations.
3. The standards are intended to:
 - Secure the health, safety, welfare and convenience of persons in or about buildings and of others who may be affected by buildings or matters connected with buildings;
 - Further the conservation of fuel and power; and
 - Further the achievement of sustainable development.
4. The role of the building standards verifier is to protect the public interest by:
 - Providing an independent check of applications for building warrants to construct buildings, provide services, fittings or equipment in buildings, or to convert buildings;
 - Granting or refusing building warrants;
 - Carrying out an independent check of construction activities through the process of reasonable inquiry; and
 - Accepting or rejecting completion certificates.
5. Verifiers are appointed by Scottish Ministers and the Act provides for a variety of verifiers should they be required. At present, the only appointed verifiers are the 32 Scottish local authorities, each covering their own geographical area.
6. In 2011 Pye Tait Consulting, on behalf of the Scottish Government, developed a set of nine national Key Performance Outcomes (KPOs), which were implemented as part of the 'Building Standards Verification Performance Framework' and launched on 1st May 2012. The intention of these was, through more accurate and effective comparisons, to ensure consistency and quality in terms of outputs and overall service, along with a greater focus on peer review, benchmarking and sharing of best practice. Additionally, the KPOs underpinned a strong culture of continuous improvement.
7. In 2013/14 the Scottish Government commissioned Pye Tait Consulting to develop and run the first national customer satisfaction survey for building standards. This was based on the need to obtain nationally consistent data on customer perceptions of their local authority verifier building standards service.

The first survey provided baseline data for trend analysis in subsequent years and was repeated in 2015 and each year since then.⁶

8. This report presents the findings from the 2021 national customer satisfaction survey.

2.2. Changes from May 2017

1. In 2015, the Scottish Government commissioned Pye Tait Consulting to evaluate the performance of local authorities in their role as verifiers,⁷ with an aim to inform Scottish Ministers in the lead-up to the next appointment of verifiers from May 2017. The evaluation identified various considerations including the scope for a review and refresh of the performance framework.
2. In 2016, the Scottish Government completed this review in consultation with Local authority Building Standards Scotland (LABSS) and with independent input from Pye Tait Consulting. The 32 local authorities were re-appointed on 1st May 2017 for varying lengths of time based on their prior performance, some of which were subsequently re-appointed for a further period from 1st May 2020. A full review of appointment periods is planned to be undertaken before 1st May 2023.⁸ The new 'Building Standards Performance Framework for Verifiers' was also implemented from May 2017.⁹
3. Two of the seven new KPOs, categorised under 'Quality Customer Experience', aim to ensure that verifiers adhere to the commitments in the building standards customer charter and meet or exceed customer expectations. The 2021 survey aligns with KPO4 – titled 'Understand and respond to the customer experience'. The purpose of this KPO is for local authority verifiers to monitor customer satisfaction with the building standards service and ensure it meets or exceeds customer expectations.

2.3. Proposed changes for future years

1. In early 2019, the Building Standards Futures Board was established to provide guidance and direction on developing and implementing recommendations made by the Review Panels on Compliance and Enforcement and Fire Safety. The Board's programme of work aims to improve the performance, expertise, resilience, and sustainability of the Scottish building standards system.
2. In 2020, Acorn Learning was commissioned by the Scottish Government to undertake a review of the national customer satisfaction survey. This research

⁶ The Scottish Government (2014) National Customer Satisfaction Survey to Support the New Verification Performance Framework (Phase 2 report). Available at: [Phase 2 Report National Survey Findings](#)

⁷ The Scottish Government (2016) Evaluation of the performance of local authorities in their role as building standards verifiers. Available at: [Evaluation of the performance of local authorities in their role as building standards verifiers](#)

⁸ Further details about the 2017 re-appointment of verifiers are available at: [Monitoring Performance](#)

⁹ The Scottish Government (2017) Building Standards Performance Framework for Verifiers. Available at: [Performance Framework for Verifiers](#)

found that the current satisfaction survey is highly valued and plays a vital role in measuring service quality across Scotland, and the ability to compare performance year-on-year is important. The research did, however, note that there is scope for continuous improvement in the way satisfaction is measured.

3. One Futures Board workstream was the 2021 review of the Operating and Performance Frameworks to assist verifiers in assessing their service against requirements. Reviewing and improving how customer feedback is collected and reported can help to ensure that a modernised, reliable and flexible solution can be found.
4. In 2021, the Scottish Government commissioned Pye Tait Consulting to identify and propose a preferred model which the Scottish Government (Building Standards Division) could use to deliver the national customer survey for building standards.¹⁰ The future model that was proposed as the preferred option, and which has since been taken forward by the Scottish Government for testing and piloting, is a short, sharp survey for customers to complete at one of two stages: at approval of building warrant, or acceptance of the completion certificate. The survey will be rolling/ongoing and is expected to comprise a short set of six to ten questions with one open-text box for comments. This model is intended to be used to evaluate customer satisfaction from 2022 onwards.

2.4. Methodology

1. The 2021 survey questionnaire (a copy is presented in Appendix 2) was shortened compared to the 2020 version. The aims of this were twofold: to remove questions that were no longer fit-for-purpose and to improve the response rate.
2. Questions removed include:
 - For which of the following reasons did you make contact with your local authority verifier Building Standards service?
 - Are you aware of the need to notify the Building Standards service before warrantable work commences?
 - Are you aware of the new Construction Compliance Notification Plan (CCNP) which is issued by the local authority verifier at the same time as the building warrant is granted?
 - Did you have an inspection visit by Building Standards service staff?
 - Have you visited the Building Standards section of the local authority verifier's website?
 - Did you visit the offices of the local authority verifier Building Standards service?
 - How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of the Building Standards service offices?

¹⁰ The Scottish Government (2021) Building standards - verification service: customer experience evaluation - future model. Available at: [Building standards - verification service: customer experience evaluation - future model](#)

3. In addition, a number of small changes were made to existing survey questions to reflect the shift to remote working following the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - A new sub-question was added to the current Q14 to ask for customers' satisfaction with the thoroughness of the virtual inspection; and
 - Two questions in Section 6: Accessibility were revised from "in person" to "in person / virtually".
4. The scope of the survey was all building standards customers between 1st April 2020 and 31st March 2021, defined as:
 - Applicants for building warrants (including any agents);
 - Submitters of completion certificates (including any agents); and
 - Others that have interacted with the building standards service.
5. Local authorities supplied their customers' contact details (name and email address only) to Pye Tait Consulting for the express purpose of being invited to participate in the survey. On advice from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) following GDPR coming into force in May 2018, the national customer satisfaction survey is in the legitimate interests of the buildings standards system and its customers. However, prior to GDPR, customers may have previously opted out of being contacted for the purpose of this survey, and local authorities double-checked with these customers if they still wished to opt out of their details being shared with Pye Tait.
6. The survey opened on 4th October 2021 and closed on 4th November 2021. It was hosted online and customers with email addresses were directly invited by Pye Tait Consulting to participate. Local authorities were also at liberty to promote the survey to their own customers (i.e. those within scope) as appropriate, with some promoting the survey via social media channels.
7. When completing the survey, customers were presented with a link relating to the specific local authority verifier to which their response related. Customers of multiple local authorities were presented with links for each local authority verifier of which they had been a customer and thus could complete the survey multiple times, once for each local authority verifier.

2.5. A note about the analysis

1. For most survey questions, the findings contained within this report have been cross-tabulated by type of customer (see Figure 3.2.a). It should be noted that the findings have not been subject to statistical tests to determine the significance of any apparent patterns and should therefore be treated as indicative. Percentages shown in charts and tables may not add up to precisely 100% due to the impact of rounding.
2. Certain charts in this report refer to a base number of 'respondents' (meaning total customers answering that particular survey question) and others refer to a base number of 'responses' (total boxes ticked for survey questions where customers could choose more than one answer).

3. Achieved sample and respondent profile

3.1. Total Survey Responses

1. Total survey responses for Scotland (including the national survey response rate) are shown in Table 3.1.a

Table 3.1.a Achieved sample and response rate

A	Number of customer email addresses supplied by local authorities to Pye Tait Consulting	27,519*
B	Of these – number of unique customers invited to participate in the survey:	22,493†
C	Total survey responses for Scotland:	3,259‡
	Response rate for Scotland (C as a percentage of B):	14.5%

Notes For comparison purposes, the national response rate in 2020 was 14.5%. However, higher volumes of customer email addresses were supplied by local authorities this year than in 2020, resulting in the highest number of responses to date since the survey was first run.

* This number includes repeat email addresses, i.e. where the same customer's details were supplied by more than one local authority verifier.

† This number follows a de-duplication of repeat email addresses supplied by more than one local authority verifier.

‡ Customers attributed their survey responses to a particular local authority verifier. Respondents could complete the survey more than once to provide feedback about more than one local authority verifier if they had been a customer of multiple local authorities.

Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

2. A breakdown of the achieved sample and response rates by local authority verifier is provided in Table 3.1.b.
3. The response rate for Scotland is not directly comparable with individual local authority verifier response rates. This is because the response rate for Scotland is based on total unique customers on a national level (i.e. following a de-duplication exercise) whereas the response rate for each local authority verifier is based on total email addresses supplied by that local authority verifier.

Table 3.1.b Achieved sample and response rate by local authority verifier

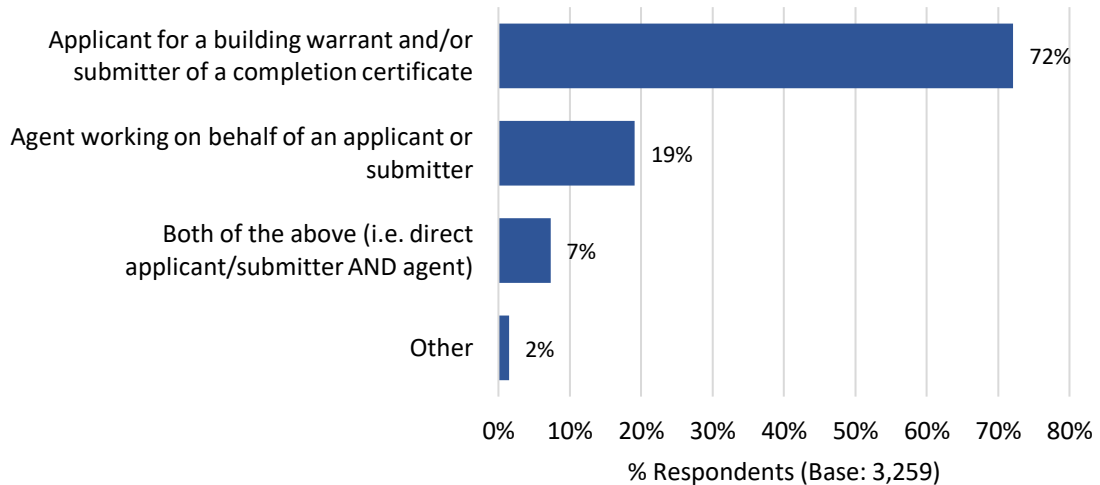
Local authority verifier	A – Total email addresses* (number)	B – Total unique email addresses† (number)	C – Survey responses attributed to local authority verifier‡ (number)	Response rate§ (percentage)
Aberdeen City	777	541	84	10.8%
Aberdeenshire	1,766	1,508	223	12.6%
Angus	326	295	49	15.0%
Argyll and Bute	702	515	97	13.8%
City of Edinburgh	3,212	2,525	389	12.1%
Clackmannanshire	281	176	41	14.6%
Dumfries and Galloway	216	187	26	12.0%
Dundee City	353	260	62	17.6%
East Ayrshire	547	413	60	11.0%
East Dunbartonshire	534	431	62	11.6%
East Lothian	1,061	744	124	11.7%
East Renfrewshire	213	59	20	9.4%
Eilean Siar	802	511	76	9.5%
Falkirk	620	423	81	13.1%
Fife	1,748	1,372	207	11.8%
Glasgow City	1,104	470	77	7.0%
Highland	1,599	1,363	213	13.3%
Inverclyde	213	142	26	12.2%
Midlothian	768	532	83	10.8%
Moray	707	577	100	14.1%
North Ayrshire	671	485	80	11.9%
North Lanarkshire	1,925	1,429	182	9.5%
Orkney	325	311	46	14.2%

Local authority verifier	A – Total email addresses* (number)	B – Total unique email addresses† (number)	C – Survey responses attributed to local authority verifier‡ (number)	Response rate§ (percentage)
Perth and Kinross	226	209	32	14.2%
Renfrewshire	1,172	823	119	10.2%
Scottish Borders	480	304	63	13.1%
Shetland	174	163	33	19.0%
South Ayrshire	683	502	65	9.5%
South Lanarkshire	1,967	1,445	218	11.1%
Stirling	708	486	118	16.7%
West Dunbartonshire	500	329	59	11.8%
West Lothian	1,139	829	144	12.6%
Customers of multiple local authorities	Included in above totals	+2,134	N/A	N/A
TOTAL	27,519	22,493	3,259	14.5%**
Notes	<p>* Supplied by local authorities to Pye Tait Consulting</p> <p>** The total Scotland response rate is determined by calculating column C as a percentage of B.</p> <p>† Unique to this local authority verifier (i.e. not supplied by any other)</p> <p>‡ Self-selected by the customer</p> <p>§ Actual responses attributed to each local authority verifier (C) as a % of total email addresses supplied by that local authority verifier (A)</p>			
Source	Pye Tait Consulting, 2021			

3.2. Respondent Profile

1. The majority of customers responding to the survey (72%) were Direct applicants for building warrants and/or submitters of completion certificates¹¹ in the 2020/21 financial year (the period in scope of the survey). A fifth (19%) were agents acting on behalf of applicants, 7% were both of the above, and the remaining 2% fell outside of these categories (Figure 3.2.a).

Figure 3.2.a Customer Type

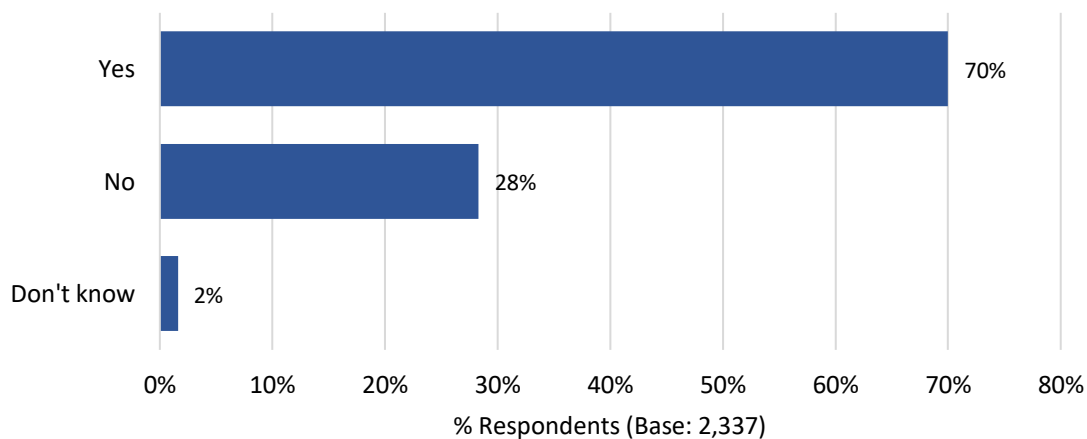


Note Proportions in some tables and figures may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

2. Among Direct applicants, over two thirds (70%) confirmed that they used an agent to act on their behalf as part of the application process (Figure 3.2.b).

Figure 3.2.b Use of an agent (direct applicants/submitters only)

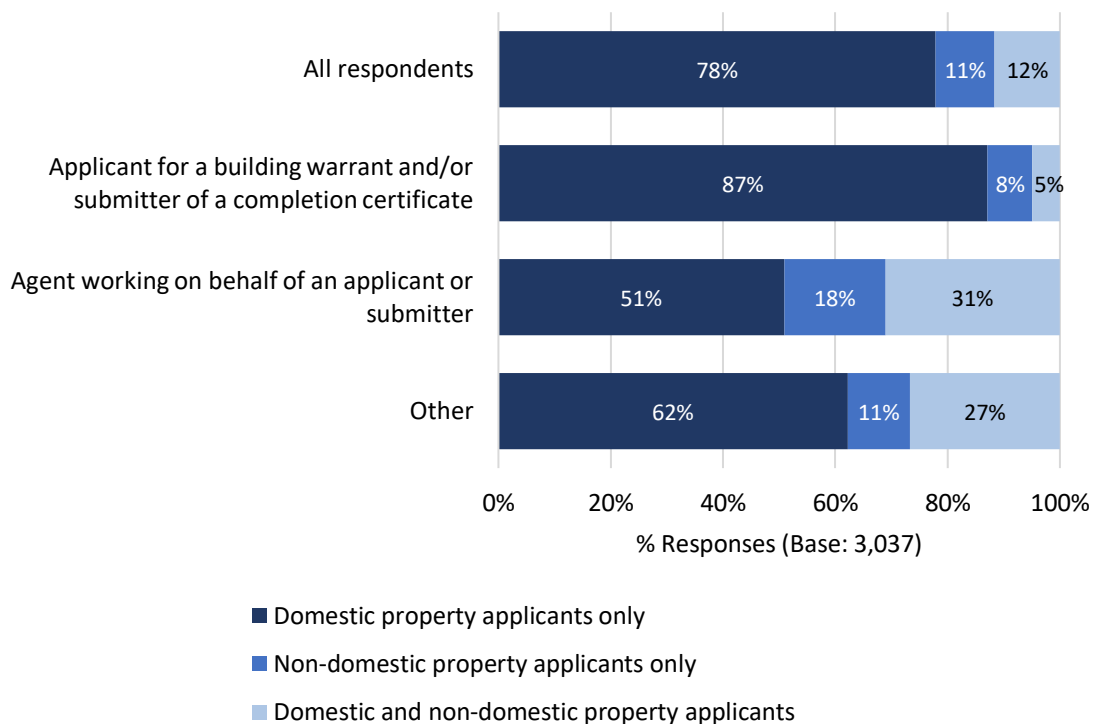


Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

¹¹ From this point forward the term 'Direct applicants' is used for ease of reference when referring to Direct applicants for building warrant and/or direct submitters of completion certificates.

3. All customers were asked to state the category (or categories) of work for which they had submitted an application. The majority of customers (80%) had submitted applications for domestic work only, 10% submitted applications for non-domestic work only, and 11% submitted applications for both domestic and non-domestic work.
4. Direct applicants responding to the survey were primarily domestic customers of the building standards system, whereas agents spanned a mix of domestic only, commercial only, and combined (domestic and commercial) customers (Figure 3.2.c).

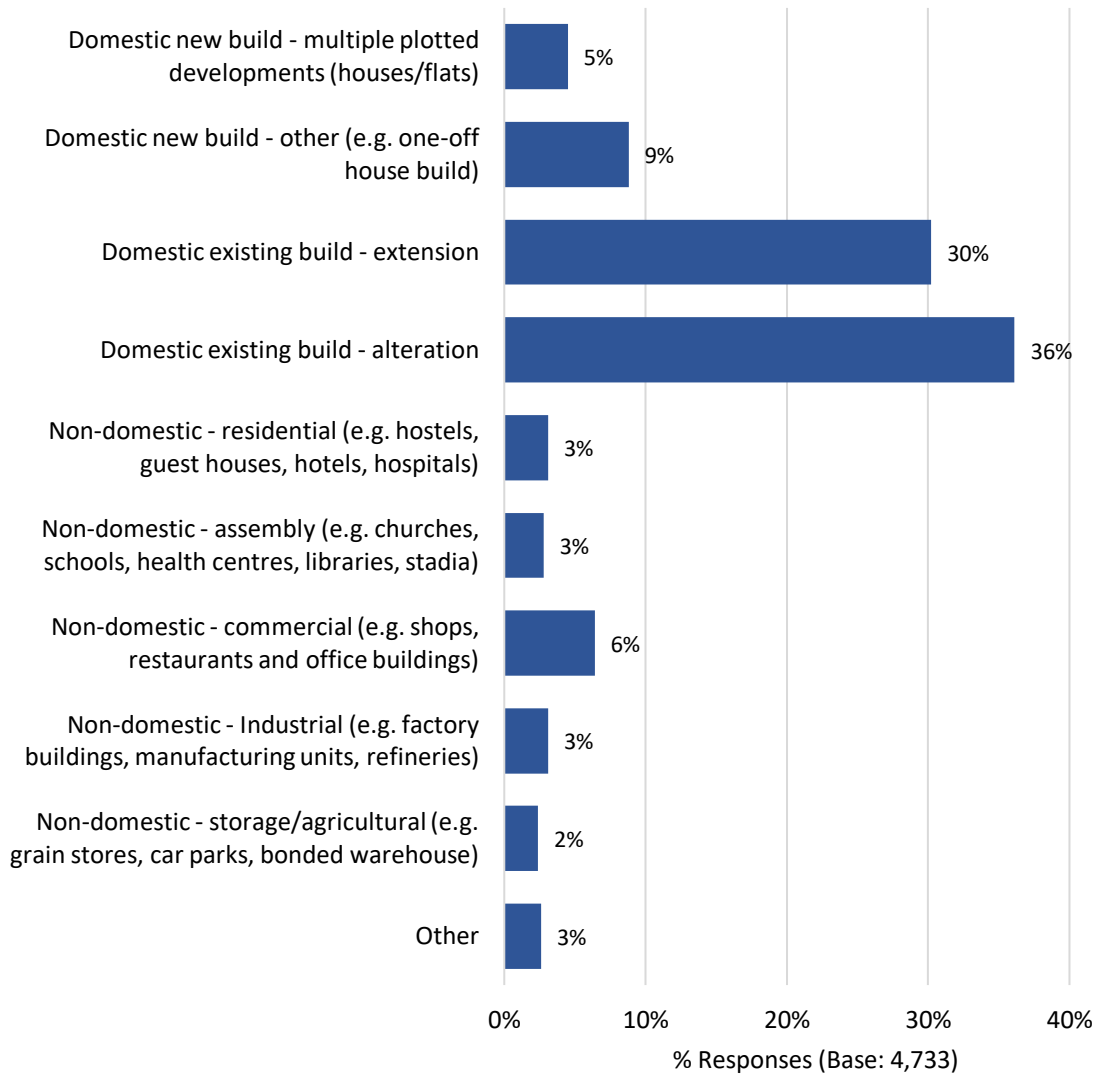
Figure 3.2.c Customer type by category of application



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

5. A more detailed breakdown of the categories of building work for which surveyed customers had applied, is shown in Figure 3.2.d.
6. Applications relating to 'Domestic existing build' (either alterations or extensions) account for the majority (66%) of responses.

