



# Client Satisfaction and Confidence in Government

Research in support of the Common Purpose Strategy

ERIN Research Inc  
for the Region of Peel

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# 1. INTRODUCTION, OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

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## Background

Peel's Common Purpose Strategy describes a unified approach to service delivery that emphasizes the links among employee engagement, client satisfaction and trust and confidence in Peel. The underlying premise is that engaged employees are positioned to provide superior levels of service to citizens, and that this in turn produces high levels of trust and confidence in the Peel regional government.

Peel's goal over the medium term is to test these assumptions with empirical research. Because the Common Purpose Strategy is wide ranging, involving both employees and clients, it is difficult to investigate all its components in a single piece of research. The current project focuses on the client side: client perceptions of service quality and trust and confidence in government.

Peel has conducted a significant amount of client research in the past. This work has been done by individual programs, designed around the specific needs and issues of those programs. The findings of this earlier research provides guidance to specific programs, but it cannot be aggregated across Peel's client base as a whole, as the methods and questions employed differ from one project to another.

The Common Purpose Strategy requires a comprehensive, unified approach to employee and client research, and in this vein, a primary goal of the current project is to build a research method that embraces all of Peel's diverse programs and clients. It will provide a common denominator of client feedback to support the Common Purpose Strategy.

## Objectives

- 1 Develop a baseline 'top of house' Client Satisfaction Index (CSI)
- 2 Gather baseline client satisfaction measures for specific services
- 3 Test the notion of universal drivers
- 4 Explore meaningful 'clusters' of services that share the same drivers
- 5 Understand clients' access experience and identify potential barriers
- 6 Explore if there are any differences in drivers by channel
- 7 Investigate attitudinal differences to service delivery among clients
- 8 Create a mathematical model for the relationship between client satisfaction and trust and confidence
- 9 Lay the groundwork to explore drivers for specific service processes
- 10 Enable future analysis of satisfaction scores for each ward.

## Our clients

Clients of the Region of Peel are clearly all those who reside in Peel, but a working definition of “our clients” must consider several factors. First, it was decided to omit business clients from this initial study. A decision will be made later whether there is value in rolling the views of business clients and citizens into a single whole or whether they are best kept separate.

Considering just citizens who reside in Peel, services divide into two groups:

- Services that all citizens use such as water and roads. These includes all the services of the ETPS division with the exception of TransHelp.
- Services that are used by segments of the population with specific needs. These include most of the programs offered by the Health and Human Services Divisions.

Within each of these broad areas are a number of specific programs. The Common Purpose Strategy requires a system that balances all these programs appropriately. This will give an overall Corporate perspective on client satisfaction. A rational method of representing these many programs is on the basis of budget, as this reflects the resources that the Peel applies to each. The corporate results that are presented in this report weight the contribution of each program in proportion to its budget.

## Design

The research design brings the foregoing definition of Peel’s clients to an operational level. The design includes:

1. A survey of the general population, with respondents selected at random from a standard database of Canadian residents representing users of Environment, Transportation and Planning Services (ETPS);
2. Surveys of Health and Human Services (HHS) clients, with respondents drawn from the current client population;
3. A survey of Long Term Care clients (LTC);
4. A survey for Emergency Shelters and Transitional Housing residents (ESTH).

All 4 surveys contained parallel questions on core issues. Customized questions on specific services were developed in consultation with the Directors. Overall, the survey of the general population contained more detailed question on ETPS services and the Health and Human Services surveys contained additional questions on those areas.

The comprehensive surveys for the general population and HHS clients were administered by telephone. Potential participants were mailed a letter prior to the survey explaining its purpose. Those who did not wish to be contacted could opt out by phoning the Client Contact Centre, and approximately ten percent did so.

The LTC survey was printed on paper and delivered to residents, who mailed the completed document to ERIN Research in a return envelope. The ESTH surveys were administered on paper to residents in small group sessions that were lead by Region of Peel staff.

Surveys were conducted between early March and mid-June, 2008.

**Sample**

Figure 1 shows the balance among the four survey groups on the basis of budget. The number of clients interviewed in each group reflects this balance.