Figure 3.2.d Categories of building work



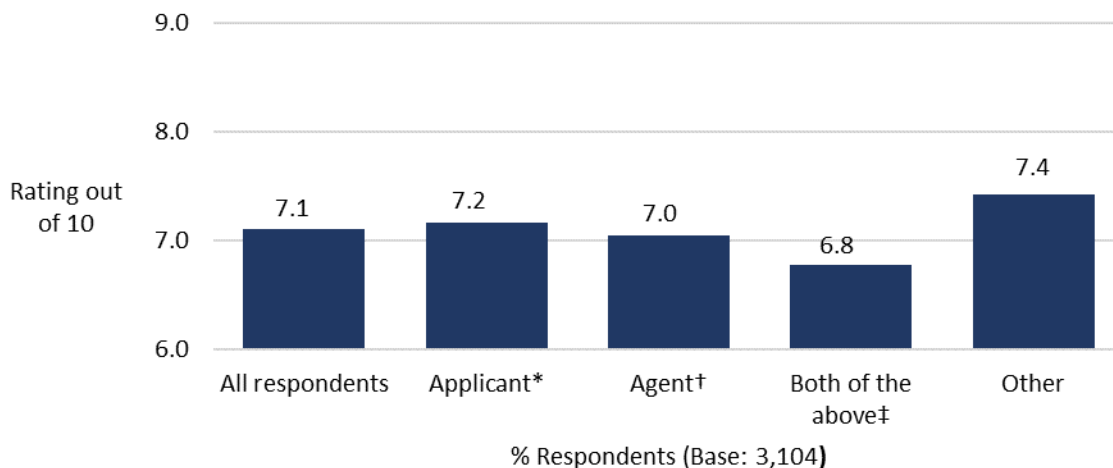
Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

4. Overall satisfaction

4.1. Overall satisfaction with the building standards service

1. Surveyed customers were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the local authority verifier building standards service on a scale from 1 'not at all satisfied' to 10 'completely satisfied'.
2. The overall average rating is 7.1 out of 10. This is slightly lower than 7.5 in 2020 and 7.4 in 2019. The most common (modal) rating was the perfect mark of 10 out of 10 (Figure 4.1.a).
3. Direct applicants are slightly more satisfied than agents, although the gap between the two remains close. The average applicant rating stands at 7.2 (a decrease from 7.5 in 2020) while the average agent rating has decreased to 7.0 (from 7.5 in 2020 and a return to the 2019 level of 7.0).

Figure 4.1.a Overall satisfaction with the building standards service



Notes * Applicant for a building warrant and/or submitter of a completion certificate
† Agent working on behalf of an applicant or submitter
‡ Both of the above (i.e. direct applicant/submitter AND agent)

Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

4. Average ratings differ very slightly by type of application, being 7.1 for domestic customers only and non-domestic customers only, and 6.9 for mixed (domestic and non-domestic) customers.
5. The overall satisfaction within each local authority verifier is displayed in Table 4.1.a. Average scores range between 5.5 and 8.7. Just under half of all local authorities (15) score 7.5 or above; six local authorities score below 6.5, and 11 score between 6.5 and 7.4 (inclusive). Most local authorities (23 of 32) have seen a fall in satisfaction levels, with six increasing their scores from 2020, and three retaining similar scores to last year.

Table 4.1.a Legend for table 4.1.b

Key	Numerical rating questions	Percentage questions
Green (G)	7.5 and higher	75% and higher
Amber (A)	Between 6.5 and 7.4	Between 65% and 74%
Red (R)	6.4 and below	64% and below

Note that the colour-coding metrics used reflect The Scottish Government's updated performance measurement requirements

Table 4.1.b Overall satisfaction with Building Standards service by local authority verifier

Local authority verifier	Overall satisfaction score 2021	Overall satisfaction score 2020	Overall satisfaction score 2019
Aberdeen City	8.1 (G)	8.3 (G)	8.0 (G)
Aberdeenshire	8.2 (G)	8.3 (G)	8.6 (G)
Angus	8.0 (G)	8.5 (G)	8.9 (G)
Argyll and Bute	8.0 (G)	8.6 (G)	8.5 (G)
City of Edinburgh	5.5 (R)	6.2 (R)	5.4 (R)
Clackmannanshire	8.0 (G)	8.4 (G)	8.9 (G)
Dumfries and Galloway	8.2 (G)	7.9 (G)	7.1 (A)
Dundee City	6.5 (A)	7.4 (A)	7.6 (G)
East Ayrshire	7.9 (G)	8.7 (G)	8.2 (G)
East Dunbartonshire	6.3 (R)	6.9 (A)	4.8 (R)
East Lothian	7.4 (A)	7.4 (A)	6.9 (A)
East Renfrewshire	7.6 (G)	8.0 (G)	8.1 (G)
Eilean Siar	8.7 (G)	8.6 (G)	8.5 (G)
Falkirk	7.4 (A)	7.4 (A)	7.9 (G)
Fife	7.2 (A)	7.6 (G)	7.5 (G)
Glasgow City	5.7 (R)	6.2 (R)	5.4 (R)
Highland	7.3 (A)	7.6 (G)	7.7 (G)

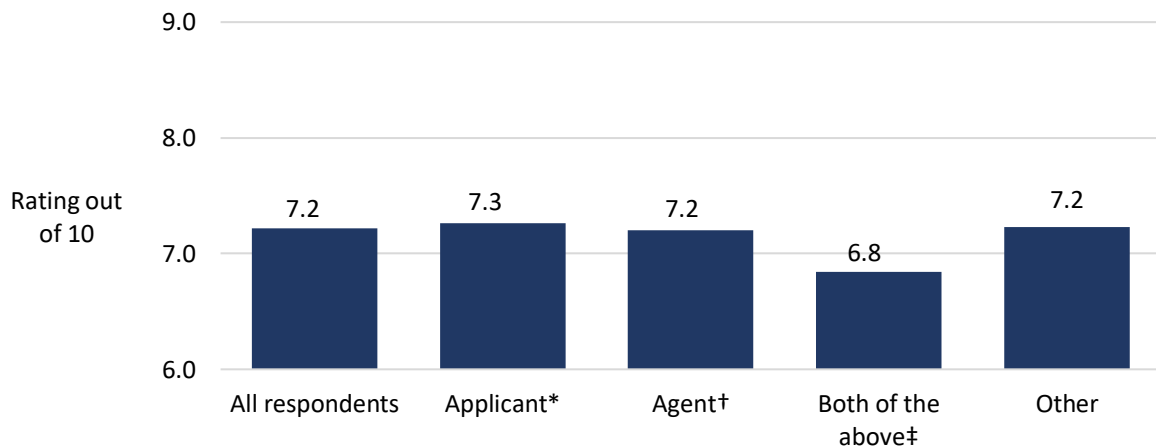
Local authority verifier	Overall satisfaction score 2021	Overall satisfaction score 2020	Overall satisfaction score 2019
Inverclyde	6.9 (A)	5.9 (R)	6.3 (R)
Midlothian	7.8 (G)	7.8 (G)	8.8 (G)
Moray	8.0 (G)	7.7 (G)	8.0 (G)
North Ayrshire	8.0 (G)	7.8 (G)	8.6 (G)
North Lanarkshire	6.2 (R)	7.4 (A)	7.5 (G)
Orkney	7.6 (G)	8.2 (G)	8.6 (G)
Perth and Kinross	7.4 (A)	8.1 (G)	8.3 (G)
Renfrewshire	5.9 (R)	6.7 (A)	7.2 (A)
Scottish Borders	6.7 (A)	7.5 (G)	7.4 (A)
Shetland	6.7 (A)	8.2 (G)	7.6 (G)
South Ayrshire	6.5 (A)	7.8 (G)	7.7 (G)
South Lanarkshire	8.0 (G)	8.4 (G)	8.0 (G)
Stirling	6.9 (A)	7.3 (A)	7.4 (A)
West Dunbartonshire	6.1 (R)	6.2 (R)	8.1 (G)
West Lothian	8.2 (G)	8.1 (G)	8.7 (G)
SCOTLAND*	7.1 (A)	7.5 (G)	7.4 (A)
Notes	* National comparison for ease of reference.		
Source	Pye Tait Consulting, 2021		

5.Meeting expectations

5.1. Meeting Expectations Introduction

1. Surveyed customers rated the extent to which they felt the local authority verifier building standards service had met their expectations, on a scale from 1 'not at all' to 10 'completely'.
2. On the whole, expectations appear to have been reasonably well met, with customers returning an average rating of 7.2 out of 10. This is a slight decrease from an average rating of 7.5 in 2020. The most common (modal) rating was the perfect mark of 10 out of 10 (Figure 5.1.a).
3. As with the scores for overall satisfaction, the difference between agents and direct applicants is small and the extent to which service meets expectation is very slightly higher for direct applicants compared to agents. The average applicant rating is 7.3 (a decrease from 7.5 in 2020) while the average agent rating is 7.2 (a decrease from 7.6 in 2020).

Figure 5.1.a Extent to which service met expectations



% Respondents (Base: 3,259)

Notes * Applicant

† Agent working on behalf of an applicant or submitter

‡ Both of the above (i.e. direct applicant/submitter AND agent)

Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

4. Average ratings differ very slightly by type of application, being 7.2 for domestic customers, 7.3 for non-domestic customers and 7.0 for mixed (domestic and non-domestic) customers.

5. Respondents were asked to provide a reason for their rating in response to this question. Analysis involved ordering all responses from highest to lowest score, then dividing them into approximate thirds based on the number of respondents:
 - The 'top group' (748 respondents) gave a perfect rating of 10;
 - The 'middle group' (806 respondents) gave a rating of 8 or 9; and
 - The 'bottom group' (1,250 respondents) gave a rating between 1 and 7.

5.2. Reasons for Rating 10 Out of 10

1. The most common reasons for customers providing a rating of 10 out of 10 include:
 - Smooth, prompt, and efficient application process;
 - Communications being prompt, clear, and regular, despite Covid-19;
 - Excellent service from officers, helpful and courteous; and,
 - Encountering no issues or problems throughout their application.
2. As was the case in 2020, these customers complimented the speed of service, the general helpfulness and supportive staff members, and the clear and prompt communications throughout the application process. Many respondents were also pleased with the efficient process despite the effects of the pandemic. A number of respondents also indicated that though it was their first time through the process, it was easy to understand with clear directions.

“Very helpful as first time doing the process and they answered all my queries quickly and corrected me when I made mistakes.” (Direct applicant)

“Very understanding of my unfamiliarity with the system and the ongoing pressures relating to the pandemic.” (Direct applicant)

“Excellent communications and good dialogue/willingness to communicate/correspond via emails even through pandemic lockdowns when staff were obviously isolated and/or working in restricted numbers with high workload.” (Agent)

5.3. Reasons for Rating 8 or 9 Out of 10

1. Most common reasons given for a rating of 8 or 9 out of 10:
 - Generally, a good, efficient service, supported by prompt and pragmatic communications and guidance;
 - Courteous, knowledgeable, and helpful staff; and
 - No significant issues were encountered during the process.
2. Negative points generally indicated a desire for faster turnaround in the process or that there were delays in the process or in communication. Respondents generally acknowledged and appreciated that delays were likely due to Covid-19. Whilst a small number of respondents explicitly indicated they received a clear response to their query from the building standards service, a small minority mentioned problems with unclear or confusing information. Fewer than ten

respondents indicated that the portal was confusing and cumbersome to navigate, especially when they were not used to it.

“The department communicated with me well during my application process, the staff were always pleasant and efficient.” (Direct applicant)

“The process was slightly slow but appreciate Covid-19 may well have impacted the teams as it has in many other industries.” (Direct applicant)

“While I believe the applications are dealt with in a timely manner, I have encountered problems with obtaining Completion Certificates as Officers cannot make site visits, which has been reasonable during the past months but not anymore. This causes delays in closing the process.” (Agent)

5.4. Issues Raised by Respondents Providing Ratings of 1 to 7 Out of 10

1. The issues raised by respondents giving comparatively lower ratings are similar to previous years. These include “lengthy” timescales taken by local authorities to respond to customer requests and process applications; difficulties faced in being able to contact the building standards service; and apparent inconsistencies in the quality of service both within and between local authorities. A small number of respondents also noted they found the online portal difficult to use, noting it to be “clunky”, “difficult to navigate”, and “cumbersome” in some instances.

“Covid-19 has impacted service but communications are extremely poor with officers working at home and near impossible to get contact. Very frustrating for architects and builders.” (Agent)

“The building standards services on the whole met our expectations but in some cases were rather slow in parts.” (Direct applicant)

“The score could be improved if Building Standard Officers were more contactable by telephone or responded to emails quicker. I would however add that this comment does not apply to all officers.” (Agent)

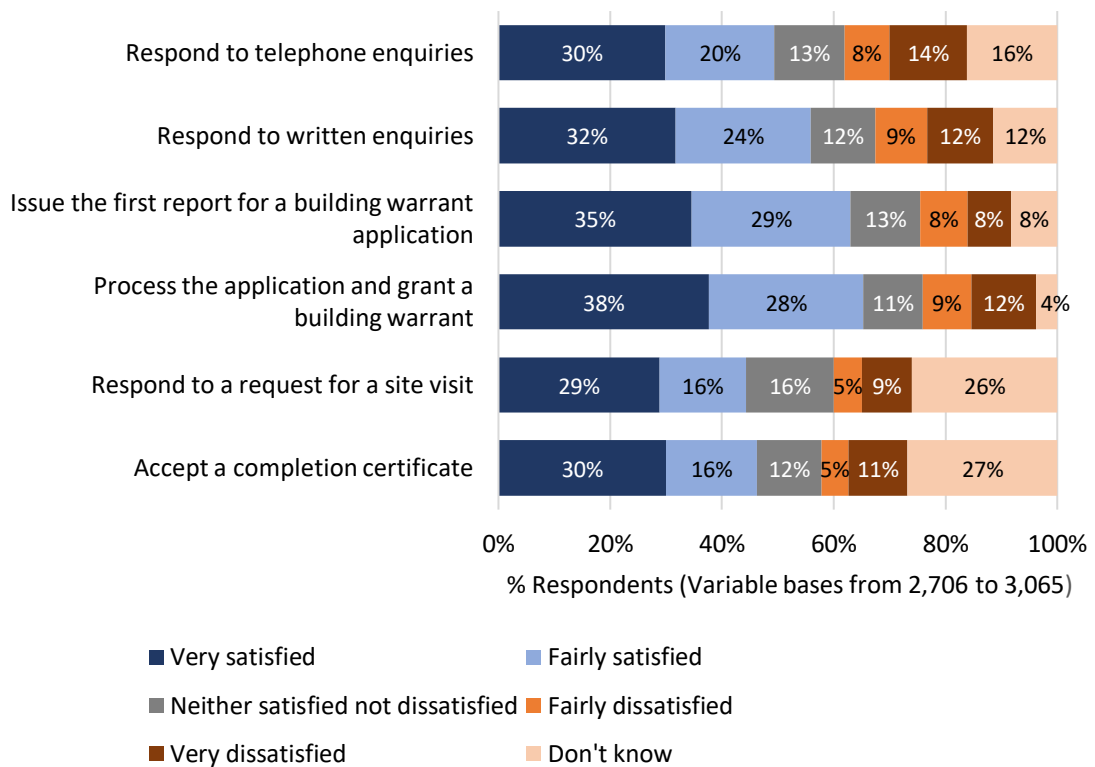
“The online form is not very easy to navigate around, however the officer/case officer helped out on many aspects not known to regular users.” (Direct applicant & Agent)

6. Timeliness and keeping customers informed

6.1. Timeliness

1. Just over half of customers (54%) are satisfied with the timeliness of various aspects of the service they received, which is a continued decrease from 58% in 2020 and 60% in 2019.
2. Among the 18% of dissatisfied customers, most highlighted 'responding to telephone enquiries' as the reason for a negative rating (Figure 6.1.a).

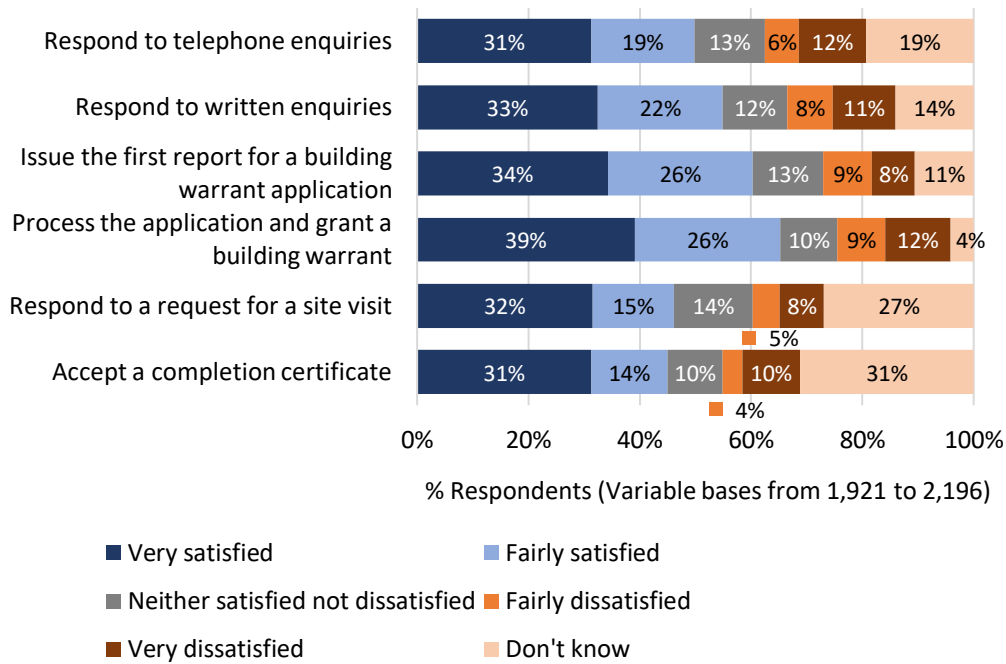
Figure 6.1.a Timeliness of service aspects (all customers)



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

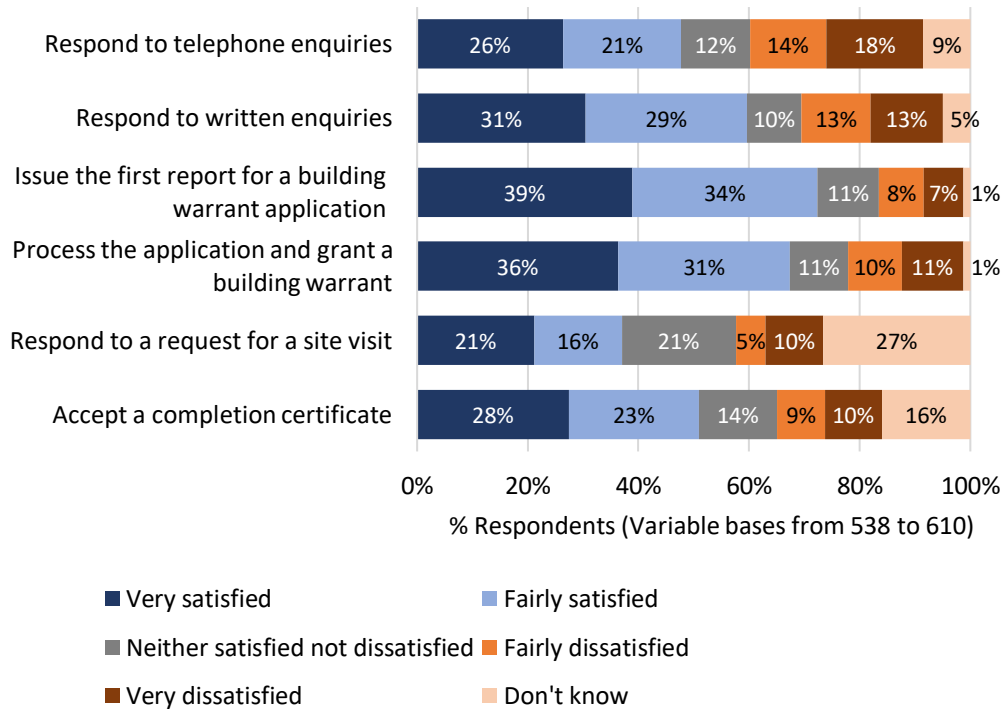
3. Similar to 2020, agents responding to the survey are more satisfied than direct applicants with respect to the timeliness of various aspects of the service. Agents are more satisfied than Direct applicants with most aspects, although applicants are more satisfied with the timeliness of 'Response to telephone enquiries' and 'Responding to a request for a site visit' – an identical finding to 2020.
4. The 2021 breakdowns by applicants and agent are shown in Figures 6.1.b and 6.1.c, below.

Figure 6.1.b Timeliness of service aspects (Direct applicants/submitters)



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

Figure 6.1.c Timeliness of service aspects (agents)

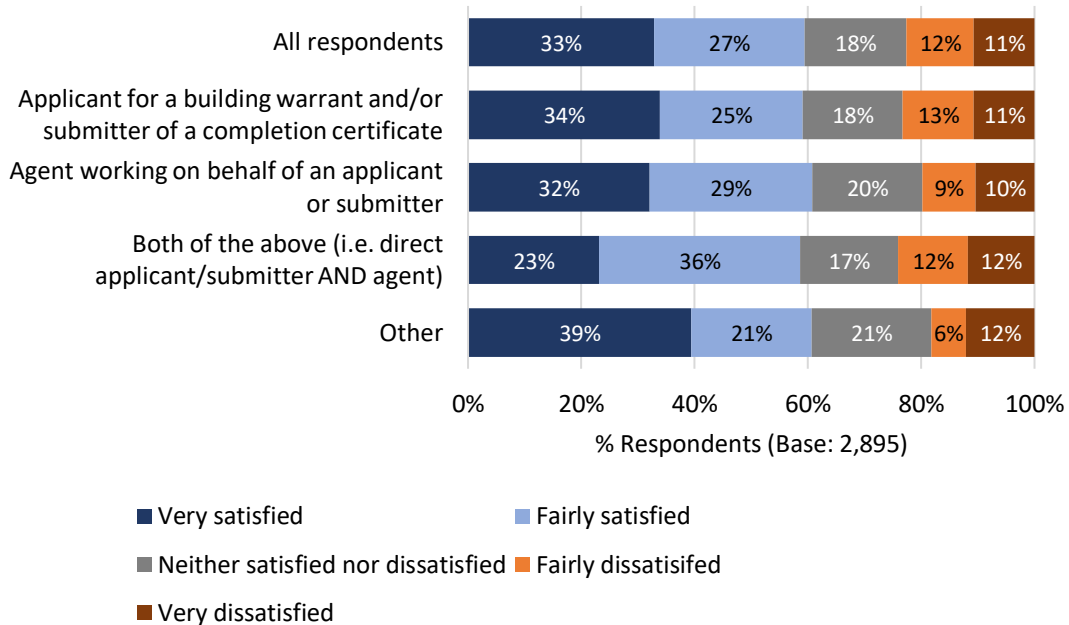


Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

6.2. Keeping Customers Informed

1. Just under three in five surveyed customers (59%) are satisfied with the way they were kept informed about the progress of their application or submission. This is a slight decrease from 61% in 2020. Around one in five customers (22%) are not satisfied and this is highest among applicants (Figure 6.2.a). This is a slight increase compared to 2020 (20%) and similar to 2019 levels, but a marked improvement from the 32% not satisfied in 2017, and 27% not satisfied in 2018.

Figure 6.2.a Satisfaction with the way kept informed



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

2. Respondents stating 'fairly dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' were asked to provide supporting reasons and 591 comments were received. These customers primarily cited lengthy waiting times to complete the process and difficulties communicating or using the online portal. This was consistent across agents and direct applicants.
3. The main reported issues include slow, inadequate, and sometimes unhelpful communications, with limited interaction and guidance from local authorities on progress. Customer perceptions were that lack of resources or mismanaged staff were the main causes of issues. Staff absence due to sickness, Covid-19, and the online portal are also commonly cited as problems in the communications process.

"No communication with us at all. We had to keep chasing the representative, constant excuses. Wasted almost a full year trying to get a completion certificate just for a garage conversion. Simply not acceptable."
(Direct applicant)

"The lockdown and officers not being able to be contacted by phone. Very challenging to get advice for this one of process."
(Direct applicant)

“Queries were often written in difficult to understand language, difficult to contact a BCO in person, and huge delays from issuing updated/revised information to obtaining the warrant or a further response.” (Agent)

“No idea how to use the [online] system and it isn't very user friendly. We couldn't progress our application because of the information required and this wasn't easily obtained but no one could tell us or advise us about what to do. We haven't been able to progress our application for over a year.” (Direct applicant)

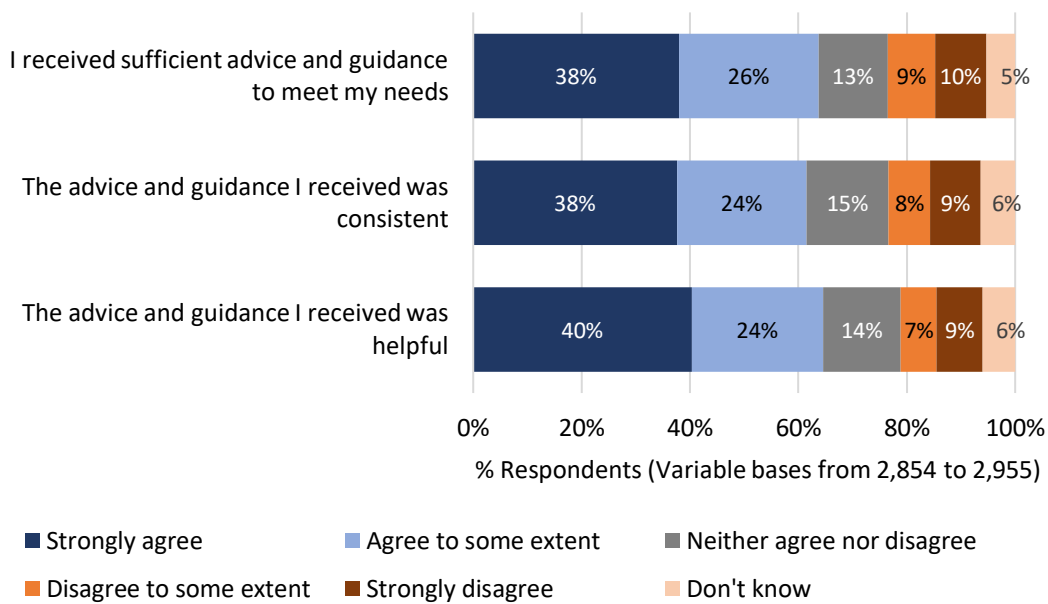
“My most recent application had not progressed and we weren't advised what was still outstanding. After chasing Building Control by email and telephone several times, I spoke to an admin worker who could see they were looking for engineer's design calculations. Until then, we hadn't been made aware of this outstanding information, and the only written communication I received was a letter later, stating our warrant would be refused if we didn't provide this information as previously requested - which it wasn't. I am finding I have to chase up on progress, I never receive an update otherwise, just threatening letters. I again believe this is a sign that BCOs are overstretched and are struggling to put anything in writing as the application progresses.” (Agent)

7. Quality of service

7.1. Advice, Guidance, and Staff Service

1. Just under two in three surveyed customers (64%) agree that they received sufficient advice and guidance from the local authority verifier building standards service. This is a slight decrease from 67% in 2020 and 69% in 2019. A majority of 61% feel the advice and guidance they received was consistent and 65% found it generally helpful (Figure 7.1.a).

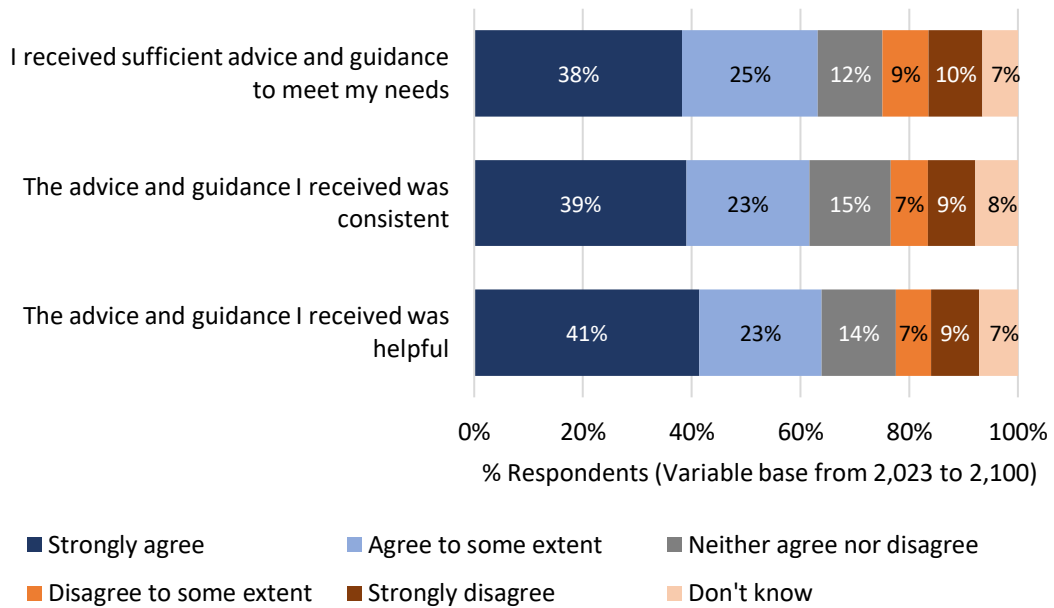
Figure 7.1.a Quality of advice and guidance received (all customers)



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

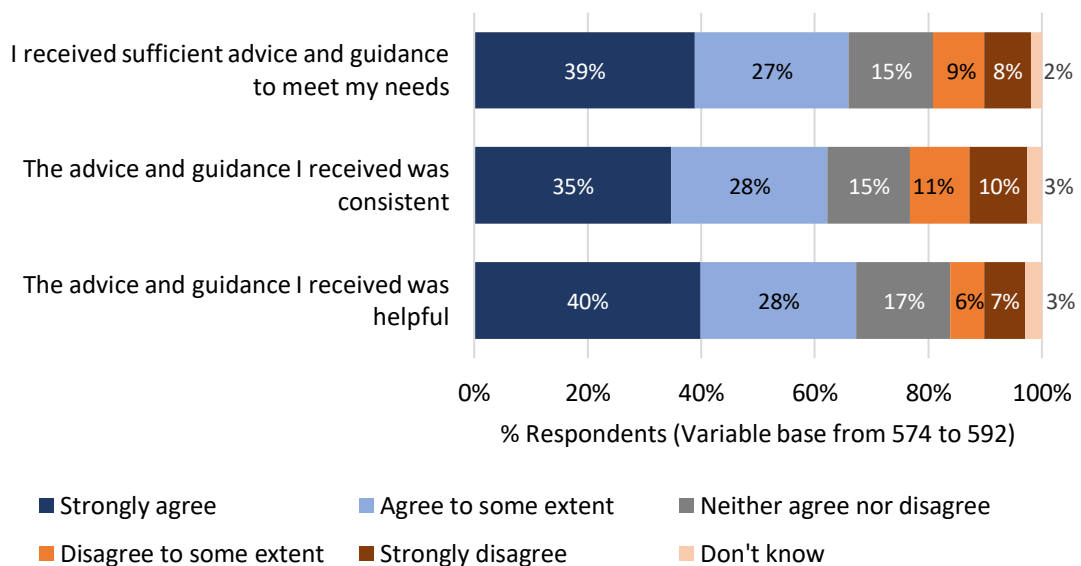
2. The strength of satisfaction is slightly higher among agents than among applicants, with around two thirds of agents (65%) being generally satisfied with the quality of advice and guidance received, compared to 63% of applicants (Figures 7.1.b and 7.1.c, respectively).

Figure 7.1.b Quality of advice and guidance received (direct applicants/submitters only)



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

Figure 7.1.c Quality of advice and guidance received (agents only)



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

- The majority of customers (80%) agree that building standards staff were polite and courteous, which is 2% lower than in 2020. The strongest areas of disagreement relate to feeling valued as a customer (25% disagree) and feeling that someone took ownership of the enquiry (20% disagree) – Figure 7.1.d.

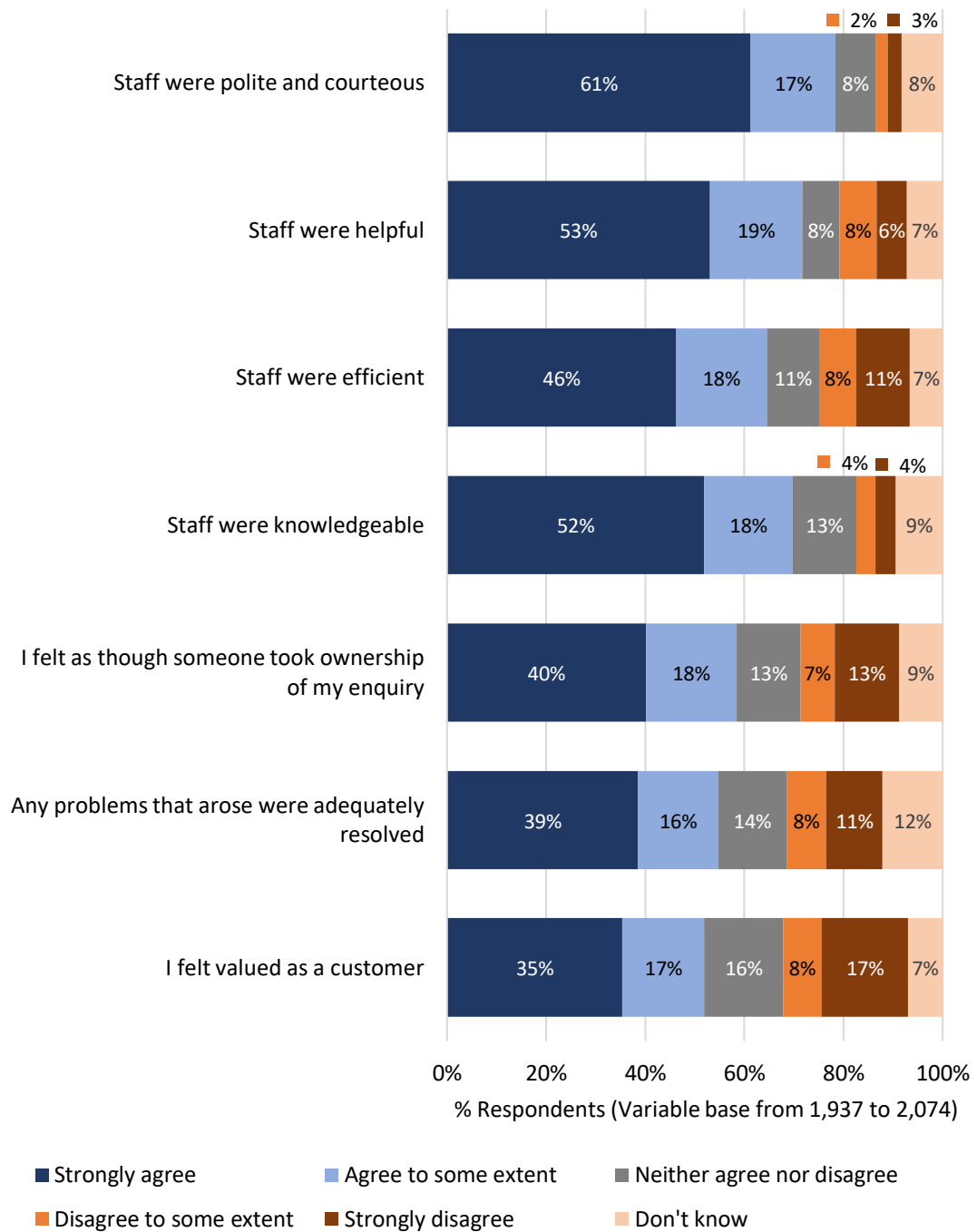
Figure 7.1.d Quality of staff service



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

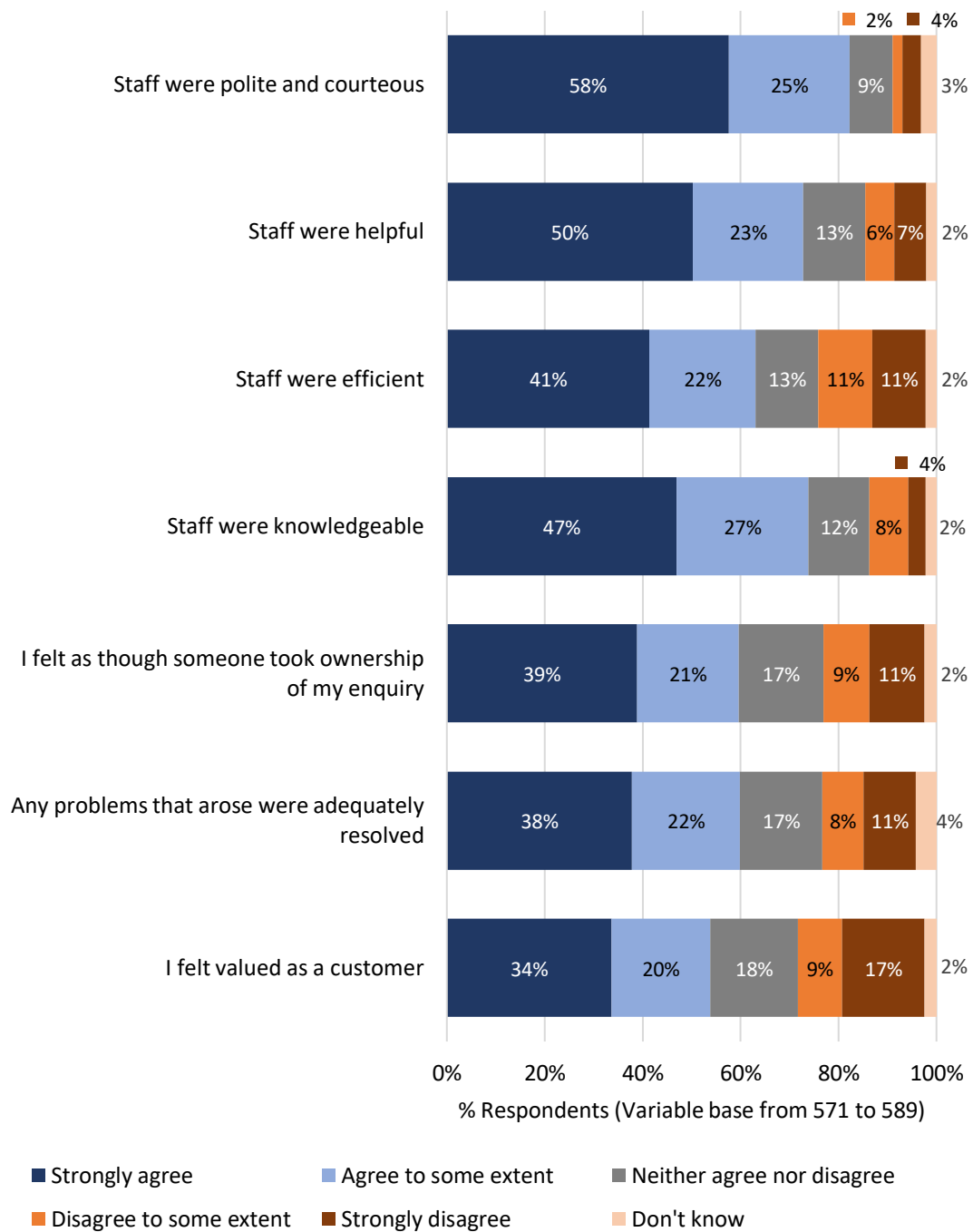
4. The strength of satisfaction follows a similar pattern between applicants and agents, with slightly higher proportions of agents agreeing (Figures 7.1.e and 7.1.f, respectively).

Figure 7.1.e Quality of Staff Service (Direct Applicants/submitters only)



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

Figure 7.1.f Quality of staff service (agents only)



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

5. Customers strongly agreeing and/or strongly disagreeing with at least one of the above statements were asked to provide their reasons.

7.2. Customers Stating 'Strongly Agree'

1. A total of 1,610 customers provided supporting reasons. The most common adjectives given to describe staff (from most to least cited) are as follows: Helpful, Quick, Polite, Responsive, Clear, Knowledgeable, Professional, Friendly, Excellent, Prompt, and Approachable.

2. Some respondents indicated that they were expecting more delays due to the pandemic and that staff went above and beyond in communicating requirements and adjustments in the process for Covid-19. Alongside this, a small number of respondents, both agents and direct applicants, commended building standards staff for being consistent in their interpretation of standards, as well as assisting the customer in understanding complicated jargon, or being proactive in resolving issues such as queries, limitations, or restrictions.

“Admin staff went over and above the minimum standards required to enable me to progress my application expeditiously”. (Direct applicant)

“Advice was always concise and clear. Guidance was freely given as and when/where required. Quality of Service is exactly as I would expect.” (Direct applicant and agent)

“Always happy to help and respond even through Covid-19 when it was clearly challenging to be able to continue to deliver services.” (Direct applicant)

“Building control officer was extremely useful and helpful. He went out of his way to help when asked for advice.” (Agent)

7.3. Customers Stating ‘Strongly Disagree’

1. A total of 585 customers provided supporting explanations for their disagreement. Most reiterated concerns raised previously, including lack of responsiveness to queries, inaccessible staff, inefficiency, and inconsistency in the quality of service between different officers in a single local authority verifier, or between verifiers.

“Conflicting information given. The individual dealing with our planning application was unhelpful and we felt personal preferences of the planning officer were contrary to local planning policy.” (Direct applicant)

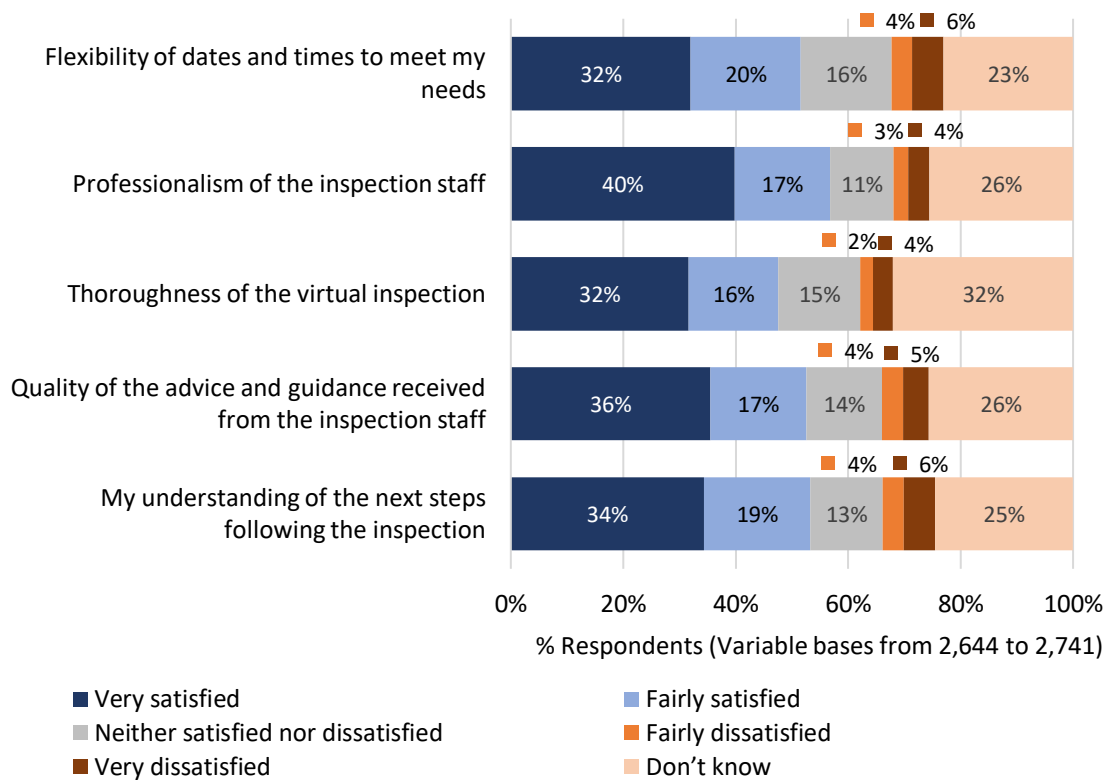
“The process has taken far too long because of the response times.” (Direct applicant)

“During this Covid-19 pandemic period contact with officers was lost due to basically no phone contact and very intermittent emails response.” (Agent)

7.4. Inspection Visits

1. Questioned about aspects of any inspection visit that had taken place, just over half (52% on average) were satisfied with various specific aspects of the visit (Figure 7.4.a). Whilst this is a large drop from 84% in 2020 and 2019, there has been a notable increase in the proportion of “don’t know” responses, likely reflecting that this question may not have been applicable if site visits had not taken place due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

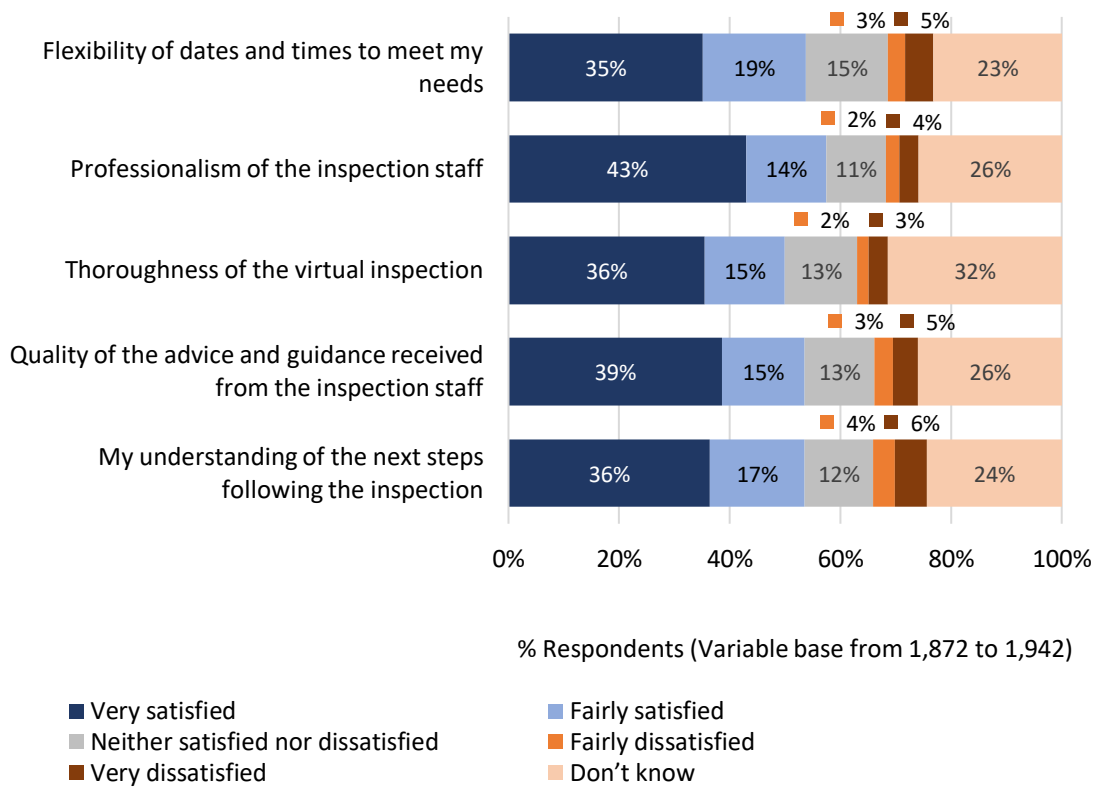
Figure 7.4.a Satisfaction with inspection visits (all customers)



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

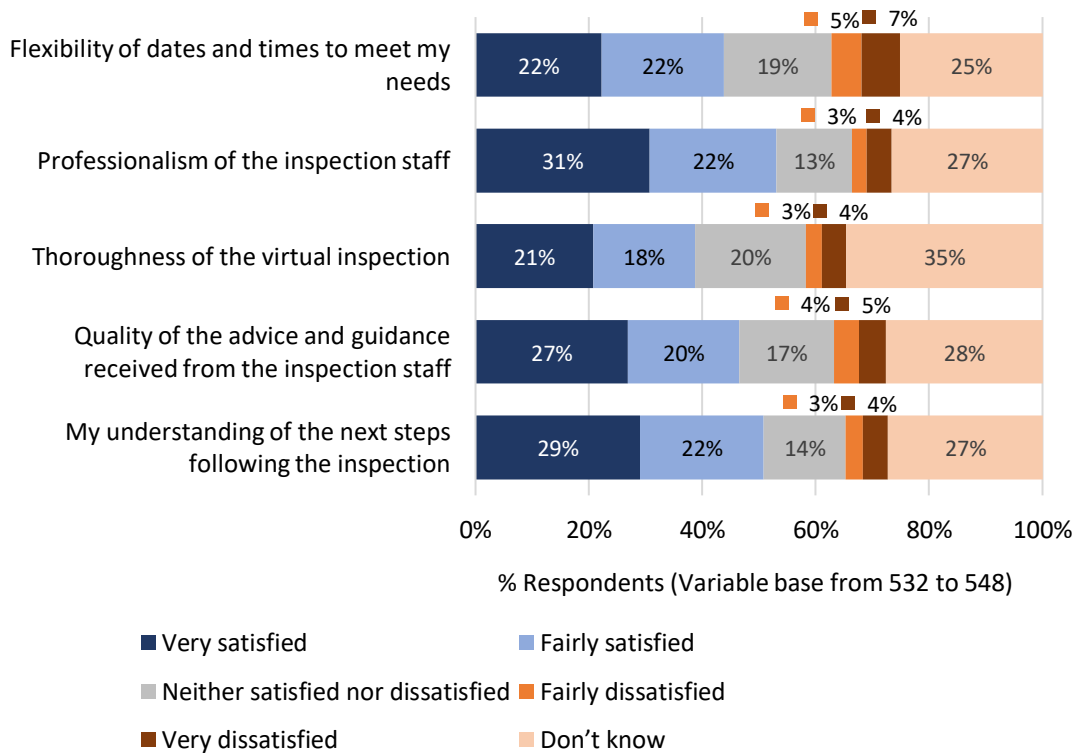
- Satisfaction levels are higher among direct applicants (54% on average) than agents (47% on average) (Figures 7.4.b and 7.4.c, respectively).

Figure 7.4.b Satisfaction with inspection visits (direct applicants/submitters)



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

Figure 7.4.c Satisfaction with inspection visits (agents)



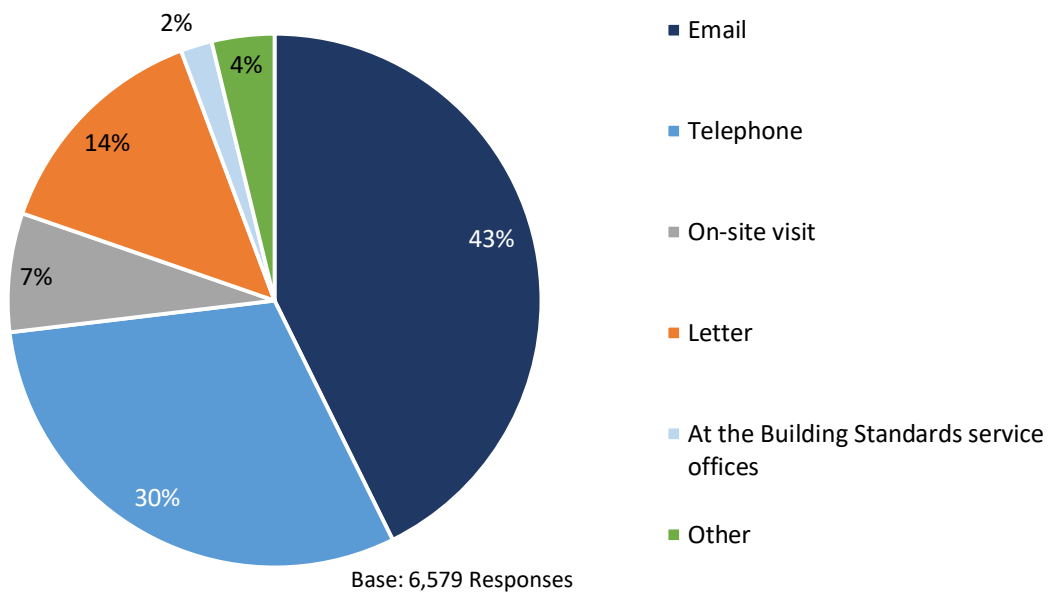
Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

8. Communications

8.1. Channels of Communication

1. Surveyed customers interact with local authority verifier building standards using a variety of channels. Email and telephone communications are the most popular forms (together accounting for 73% of responses) followed by on-site visits and hard-copy letters (Figure 8.1.a). These results are similar to previous years, although email has become slightly more commonplace, while interactions at Building Standards offices have dropped from 6% in 2020 to 2% in 2021.
2. On average, customers reported using 2.1 channels of communication and the proportional mix is broadly similar between applicants and agents, although direct applicants are more likely to interact via an on-site visit (15%) compared to agents (9%), while agents are more likely to use a telephone approach (34%) compared to applicants (29%).

Figure 8.1.a Channels of interaction



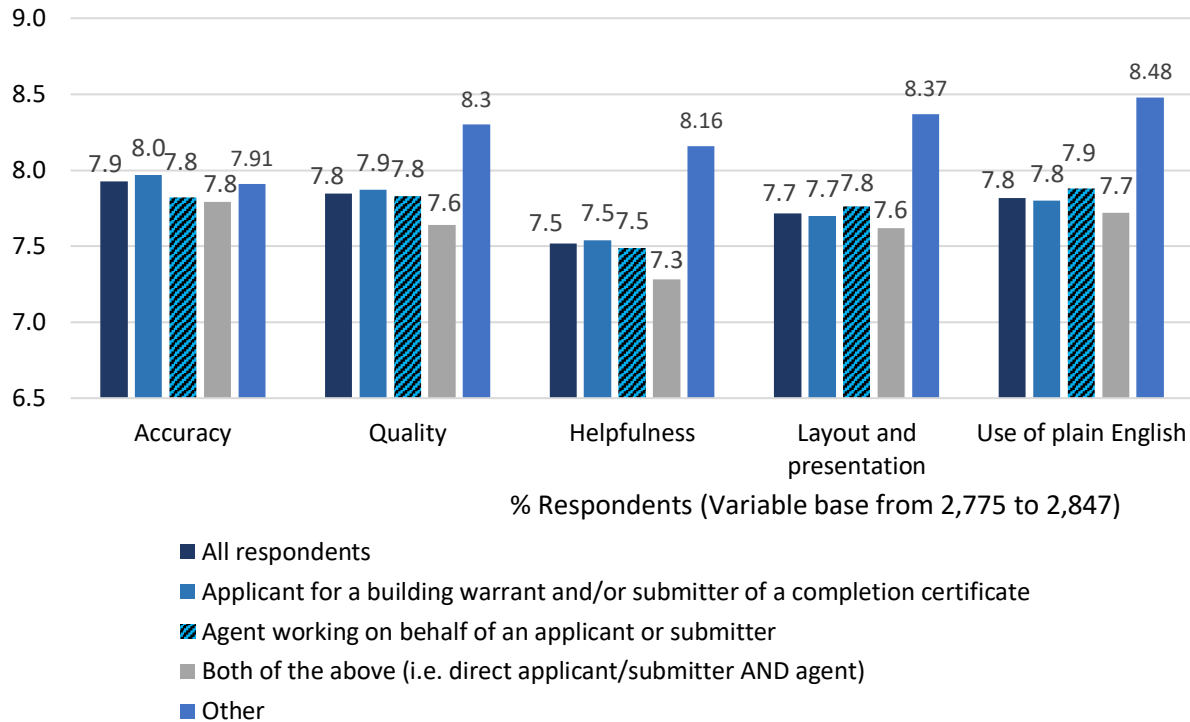
Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

3. The 4% of responses classified as 'other' primarily stem from direct applicants interacting with the building standards service via an agent, architect, or builder, while some indicated no contact at all with building standards services. Both agents and direct applicants using the online portal and attending virtual meetings, replacing site visits and inspections due to Covid-19, were also stated. Microsoft Teams and Zoom were the two most cited platforms for video calls.

8.2. Written Information and Documentation

1. On a scale from 1 'very poor' to 10 'very good', customers were asked to rate different aspects of the written information and documentation they received from their local authority verifier.
2. The resulting average ratings fall between 7.5 and 7.9 out of 10, which is a decrease from a range of 7.8 to 8.2 in 2020 (Figure 8.2.a).

Figure 8.2.a Quality of written information and documentation



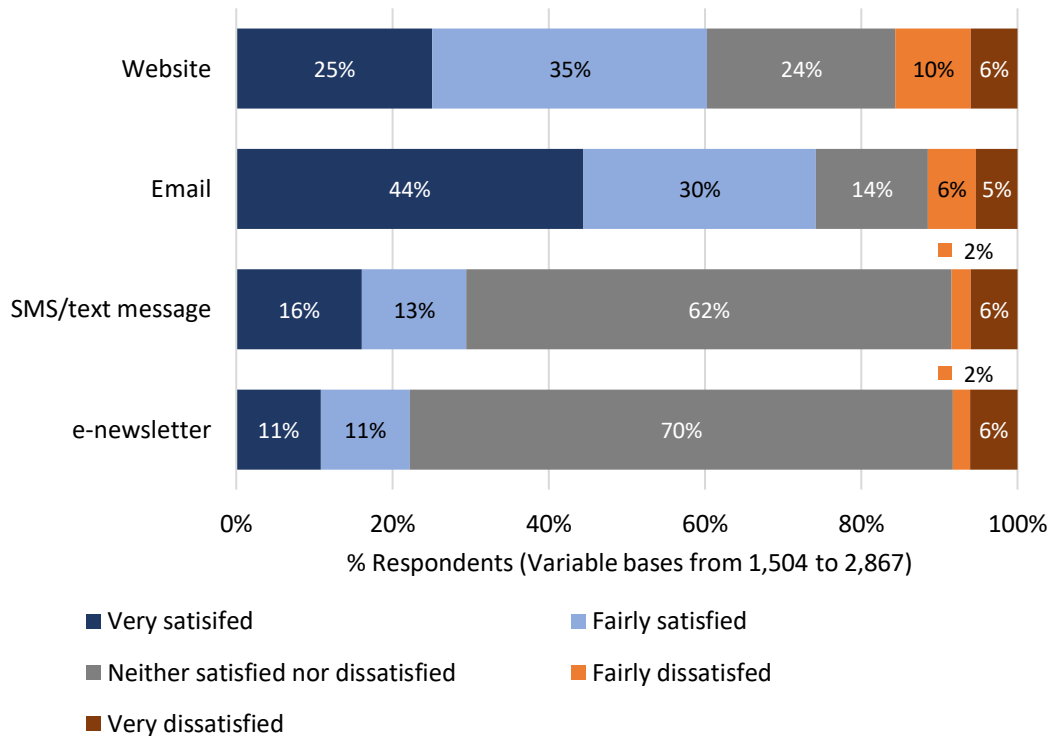
Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

8.3. Electronic Communications

1. Customers were asked to rate their satisfaction with specific forms of electronic communication made available by their local authority building standards service.
2. Just under three quarters (74%) are satisfied with email communications – an increase of 1% from 2020. Around three in five (60%) are satisfied with the local authority verifier's website – a slight fall from 63% in 2020 and 66% in 2019.

- The base number of respondents rating their satisfaction with SMS/text message and e-newsletter communications is about half that of other forms, indicating that these methods of communication are not as widespread¹² (Figure 8.3.a).

Figure 8.3.a Satisfaction with electronic communications



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

8.4. Customers Stating ‘Very/Fairly Dissatisfied

- Respondents stating ‘fairly dissatisfied’ or ‘very dissatisfied’ with respect to at least one of the above forms of electronic communication were asked to give their reasons.
- Based on 540 responses, the main themes echo those raised over the past six years. In particular:
 - Emails are not always answered, or the speed of response is slow;
 - Websites are confusingly laid out and unintuitive, making it difficult to find the information needed, especially for non-IT literate users.

¹² It is possible that some customers may have stated ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’ with respect to SMS/e-newsletter communications where they had not actually experienced these communications, as opposed to leaving the question blank.

“I found the website communication system not fit for the first-time user. Only use able by those who understand the jargon and quirks of the system.” (Direct applicant)

“I personally find the electronic website difficult to use and understand.” (Direct applicant)

“No response to emails other than a "standard" acknowledgement and then - nothing for weeks / months.” (Agent)

3. There were very few reasons provided by customers dissatisfied with SMS/text message and e-newsletter communications. Most seemed unaware that communications might be available through these channels. Some respondents received emails stating staff are working from home due to the Covid-19 pandemic and can therefore accept that there will be delays, however some are left waiting months for a response.

8.5. eBuilding Standards

1. Whilst a direct question was not asked on the topic of eBuilding Standards, there has been some feedback consistent with reports from the past few years.
2. Of the 98 people who provided feedback on the portal, the majority of suggestions relate to making the portal easier to understand, easier to access, and providing explanatory notes or guidance for the electronic process. Some applicants indicated that officers were not always able to access documents uploaded through the portal and there was no clear option to communicate via email instead of via the portal.

8.6. Improving Communications in the future

1. Customers were asked in what ways the local authority verifier building standards service could improve its overall communications in the future. The main suggestions include:
 - Returning emails more efficiently and timeously, with many respondents suggesting this is non-existent;
 - Expanding phone services available to customers, or allow for officers to be contactable via phone, again with many suggesting this is not possible at present;
 - Improving response times on applications, or providing a more realistic timescale at the outset;
 - Being more proactive, customer oriented and commercially aware;
 - Employing more staff;
 - Ensuring greater consistency in the quality of service from all staff, within and between local authorities;
 - Improving navigability and functionality of the website to ensure it is more user-friendly;

- Using clearer (plain) English in written documents and communications; and
 - Providing clearer and more specific instructions for the actions that applicants need to take, particularly for first time applicants.
2. Respondents did acknowledge that responses to emails and phone calls may have been delayed because of the Covid-19 pandemic and were generally accepting of this. However, some respondents indicated that, due to changes implemented to enable home working, communication had become impossible (such as forwarding to mobiles instead of office telephones). A number of respondents stated that they would prefer to meet with someone face to face or call someone directly to discuss their application and building process rather than rely electronic communications.

“The website is sometimes hard to navigate through and find what you are looking for. Maybe try to make it more user friendly to people who have never applied before.” (Direct applicant)

“Respond in a timely manner to submission of documents and not leave it until the final moment to respond. I don't know if this is a staffing issue or just the culture, but it unnecessarily slows down the whole process.” (Direct applicant)

“Allow BS officers to discuss issues on the phone, without having to resort to e-mail communications for every issue no matter how minor. Please issue mobile numbers of the case officers with the warrant notes.” (Agent)

“Remembering to use clear layperson's language, which can be difficult for technical information, but is essential for the customer to be able to understand and comply.” (Direct applicant)

“Direct communication to the officer would be helpful, or to a duty officer.” (Agent)

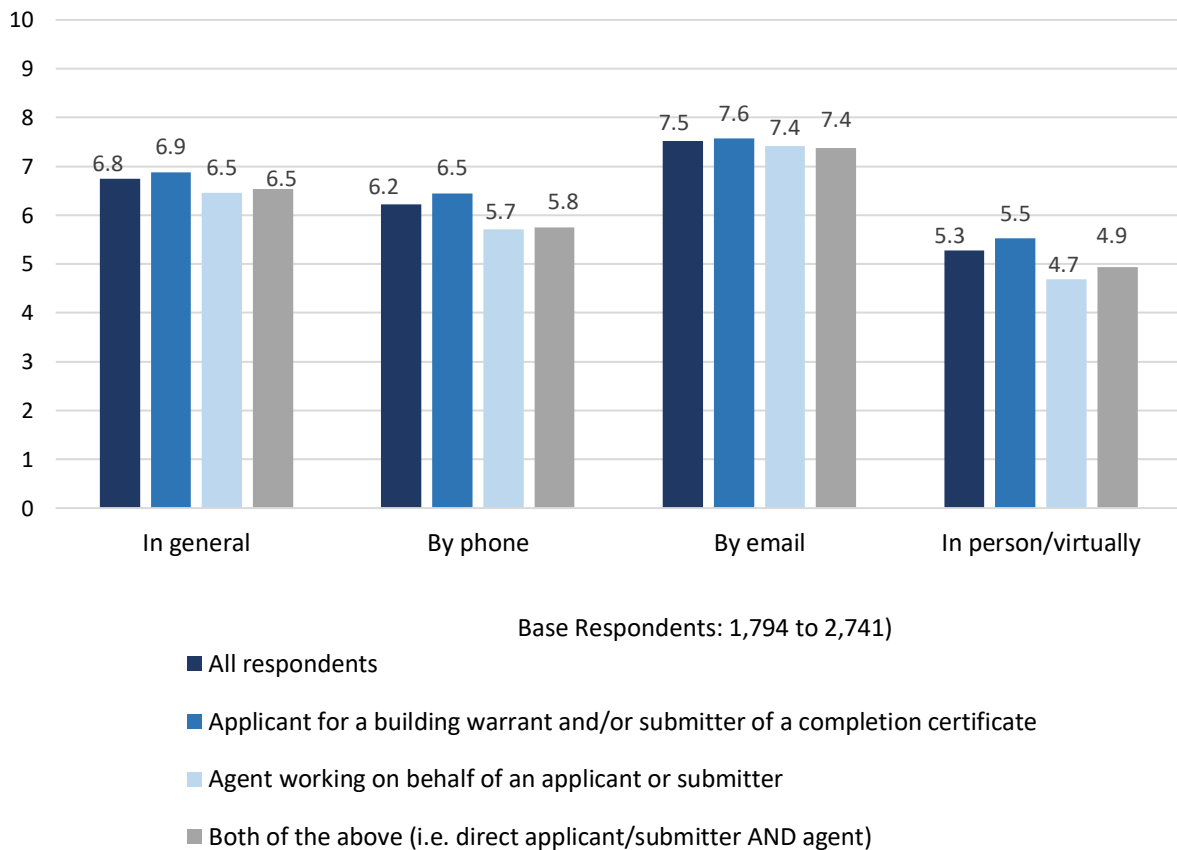
“Regular proactive communication on progress - even to say expenses delays / lead times - no word is very frustrating and does not allow us to plan.” (Direct applicant)

9. Accessibility

9.1. Making Contact with the Building Standards Service

1. On a scale from 1 'very difficult' to 10 'very easy', customers were asked to rate how easy they found making contact with their local authority building standards service. Email is generally seen as the easiest form of contact (7.5) and customers have found it more difficult to speak to someone on the telephone (6.2) or in-person/virtually (5.3). It is perceived to be more difficult to contact local authority building standards teams than in 2020 (email: 7.9; telephone: 6.9; in-person: 6.1).

Figure 9.1.a Ease of contacting the local authority verifier building standards service



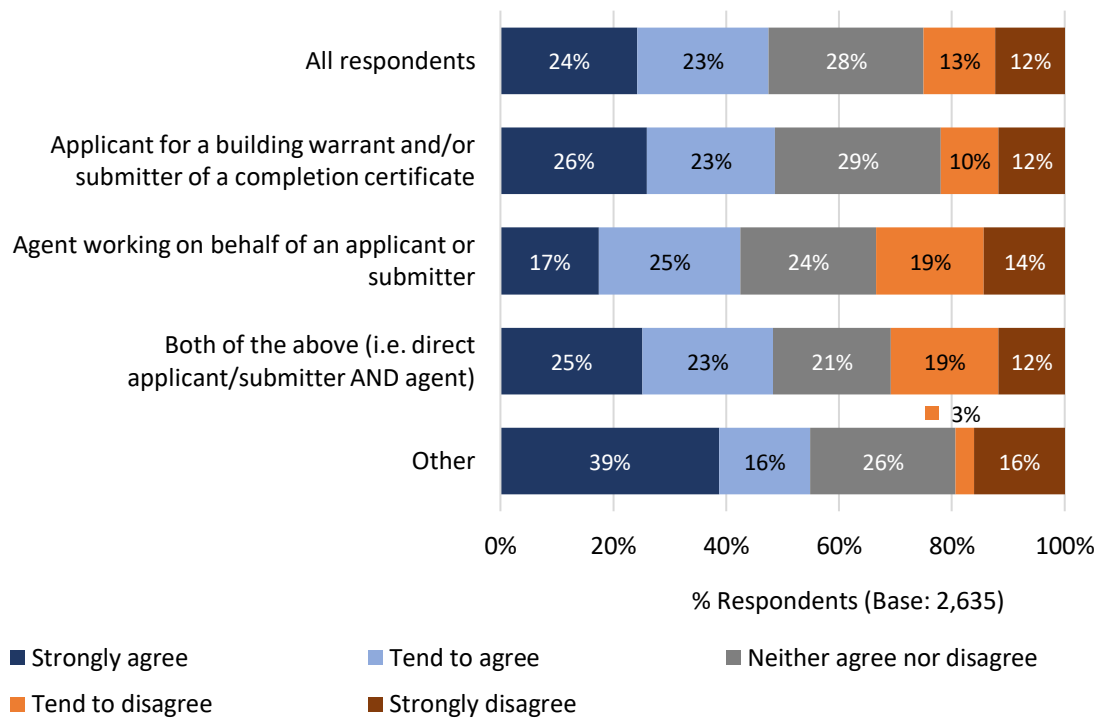
Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

2. Those customers finding it generally easy to make contact described good accessibility, an efficient service and few or no issues, supported by helpful, prompt and approachable staff.
3. Customers providing lower ratings have had opposing experiences, referring to unanswered emails, slow response times, staff not being available, calls going to voicemail and messages being unanswered. Where customers referred to lockdown and Covid-19, some felt that communication was good in spite of the

prevailing conditions, while others said that lockdown meant officers were impossible to reach.

- Just under half of surveyed customers (48%) agree that building standards service staff are accessible if they want to meet with them in person or virtually. This is a decrease from 51% in 2020 and 58% in 2019.¹³ Applicants are more satisfied than agents, with 49% and 43% in agreement, respectively (Figure 9.1.b).

Figure 9.1.b Building standards service staff are accessible to meet in person

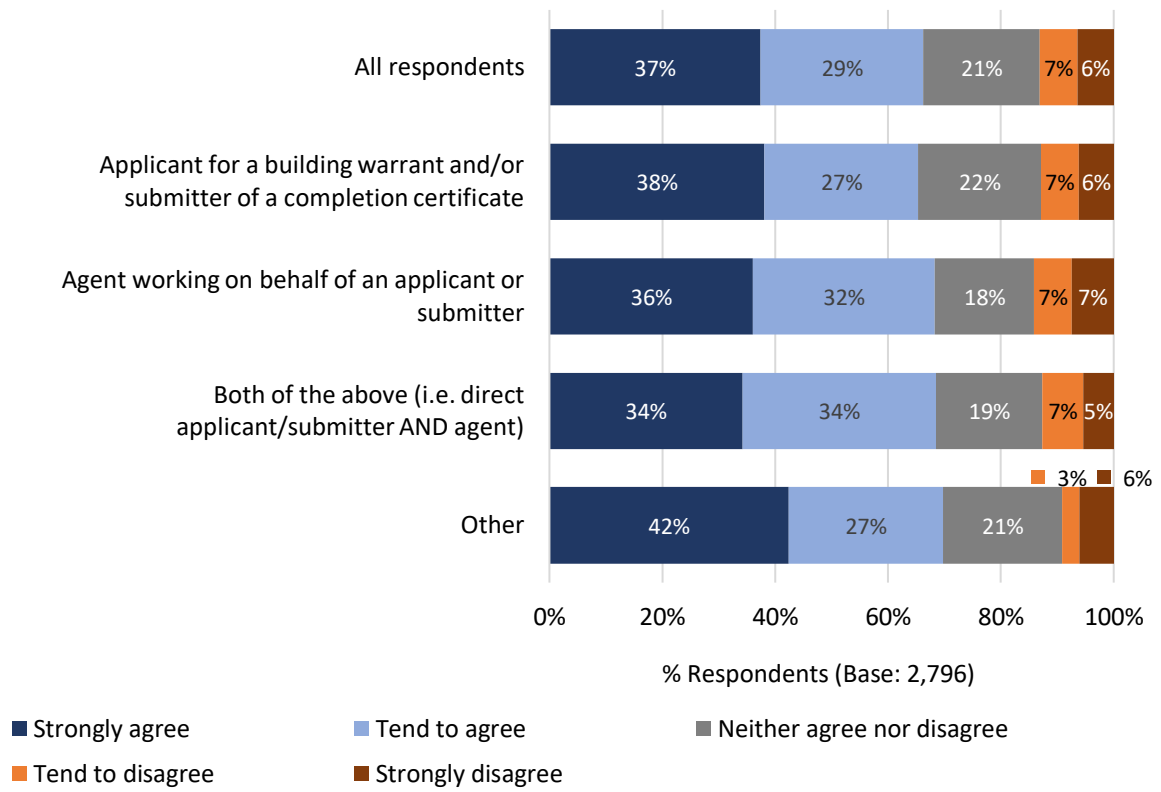


Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

- Two thirds of customers (66%) agree that building standards service staff are approachable. This is a slight decrease from 72% in 2020. Agents (68%) are slightly more likely than applicants (65%) to agree on this (Figure 9.1.c).

¹³ Note that the question wording was changed in 2021 to “Building standards service staff are accessible if I want to meet with them (in person or virtually)” from “Building standards service staff are accessible if I want to meet with them in person” in previous years.

Figure 9.1.c Building standards service staff are approachable



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

10. Conclusions and findings

10.1. Conclusions

1. The eighth annual national survey of building standards customers in Scotland has achieved a respectable overall response rate of 15% and has successfully captured the views of different types of customers served by all 32 local authorities. The highest overall volume of customer email addresses was supplied by local authorities in 2021 compared to previous years. The survey was once again promoted via social media channels, resulting in the highest number of responses to date since the first survey was run.
2. Across several headline measures, customer satisfaction with the building standards service has fallen in Scotland over the past year, with the overall score standing at 7.1 out of 10, compared with 7.5 in 2020. Direct applicants are slightly more satisfied than agents, although the gap between the two remains close (7.2 and 7.0, respectively).
3. Over the years since the survey began, customer expectations of the service have not generally changed, with the most important aspects being speed of response, efficiency and clarity of communications, ease of access to friendly and knowledgeable staff, as well as consistency in the quality of service within and between local authorities.
4. Most customers are generally complimentary about the service, either experiencing no issues or the satisfactory resolution of any queries or problems arising over the course of an application. However, it seems clear from the feedback that customers' emails, phone calls and voice messages are not always being answered in what they perceive as a reasonable timeframe, and that the length of time taken by local authorities to process building warrant applications (including cases that some agents consider to be 'straightforward') is often beyond what customers deem acceptable. This is a particular problem where delays can have a knock-on impact on applicants' plans and/or wider development activity. This has been a recurring issue within customer feedback for several years now, and suggests that customer expectations could be managed more effectively. This concern has been further compounded by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, although some customers were genuinely sympathetic to the extra pressures on local authorities and felt that verifiers had done their best.
5. The necessary switch to remote working has meant that volumes of inspections and site visits remain lower than pre-Covid-19 levels, and there is extensive use of electronic communication and inspection. There appears to be split opinion over whether this transition to remote working is working to the benefit or detriment of customers, with some favouring this approach, and others preferring face-to-face resolution. Customers are broadly understanding that processes may take longer than normal with staff based at home, and most are familiar with communication with building standards over email or through the portal. However, some customers note that not all issues are resolved timeously and express frustration that building standards teams have not yet fully adapted to

remote working to be able to provide responses in an adequate timeframe. Overall, there is decreasing satisfaction with timeliness of responses and extent to which services met customer expectations.

6. A minority of customers are concerned that the level of service provided by their local authority is not sufficiently customer-focused and they largely put this down to under-resourcing.
7. Customers also commented that staff should be more understanding of their needs and offer greater levels of guidance and support when required as they move through what can be a stressful process. Customers request improved clarity and guidance on the process as a whole (and associated terminology) to promote a more supportive journey for them. This suggests that the existing Customer Journey¹⁴ document may not be sufficiently visible through local authorities.
8. Disparities prevail between different local authority verifiers and satisfaction levels are lowest among customers of the largest local authorities (see Appendix 1).
9. Finally, customer feedback on the eBuilding Standards system suggests that the portal would benefit from continuous review and development to incorporate the latest technology available. Customers believe this will ensure it is simple and intuitive to use, particularly if accompanied by guidance for customers who are less IT-literate, and if portal traffic has increased due to Covid-19.

10.2. Forward Considerations

1. These considerations are for the Scottish Government (Building Standards Division) to consider taking forward in conjunction with Local authority Building Standards Scotland (LABSS) and Building Standards Managers (BSMs) across the 32 local authority verifiers and are based on customer feedback and suggestions to this survey.
2. Additionally, the separate individual local authority verifier reports (x32) will help to pinpoint where customer service performance is relatively strong or weak.
3. The results enable customer satisfaction performance to be measured against the previous year, as well as future years, in the interests of continuous improvement. Any proposed mechanisms for improving customer service would need to be considered in relation to local authority verifier resources, which have been placed under additional strain in 2020 due to Covid-19.
4. It is important to ensure that service levels can meet changing customer needs and expectations in the face of new technologies (including eBuilding Standards) and the potential for lasting changes to the way local authorities work due to Covid-19. It is also important that remote working does not lead to customers

¹⁴ Scottish Government, 2016. Building Standards Customer Journey Available at: [Buildings Standards Customer Journey](#)

being (or feeling) unable to reach building standards teams and that, if contact channels or response times have changed on a lasting basis, customers' expectations are managed. This means being clear on what customers can actually expect rather than general statements that there may be delays where customers do not know when they might get a response to a query.

5. On the back of the 2021 findings, it would appear that customer satisfaction and associated measures have fallen after a rise over the past few years, and that ongoing work is required to reverse this trend. Specific considerations for improving the customer experience are broadly similar to 2020 and continue to apply as guiding principles for improvement and embedding change.
 - Identify ways of reducing the time taken for processing building warrant applications and completion certificates, particularly with staff adapting to new ways of working.
 - Whilst it may not always be possible to keep customers regularly updated on the progress of their application, ensure that customer email and telephone queries are responded to (with more than an auto-reply acknowledgement) within an acceptable period of time (i.e. those stated in local authorities' customer charters).
 - Proactively manage customer expectations around response timescales from the outset. Clear explanations should be provided to customers as to why applications may need to take a particular length of time, including reasons for any envisaged delay to services.
 - Where customer feedback points to concerns that a local authority verifier service is not meeting customer expectations, use this evidence to make a business case to senior Council leaders for more and better resourcing.
 - Continue to explore and identify best practices among those local authority verifiers with higher overall satisfaction scores. Consider what opportunities exist and what challenges need to be overcome to share best practices and embed these more widely across Scotland.
 - Ensure that where building standards staff members change (or are absent for any reason), contingency procedures are in place to pick up cases or that there is a handover so that delays are minimised.
 - Maintain local ownership for improving the customer experience through effective use of Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) and updating local customer charters.
 - Continue to identify ways of working smarter and to ensure processes set out in legislation can be enacted with optimum efficiency.
 - Customers note their experience could be improved if the functionality of the eDev (eBS) portal is developed to provide step-by-step guidance and a more efficient and intuitive experience, as well as ensuring that local authority verifiers use the system to its full advantage. Customers' suggested system and process enhancements include allowing the upload of multiple drawings

at once and — ideally — enabling customers to log in and check on the progress of an application, as well as the use of plain English.

6. Binding these considerations together is the need for a customer-focused approach to be at the heart of all behaviour, and for this to be embedded through continuous improvement.
7. The current methodology has successfully captured the views of thousands of building standards customers to provide accurate and robust data on customer satisfaction. However, as outlined in section 2.3, the Scottish Government commissioned Pye Tait Consulting to identify and propose a preferred model which the Scottish Government (Building Standards Division) could use to deliver the national customer survey for building standards.¹⁵ The future model that was proposed as the preferred option, and which has since been taken forwards for testing and piloting, is a short, sharp survey for customer to complete at one of two stages: at approval of building warrant, or acceptance of the completion certificate. The survey will be rolling/ongoing and comprise a short question set of six to ten questions with one open-text box for comments. This model will be used to evaluate customer satisfaction from 2022 onwards.
8. Some specific considerations relating to the delivery of this future national customer satisfaction survey for building standards can act as guiding principles as this model is developed. These also link into future considerations around the Performance Framework and the global coronavirus pandemic.
 - Some local authority verifiers already operate their own satisfaction surveys on a local level. Consideration should be given as to whether these should be discontinued, to minimise duplication and potential confusion, so long as the national-level question set is specifically designed to meet the requirement of Customer Service Excellence (CSE) elements held by some verifiers. Such a question set should be designed to be quick and easy to complete, while retaining core questions for benchmarking purposes.
 - Promotion of the survey should be carefully considered. Including the link to any online survey in any automated Building Warrant approval email (say) may be easily overlooked. To increase the visibility of the customer survey link, the opportunity to provide feedback could instead be circulated in a separate, dedicated and auto-generated message shortly afterwards.
 - Response rates could be maintained or increased by incorporating the feedback process as part of the application cycle. Embedding any survey should be quick and simple and the benefits of completion clearly stated to respondents.
 - The switch from an annual exercise to an ongoing one will reduce the potential for focused promotional activities such as blogs and social media posts. Embedding feedback as part of the application process would make

¹⁵ The Scottish Government (2021) Building standards - verification service: customer experience evaluation - future model. Available at: [Building standards - verification service: customer experience evaluation - future model](#)

this a moot point, but consideration should be given to how to raise awareness of the satisfaction survey.

- Consideration should be given to whether differing approaches are required for agents and applicants. While agents may become fatigued through surveying on a regular basis, there is a risk that not doing so may create a two-tier system that does not enable comparability between groups.
- As with the switch to any new system, the future model should be carefully developed, tested and piloted with small cohorts of verifiers and customers to iron out teething issues and ensure that it is fit-for-purpose.
- The eBuilding Standards portal provides an additional opportunity to maximise the volume and accuracy of customer details collected and held by local authority verifiers. With development, it could also standardise data capture to make national reporting easier, more efficient, and more accessible. Improved consistency in data standards across local authorities will help to promote consistency in customers' experience when liaising with different verifiers.

11. Appendix 1: Results by Local Authority verifier size

11.1. Main Survey Data by Local Authority Verifier Size

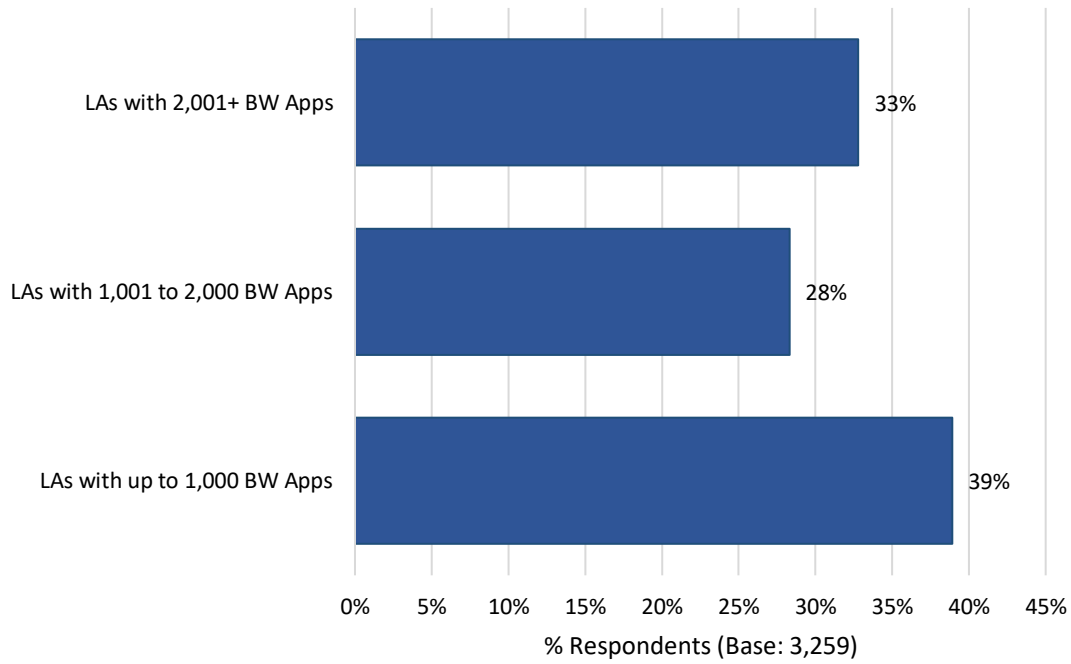
1. The charts in this section present the main survey data according to the size of the local authority verifier. In this context, size is defined as the number of building warrant applications made by customers within the 2020-2021 financial year. Three size bandings have been derived, as follows:

Table 11.1.a Size bandings per number of applications

Small – Up to 1,000 applications	Medium – 1,001 to 2,000 applications	Large – 2,001+ applications
Aberdeen City	Aberdeenshire	City of Edinburgh
Angus	Dumfries & Galloway	Fife
Argyll & Bute	East Dunbartonshire	Glasgow City
Clackmannanshire	Perth & Kinross	Highland
Dundee City	Renfrewshire	North Lanarkshire
East Ayrshire	South Lanarkshire	
East Lothian	West Lothian	
East Renfrewshire		
Eilean Siar		
Falkirk		
Inverclyde		
Midlothian		
Moray		
North Ayrshire		
Orkney		
Scottish Borders		
Shetland		
South Ayrshire		
Stirling		
West Dunbartonshire		

Source Pye Tait Consulting 2021

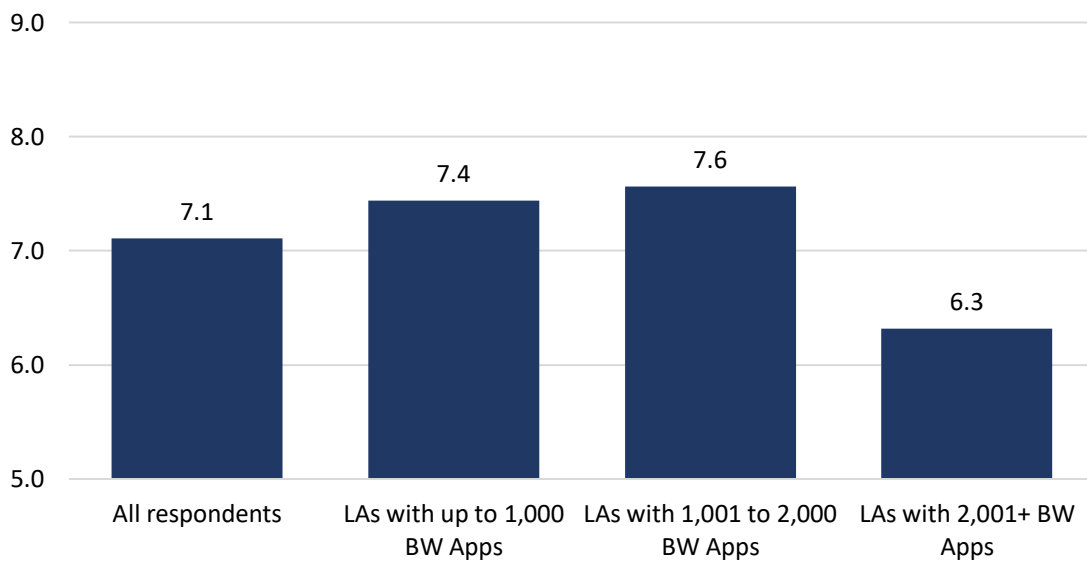
Figure 11.1.a Total Respondents



Source Pye Tait Consulting 2021

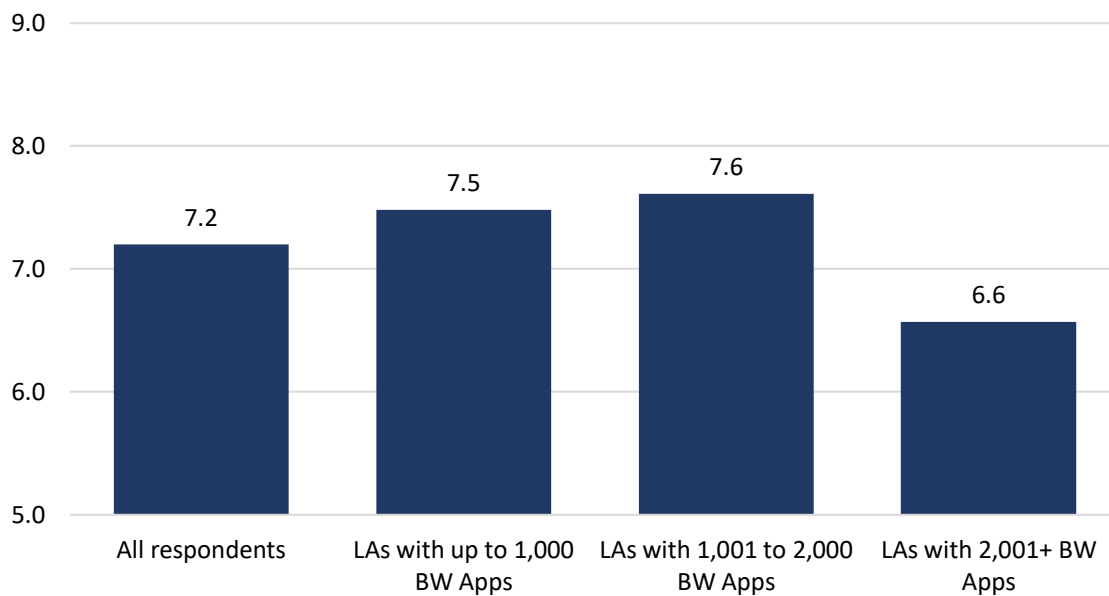
11.2. Overall Satisfaction and Meeting Expectations

Figure 11.2.a Overall satisfaction with the building standards service



Source Pye Tait Consulting 2021

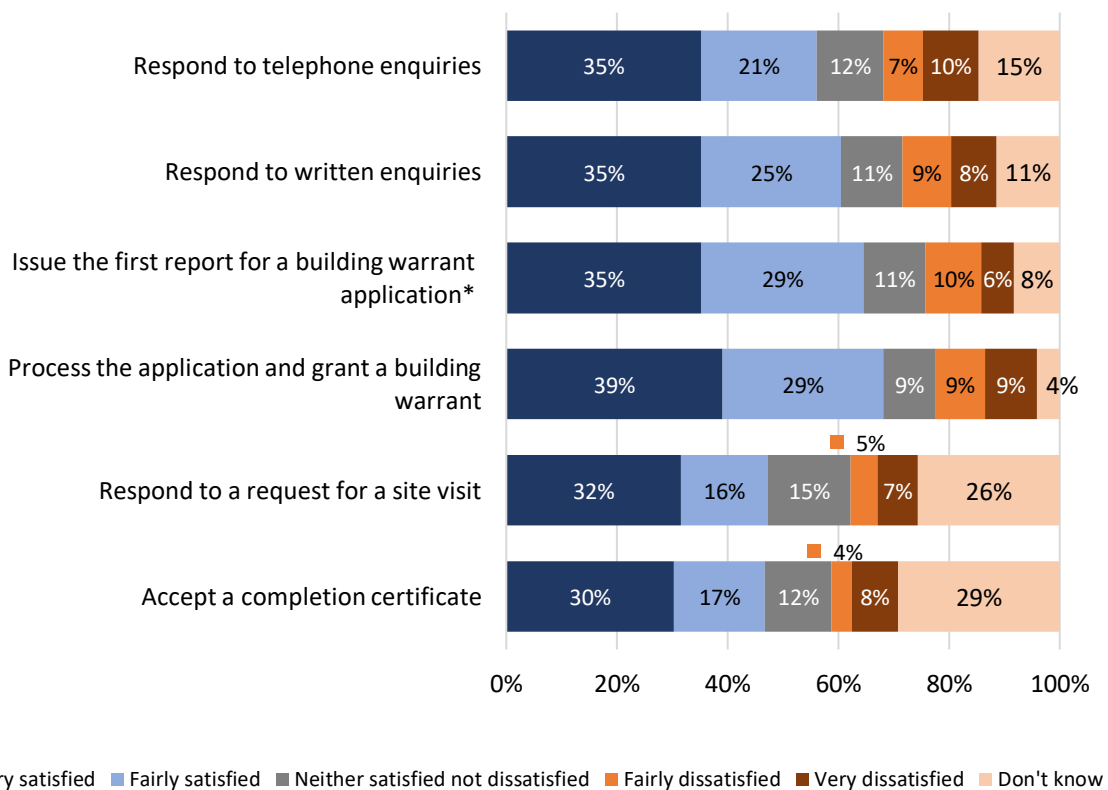
Figure 11.2.b Extent to which the service met expectations



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

11.3. Timeliness

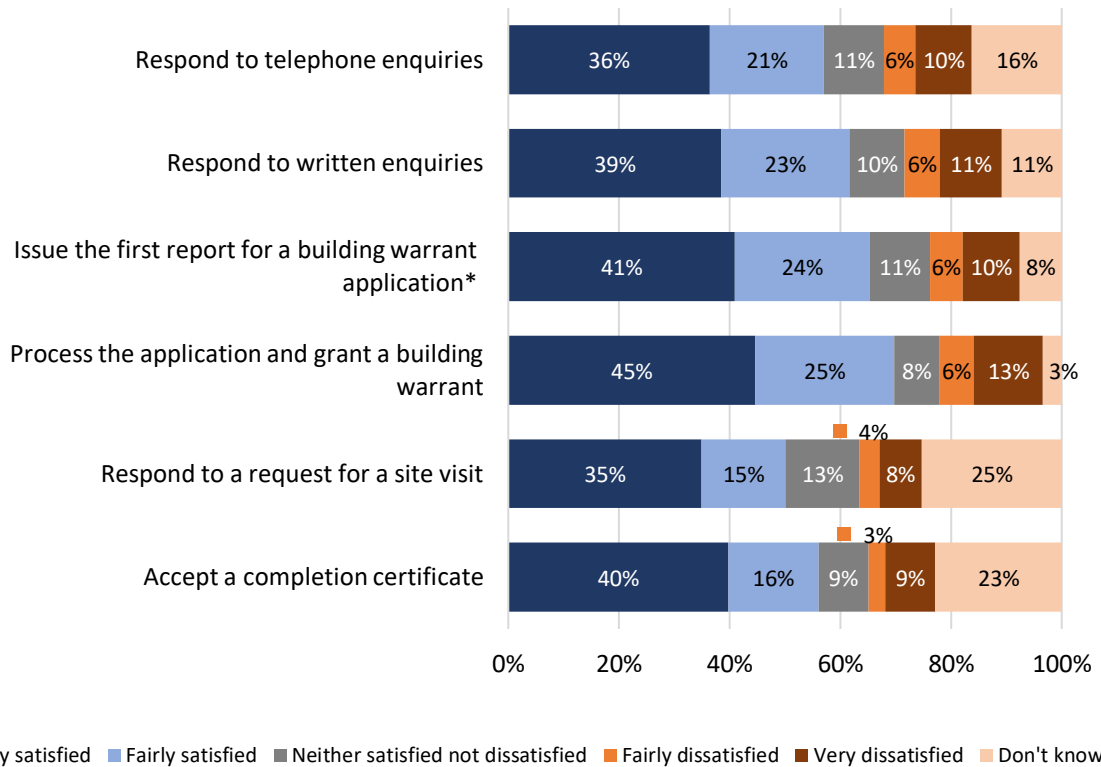
Figure 11.3.a Timeliness — LAs with up to 1,000 building warrant applications



Notes * (e.g. detailing non-compliance or further information requested)

Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

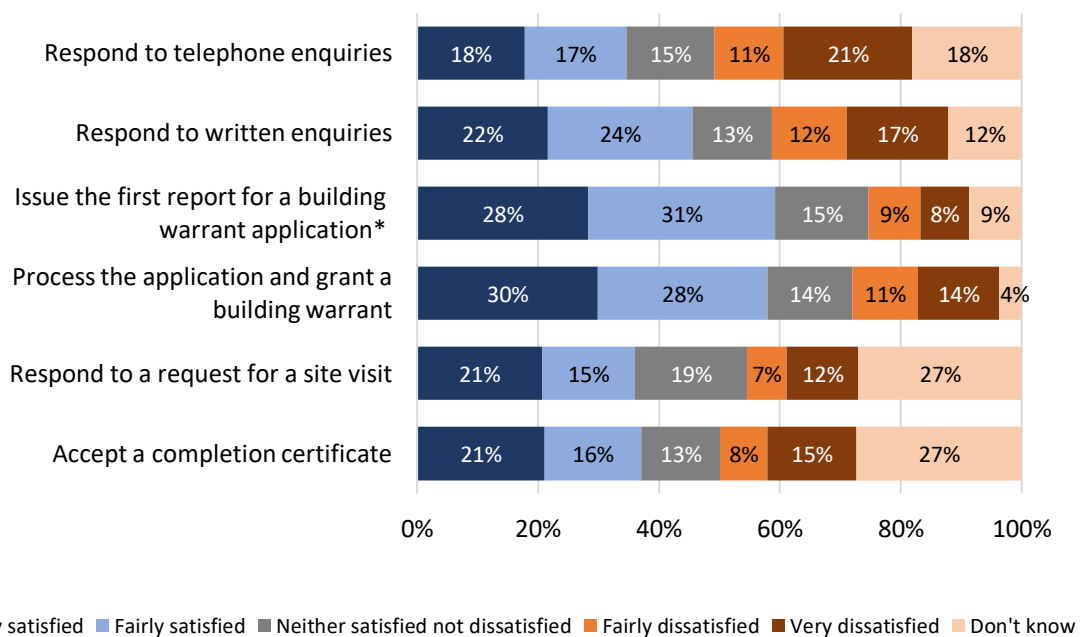
Figure 11.3.b Timeliness — LAs with 1,001–2,000 building warrant applications



Notes * (e.g. detailing non-compliance or further information requested)

Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

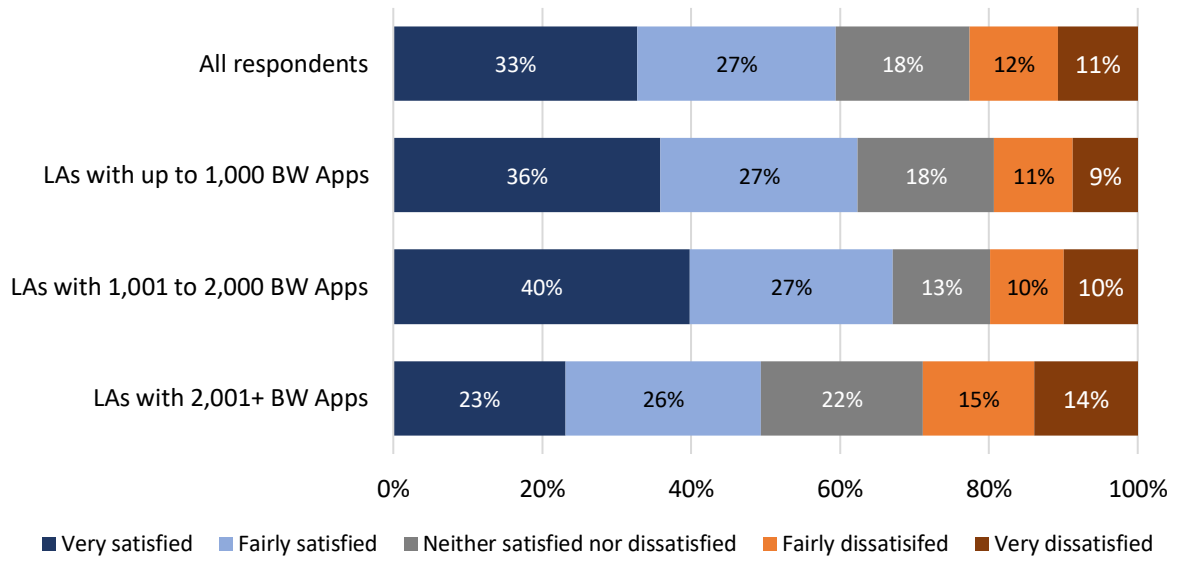
Figure 11.3.c Timeliness — LAs with 2,001+ building warrant applications



Notes * (e.g. detailing non-compliance or further information requested)

Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

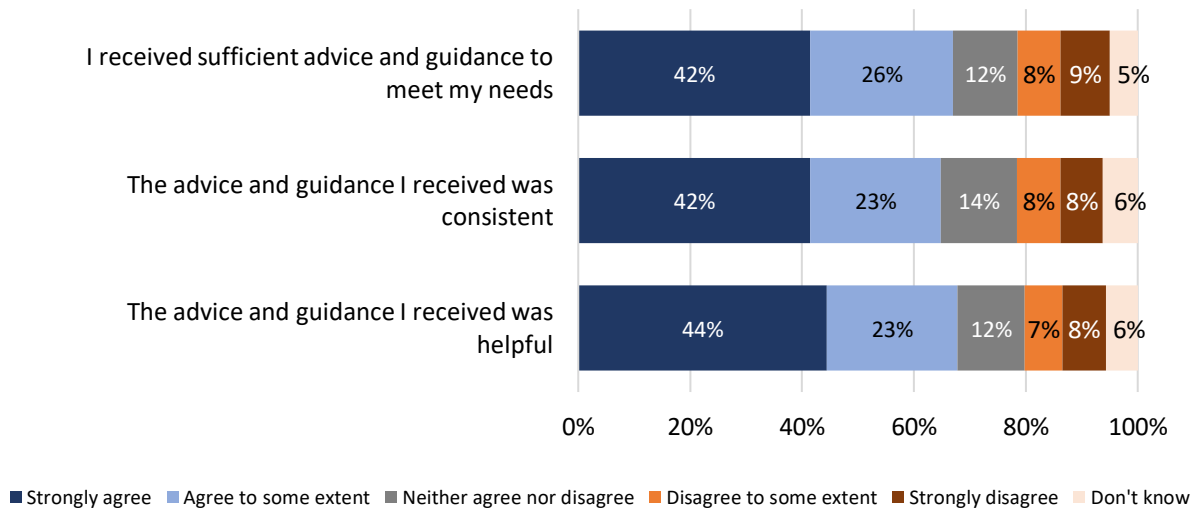
Figure 11.3.d Satisfaction with the way kept informed



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

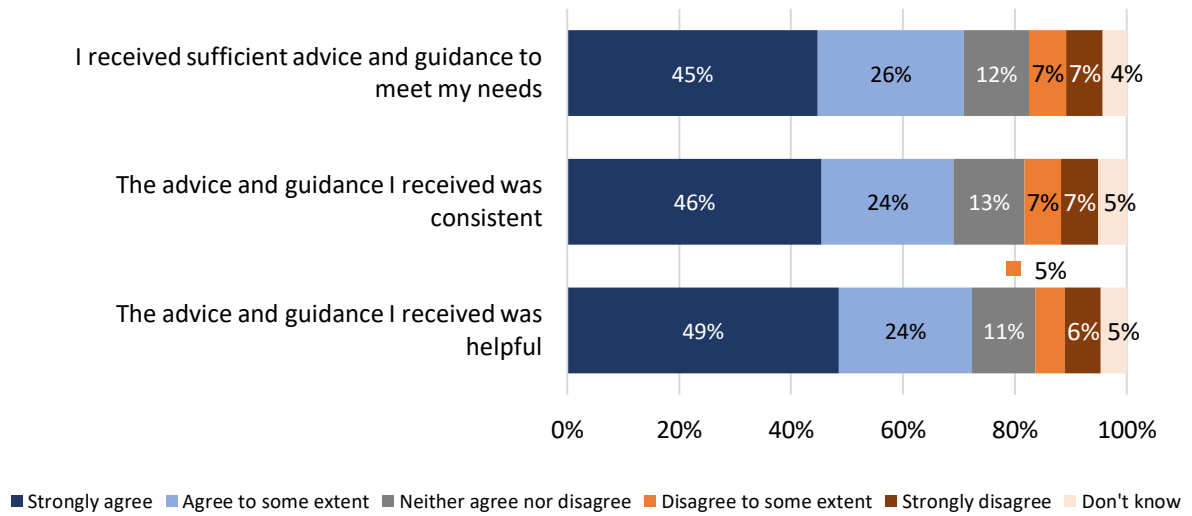
11.4. Advice and Guidance

Figure 11.4.a Advice and guidance — LAs with up to 1,000 BW applications



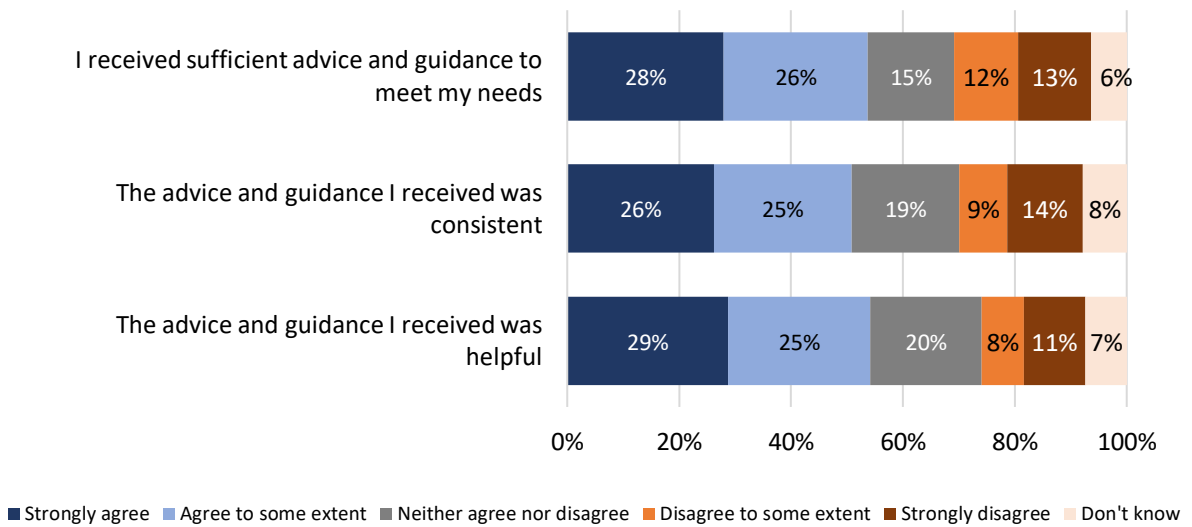
Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

Figure 11.4.b Advice and guidance — LAs with 1,001–2,000 building warrant applications



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

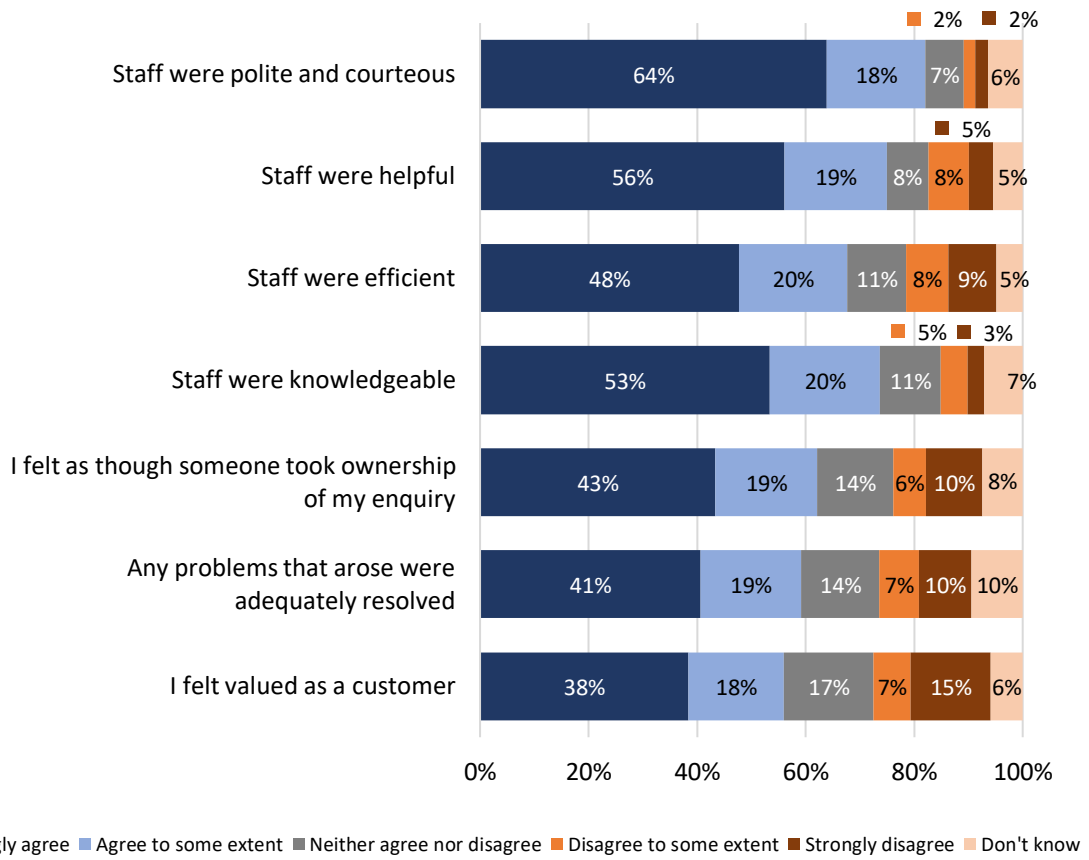
Figure 11.4.c Advice and guidance — LAs with 2,001+ building warrant applications



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

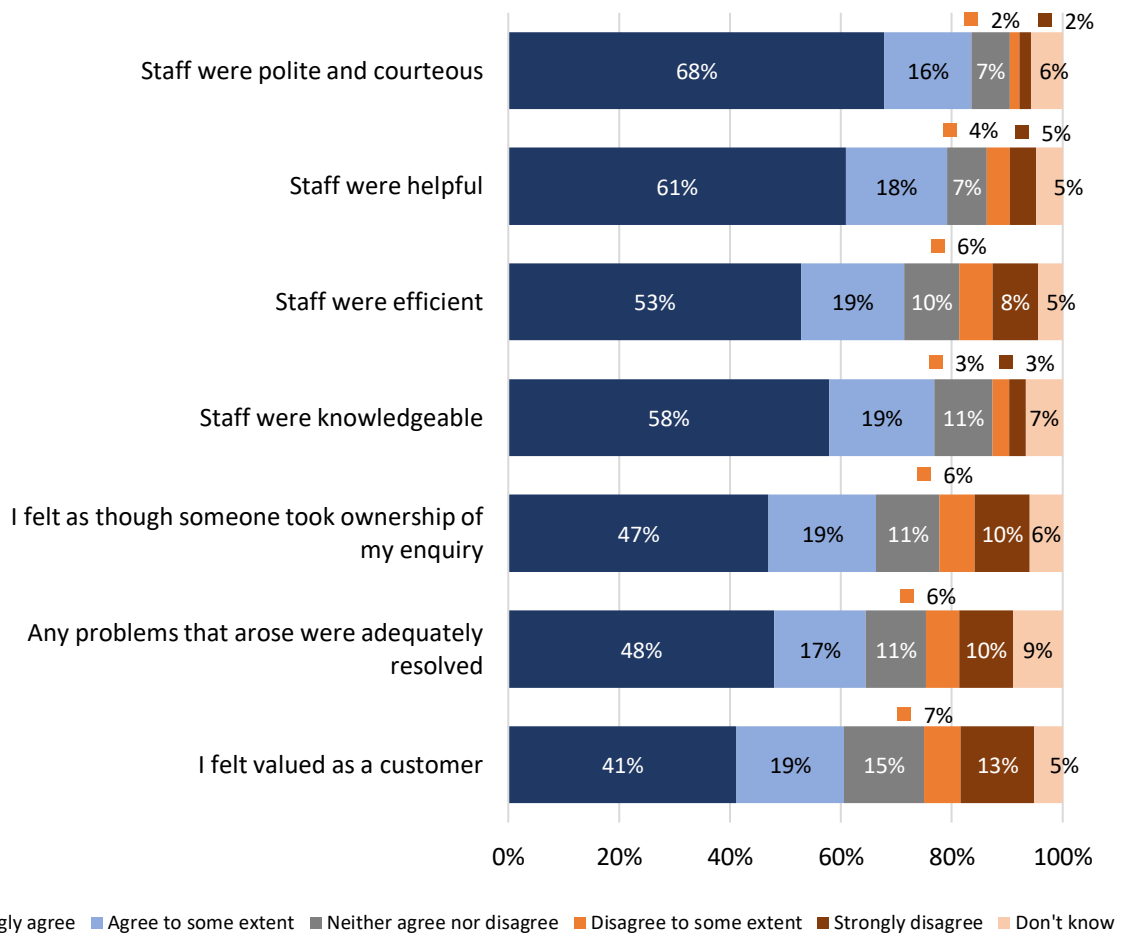
11.5. Quality of Service

Figure 11.5.a Quality of service — LAs with up to 1,000 BW applications



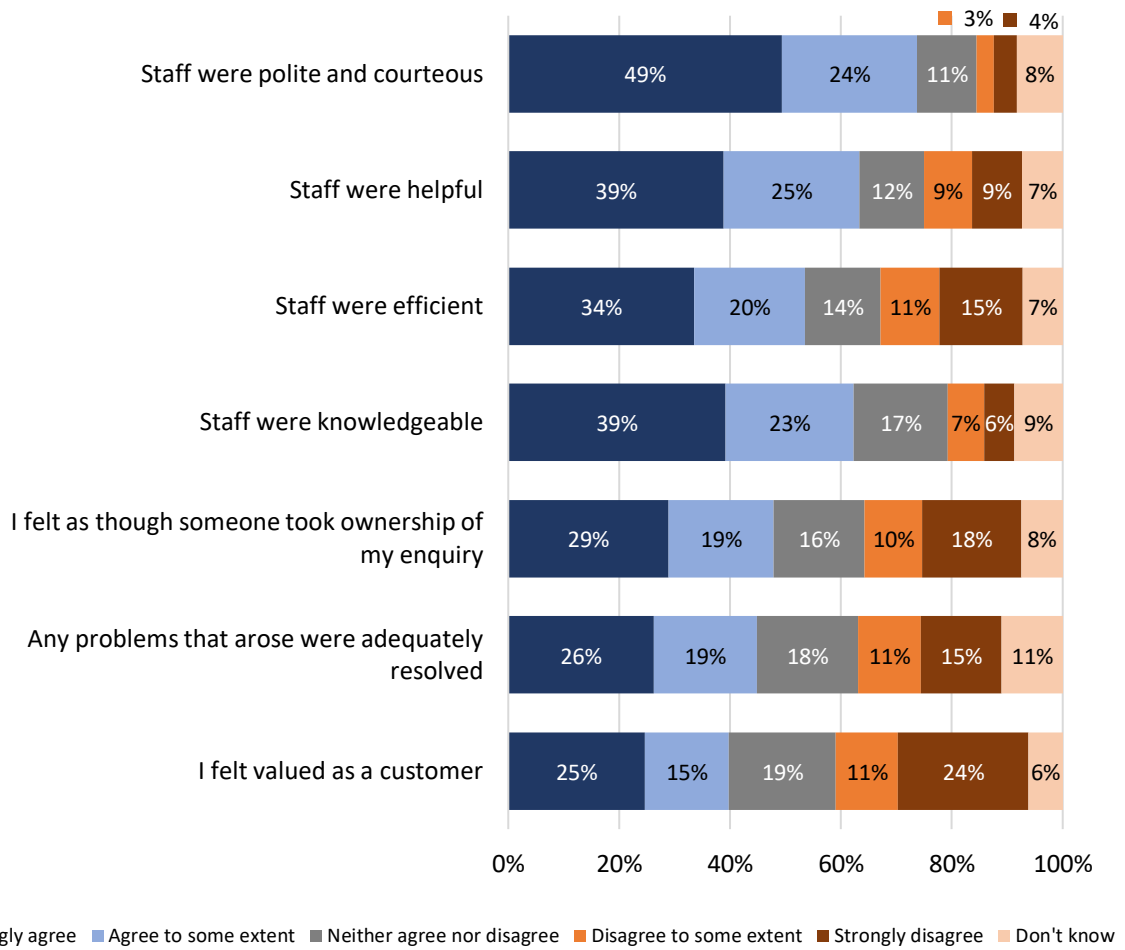
Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

Figure 11.5.b Quality of service — LAs with 1,001–2,000 building warrant applications



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

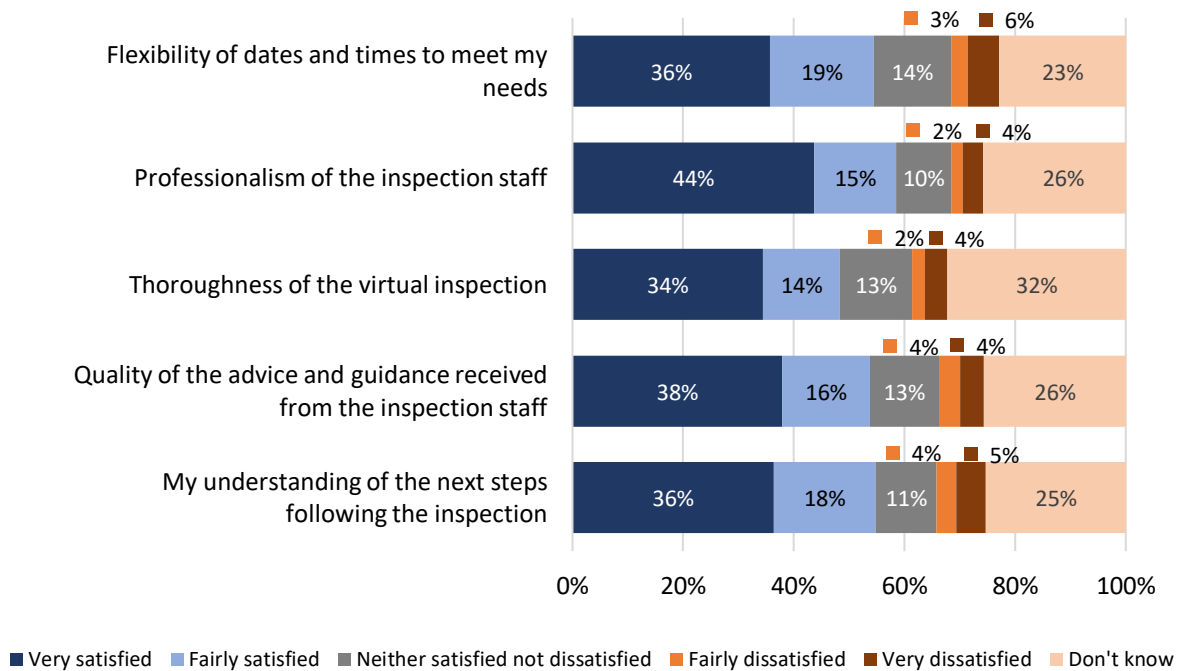
Figure 11.5.c Quality of service — LAs with 2,001+ building warrant applications



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

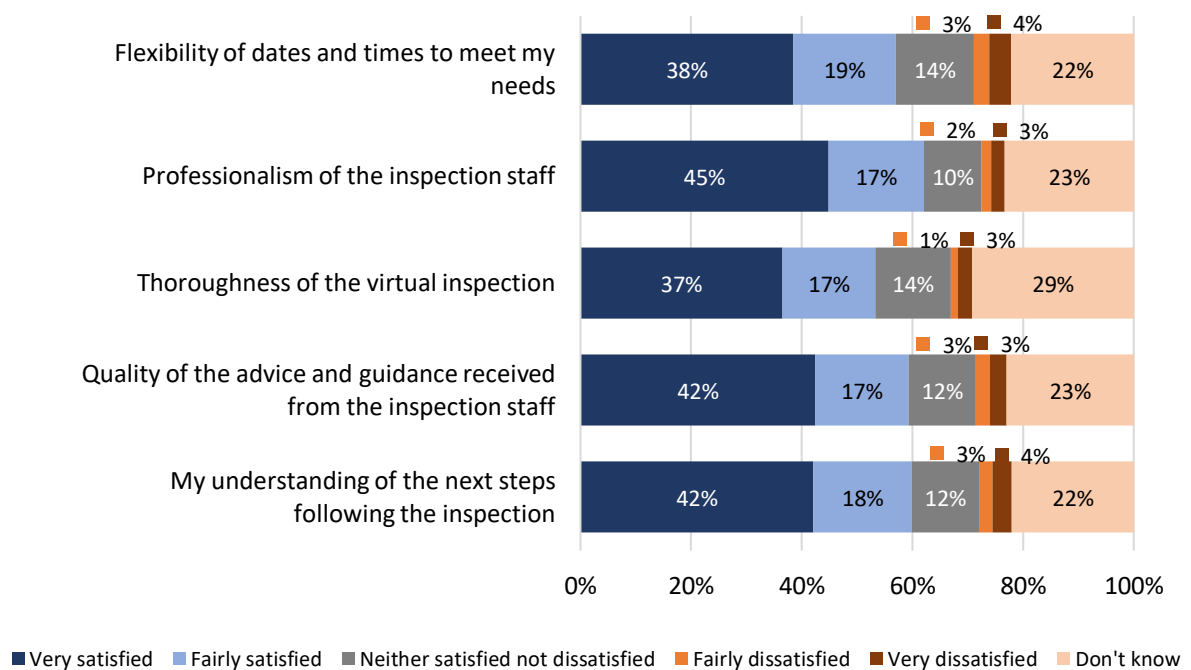
11.6. Inspections

Figure 11.6.a Satisfaction with aspects of inspection visit — LAs with up to 1,000 building warrant applications



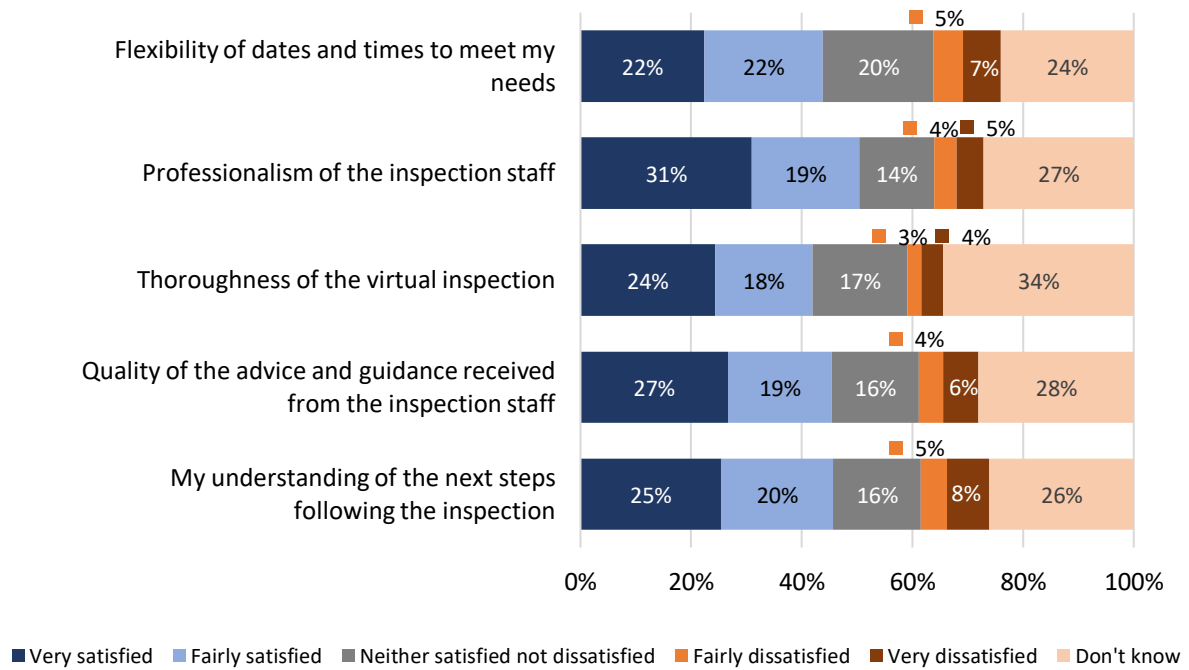
Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

Figure 11.6.b Satisfaction with aspects of inspection visit — LAs with 1,001–2,000 building warrant applications



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

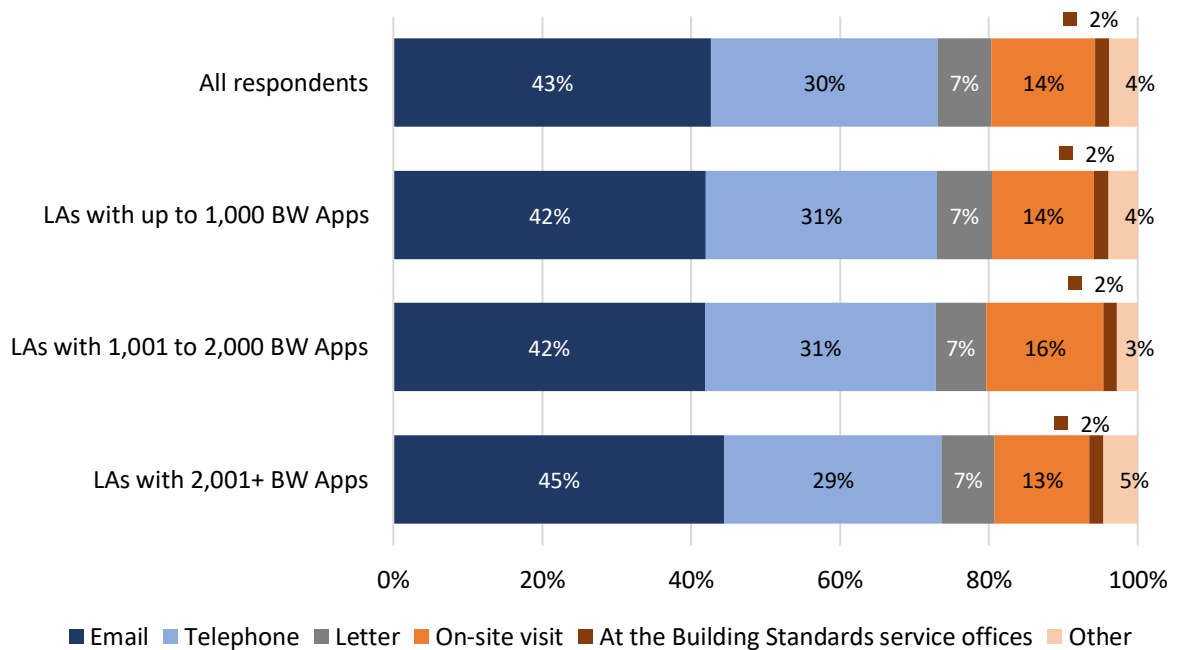
Figure 11.6.c Satisfaction with aspects of inspection visit — LAs with 2,000+ building warrant applications



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

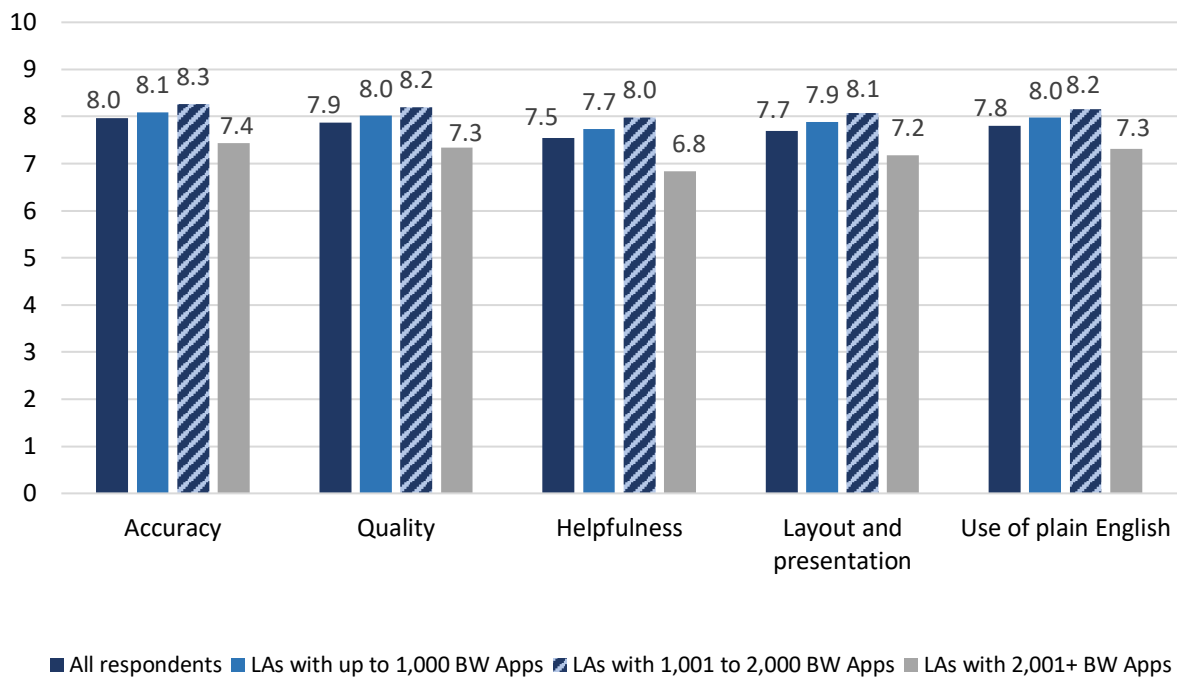
11.7. Communications

Figure 11.7.a Channels of interaction



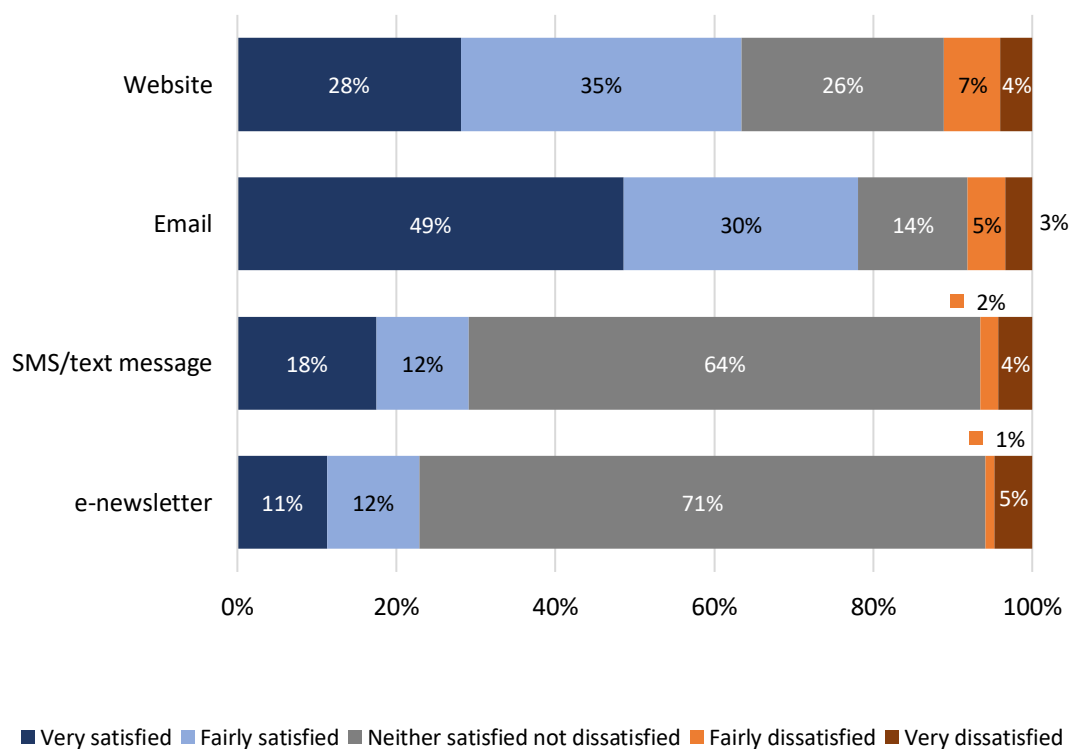
Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

Figure 11.7.b Quality of written information and documentation



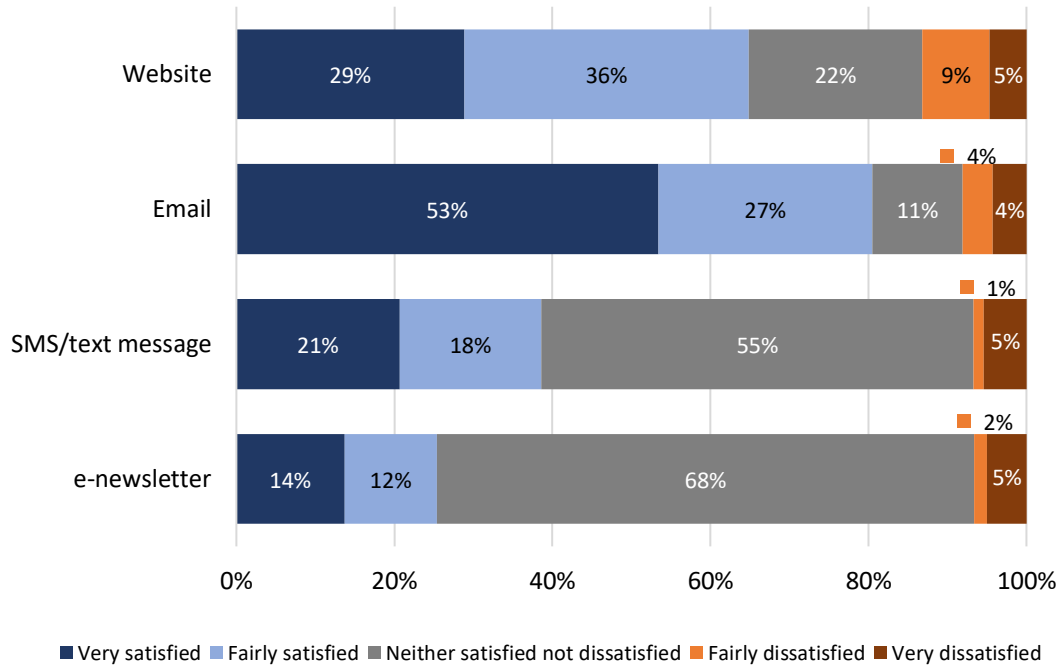
Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

Figure 11.7.c Satisfaction with electronic communications forms — LAs with up to 1,000 building warrant applications



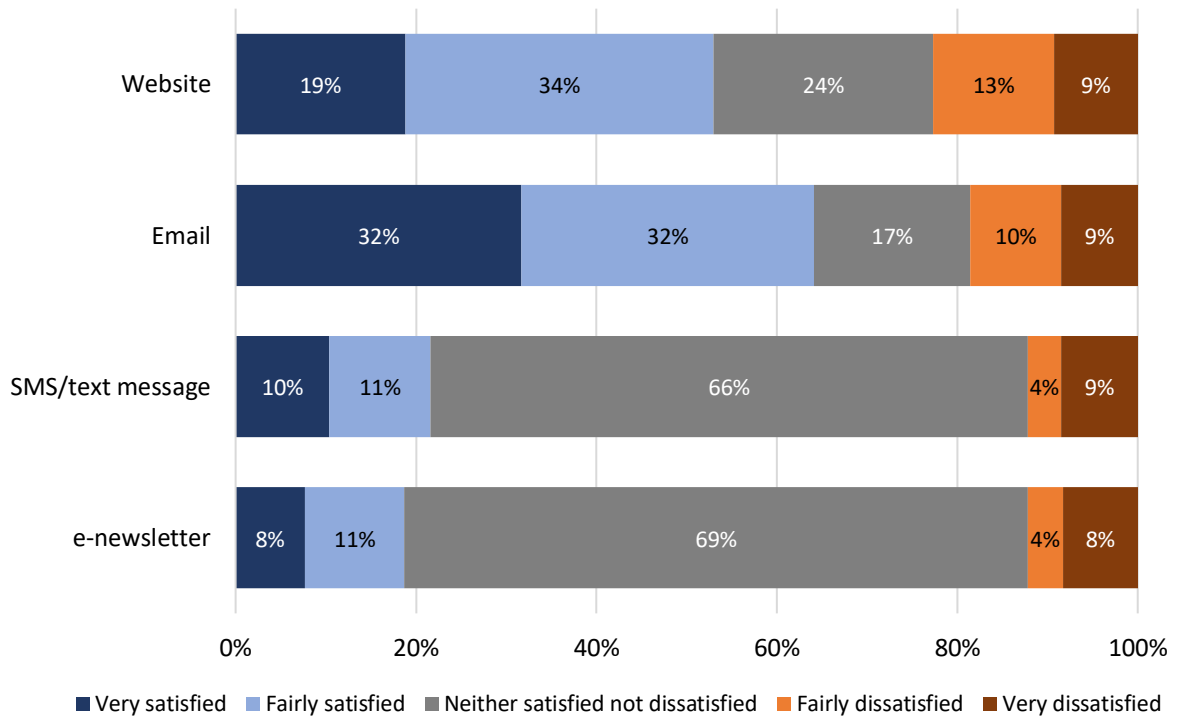
Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

Figure 11.7.d Satisfaction with electronic communication forms — LAs with 1,001–2,000 building warrant applications



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

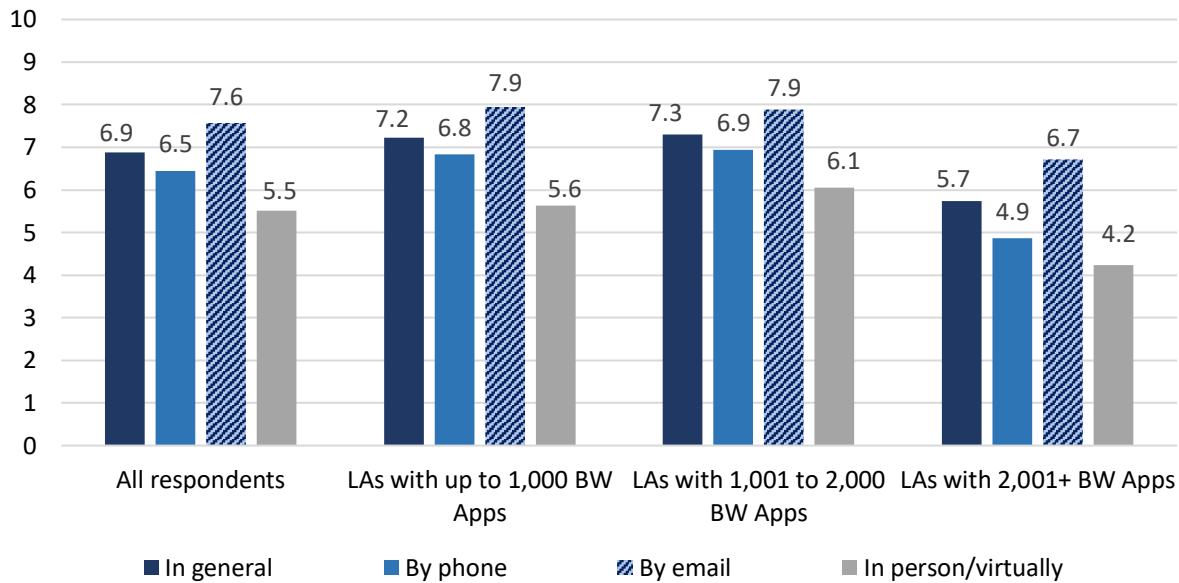
Figure 11.7.e Satisfaction with electronic communication forms — LAs with 2,001+ building warrant applications



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

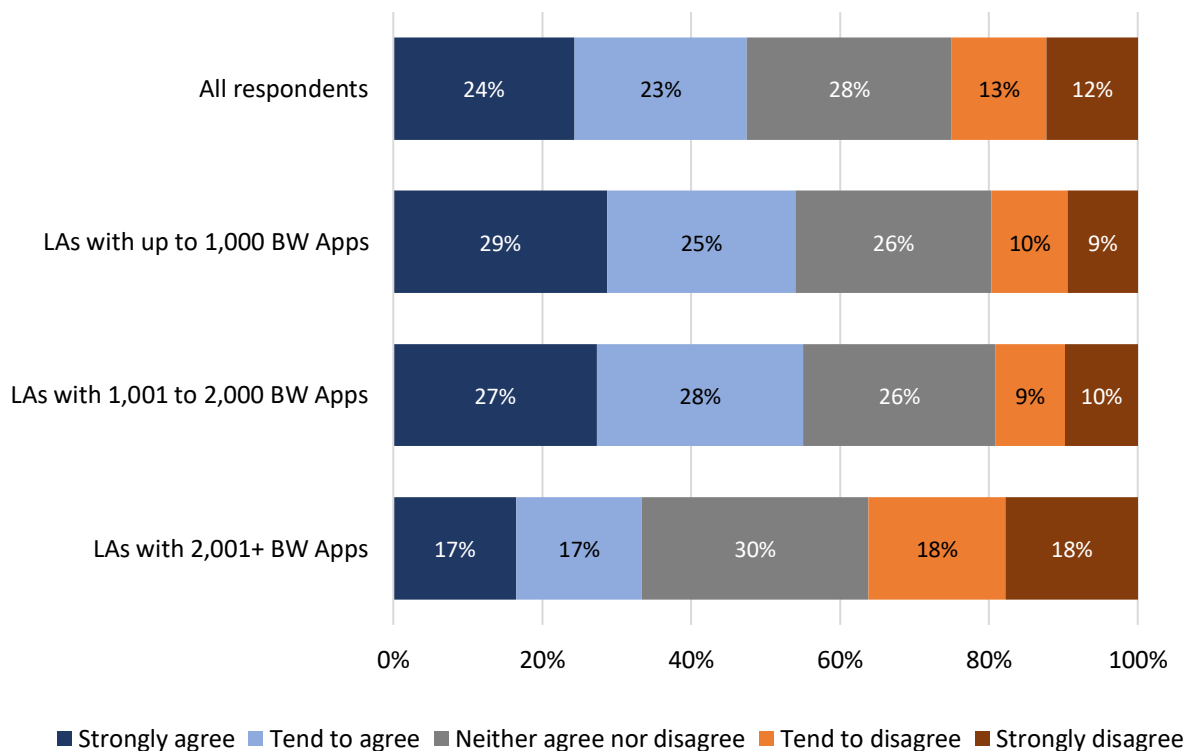
11.8. Accessibility

Figure 11.8.a Building standards service staff are accessible to meet in person



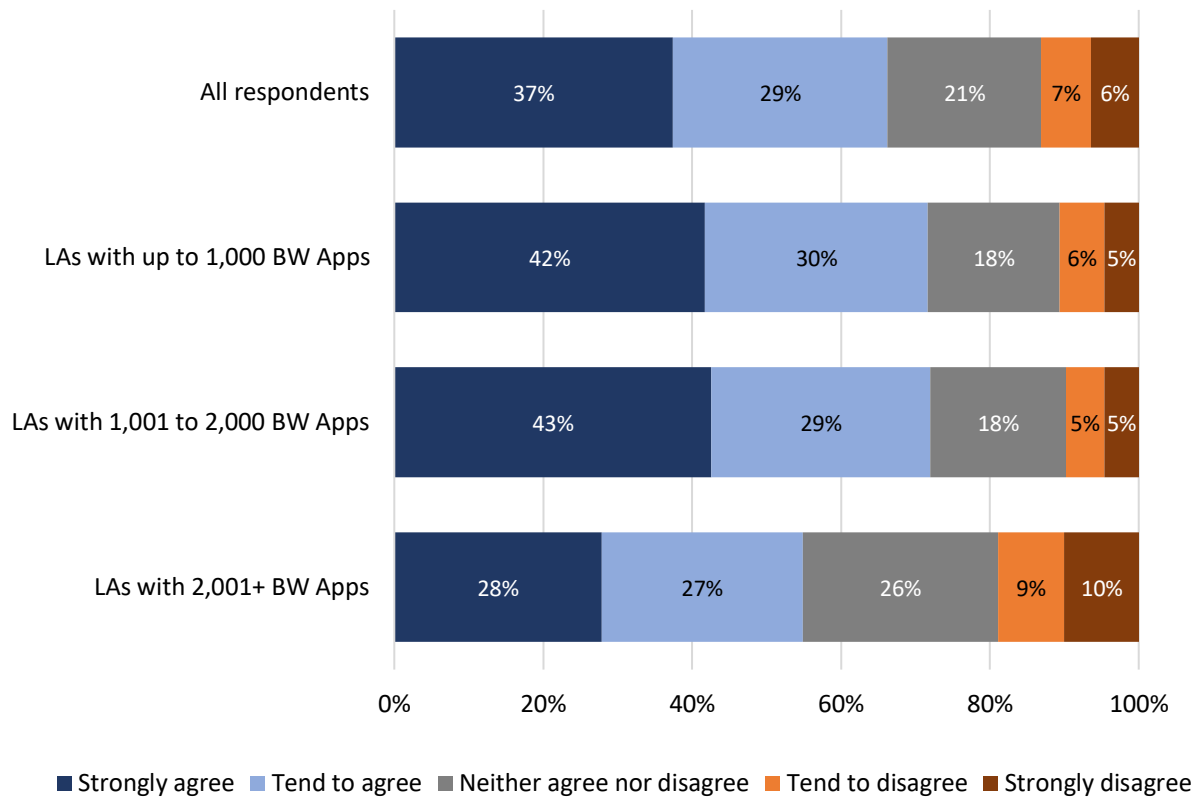
Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

Figure 11.8.b Building standards service staff are accessible to meet in person



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

Figure 11.8.c Building standards service staff are approachable



Source Pye Tait Consulting, 2021

Appendix 2: National survey questionnaire

2021 Customer Satisfaction Survey for Building Standards

Please tell us what you think

Introduction

The Scottish Government (Building Standards Division) would like to obtain your views and feedback about the local authority verifier Building Standards service in Scotland. This is a national survey that is being administered separately to customer feedback questionnaires issued by individual local authorities.

As a Building Standards customer since April 2020, we would like to hear about the quality of service you have received, for example when applying for a building warrant and/or submitting a completion certificate. We are interested in your views on the customer service you have experienced as opposed to the actual decision made in response to an application.

How to complete the survey

You will be asked to identify which local authority verifier your feedback relates to. If you have been a customer of more than one local authority verifier and would like to provide additional feedback, please complete a separate survey.

The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete (this may take a little longer depending on how much feedback you wish to give). Please note, the final question asks you for any additional comments or feedback not covered by the previous questions.

As you progress through the survey, you will only be presented with those questions that are relevant to you. If you are unable to answer any questions, or if you feel they are not applicable, please leave them blank.

Reassurance

Pye Tait Consulting is carrying out this survey independently on behalf of the Scottish Government and all 32 local authorities in Scotland. The findings from the survey will be treated confidentially and reported anonymously by Pye Tait Consulting under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Market Research Society (MRS) Code of Conduct.

If you have any queries, please contact Tom Wilson at Pye Tait Consulting, via [t.wilson\[at\]pyetait.com](mailto:t.wilson@pyetait.com) or by telephoning 01423 509433

To continue, please select a local authority verifier to provide your views and feedback. Please note that after you press 'submit' at the end of this survey, you will return to this page and your response for this local authority verifier will be marked as 'completed' (below). Thank you for taking the time to complete this online survey.

PART 1: About you and your application: [Local authority verifier selected]

Q1. In order to minimise selection error, customers are not presented with this drop-down list of 32 local authorities to manually select which to provide feedback about. Instead, this information was either pre-filled (for customers of one local authority verifier) or a dynamically controlled reduced list was presented for customers of more than one local authority verifier (typically agents).

Which ONE of the following local authorities are you responding about in this survey? (Please tick the appropriate box and complete a separate survey for any other local authorities of which you have been a customer since April 2020).

<input type="checkbox"/>	Aberdeen	<input type="checkbox"/>	Highland
<input type="checkbox"/>	Aberdeenshire	<input type="checkbox"/>	Inverclyde
<input type="checkbox"/>	Angus	<input type="checkbox"/>	Midlothian
<input type="checkbox"/>	Argyll and Bute	<input type="checkbox"/>	Moray
<input type="checkbox"/>	City of Edinburgh	<input type="checkbox"/>	North Ayrshire
<input type="checkbox"/>	Clackmannanshire	<input type="checkbox"/>	North Lanarkshire
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dumfries and Galloway	<input type="checkbox"/>	Orkney
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dundee	<input type="checkbox"/>	Perth and Kinross
<input type="checkbox"/>	East Ayrshire	<input type="checkbox"/>	Renfrewshire
<input type="checkbox"/>	East Dunbartonshire	<input type="checkbox"/>	Scottish Borders
<input type="checkbox"/>	East Lothian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Shetland
<input type="checkbox"/>	East Renfrewshire	<input type="checkbox"/>	South Ayrshire
<input type="checkbox"/>	Eilean Siar	<input type="checkbox"/>	South Lanarkshire
<input type="checkbox"/>	Falkirk	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stirling
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fife	<input type="checkbox"/>	West Dunbartonshire
<input type="checkbox"/>	Glasgow	<input type="checkbox"/>	West Lothian

Q2. In what capacity have you been a customer of the Building Standards service? [Tick one only]

<input type="checkbox"/>	Applicant for a building warrant and/or submitter of a completion certificate (e.g. building owner/tenant)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Agent working on behalf of another applicant/submitter
<input type="checkbox"/>	Both of the above, i.e. direct applicant/submitter AND agent
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

If 'Other' – please specify: _____

Q3.[Only asked if Option 1 selected to Q2] Did you use an agent to act on your behalf as part of the application process?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know

Q4.For which of the following categories of work have you submitted an application? [Tick all that apply]

<input type="checkbox"/>	Domestic new build – multiple plotted developments (houses/flats)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Domestic new build – other (e.g. one-off house build)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Domestic existing build - extension
<input type="checkbox"/>	Domestic existing build - alteration
<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-domestic – residential (e.g. hostels, guest houses, hotels, hospitals)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-domestic – assembly (e.g. churches, schools, health centres, libraries, stadia)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-domestic – commercial (e.g. shops, restaurants and office buildings)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-domestic – Industrial (e.g. factory buildings, manufacturing units, refineries)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-domestic – storage/agricultural (e.g. grain stores, car parks, bonded warehouse)

If 'Other' – please specify: _____

PART 2: Meeting your expectations: [Local authority verifier selected]

Q5.Overall, to what extent did the service you received from the local authority verifier Building Standards service meet your expectations? Please rate on a scale from 1 'not at all' to 10 'completely'?

Q6.Please provide your reasons for this rating:

PART 3: Progressing your application: [Local authority verifier selected]

Q7.How satisfied were you with the time taken by the local authority verifier Building Standards service to undertake each of the following? [Leave any statements blank if don't know or not applicable]

	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Respond to telephone enquiries					
Respond to written enquiries					
Issue the first report for a building warrant application (e.g. detailing non-compliance or further information requested)					
Process the application and grant a building warrant					
Respond to a request for a site visit					
Accept a completion certificate					

Q8.How satisfied are you with the way you were informed about the progress of your application? [Leave blank if don't know or not applicable]

	Very satisfied
	Fairly satisfied
	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
	Fairly dissatisfied
	Very dissatisfied

Q9.[Only asked if 'fairly dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' to Q8] What are your reasons?

PART 4: Quality of service: [Local authority verifier selected]

Q10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the advice and guidance you received from local authority verifier Building Standards service staff? [Leave any statements blank if don't know or not applicable]

	Strongly agree	Agree to some extent	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree to some extent	Strongly disagree
I received sufficient advice and guidance to meet my needs					
The advice and guidance I received was consistent					
The advice and guidance I received was helpful					

Q11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the quality of service received from Building Standards service staff? [Leave any statements blank if don't know or not applicable]

	Strongly agree	Agree to some extent	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree to some extent	Strongly disagree
Staff were polite and courteous					
Staff were helpful					
Staff were efficient					
Staff were knowledgeable					
I felt as though someone took ownership of my enquiry					
Any problems that arose were adequately resolved					
I felt valued as a customer					

Q12. [Only asked if 'Strongly Agree' to any components of Q10 or Q11] You have stated **STRONGLY AGREE** to at least one of the above statements with respect to the advice, guidance and quality of service you have received. Please can you explain what was particularly good?

Q13. [Only asked if 'Strongly Disagree' to any components of Q10 or Q11] You have stated **STRONGLY DISAGREE** to at least one of the above statements with respect to the advice, guidance and quality of service you have received. Please can you explain your reasons?

Q14. How satisfied were you with each of the following aspects of the inspection visit?
[Leave any statements blank if don't know or not applicable]

	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Flexibility of dates and times to meet my needs					
Professionalism of the inspection staff					
Thoroughness of the virtual inspection					
Quality of the advice and guidance received from the inspection staff					
My understanding of the next steps following the inspection					

PART 5: Communications: [Local authority verifier selected]

Q15. In which of the following ways did you interact with the local authority verifier Building Standards service? [Tick all that apply]

	Email
	Telephone
	Letter
	On-site visit
	At the Building Standards service offices
	Other

If 'Other' – please specify: _____

Q16. On a scale from 1 'very poor' to 10 'very good' - how would you rate each of the following aspects of the local authority verifier's written information and documentation:

	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10
Accuracy	
Quality	
Helpfulness	
Layout and presentation	
Use of plain English	

Q17. How satisfied are you with each of the following forms of electronic communication made available by the local authority verifier Building Standards service? [Leave any statements blank if don't know or not applicable]

	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Website					
Email					
SMS/text message					
e-newsletter					

Q18. [Only asked if 'fairly dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' to any of Q17 A to D] You stated FAIRLY DISSATISFIED or VERY DISSATISFIED to at least one of the options in the last question about electronic communication. What are your reasons?

Q19. Generally, in what ways (if any) do you think the local authority verifier Building Standards service could improve its communications?

PART 6: Accessibility: [Local authority verifier selected]

Q20. How easy was it to make contact with the local authority verifier Building Standards service via each of the following methods? Please rate on a scale from 1 'very difficult' to 10 'very easy'

	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10
In general	
By phone	
By email	
In person/virtually	

Q21. Please provide reasons for your ratings:

Q22. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to the local authority verifier Building Standards service? [Leave any statements blank if don't know or not applicable]

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree
Building Standards service staff are accessible if I want to meet with them (in person or virtually)					
Building Standards service staff are approachable					

PART 7: Overall satisfaction and final comments: [Local authority verifier selected]

Q23. Overall, how would you rate your satisfaction with the Building Standards service? Please rate on a scale from 1 'not at all satisfied' to 10 'completely satisfied'

Finally, do you have any final comments about how you believe the local authority verifier Building Standards service could be improved in the future?

Appendix 3: Survey invitation email

Email subject: Building Standards in Scotland – Customer Feedback Questionnaire

Dear {Name}

We are writing to you as a customer of the local authority verifier Building Standards service in Scotland.

This means that since 1st April 2020 you may have submitted a building warrant application, completion certificate, used the services of your own agent, or made other enquiries through your local authority verifier Building Standards service. You may also have been an agent acting on behalf of an applicant.

The Scottish Government would like to obtain your views and feedback on the customer service you received. This will help identify which aspects are working well and any areas where improvements need to be made in the future.

We would be grateful if you would spare 5 or 10 minutes to complete the online survey.

If you have been a customer of more than one local authority verifier Building Standards, you will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the service provided by each.

PLEASE CLICK HERE TO START THE SURVEY

Your feedback is important to us, even if you are not able to answer all questions or have had limited contact with the local authority verifier Building Standards service.

Further information, including our contact details, can be found via the survey link (above).

Many thanks for your time and contribution.

Kind regards,

Pye Tait Consulting (on behalf of the Scottish Government, Building Standards Division)

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