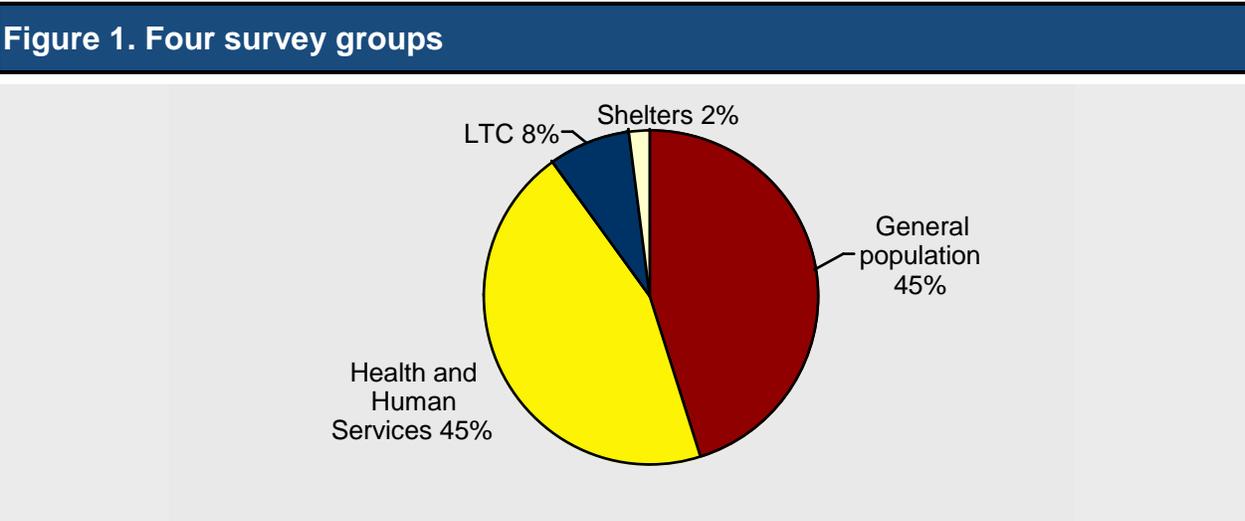


Table 1 shows the numbers of clients interviewed for each survey. The “raw number” is the actual number of individuals interviewed. The “weighted number” adjusts this in proportion to program budgets.

<b>Table 1. Sample structure</b>			
<b>Survey group</b>	<b>Raw number</b>	<b>Weighted number</b>	<b>Weighted percent</b>
General population: ETPS services	1,527	1,369	45
Health and Human Services (HHS)	1,108	1,358	45
Long Term Care (LTC)	320	236	8
Emergency Shelters and Transitional Housing (ESTH)	61	53	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,016</b>	<b>3,016</b>	<b>100</b>

## Response rate

Response rates are calculated using the formula recommended by Statistics Canada. Response for the HHS and LTC surveys are higher than for the general population. The HHS and LTC clients have a more immediate and personal relationship with Peel services than do many citizens, and higher rates for these groups are to be expected.

The response of 31% for the general population is very good by current standards. All in all, the response indicates that the data provide a reliable foundation for understanding and action.

Table 2. Response rate	
Survey group	Response rate (percent)
General population: ETPS services	31
Health and Human Services (HHS)	57
Long Term Care (LTC)	48
Emergency Shelters and Transitional Housing (ESTH)	na

## Reporting of results

The majority of survey questions used 5-point response scales, where, for example, 1 indicates “Strongly disagree” and 5 indicates “Strongly agree”. When reporting results, it is often useful to give the average response, and readers tend to find the 5-point format difficult in this context.

The more intuitive 10-point format is used to report average scores. This 10-point scale corresponds to the 5-point scale used to answer the survey in the following manner:

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	Strongly disagree									Strongly agree	
<i>Staff were knowledgeable and competent</i>	1	2	3	4	5						
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

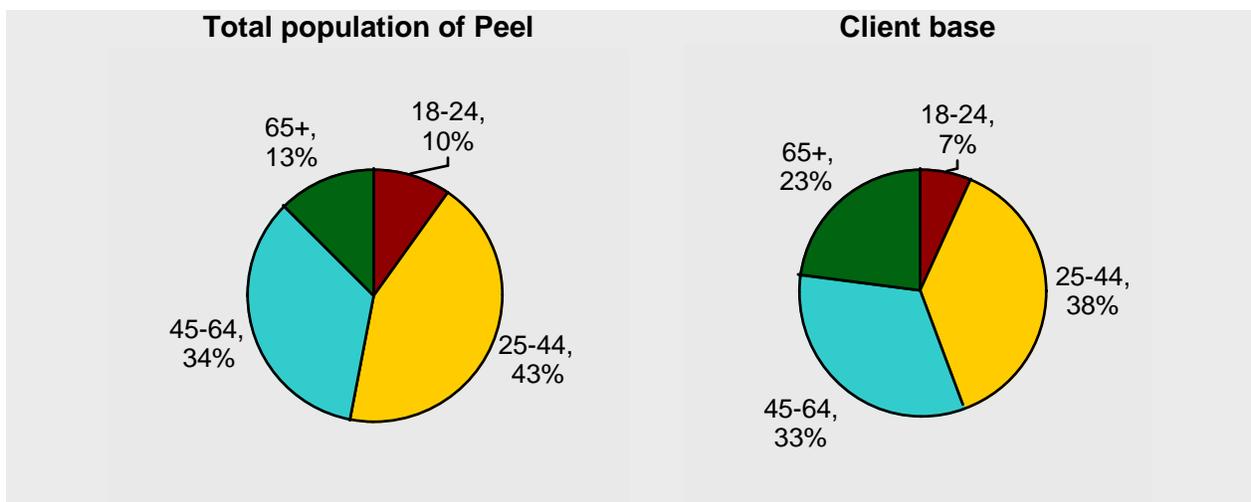
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## 2. WHO ARE OUR CLIENTS?

Many of the following demographic differences are expected given that the Human and Health services tend to target specific groups, such as age groups or employment groups.

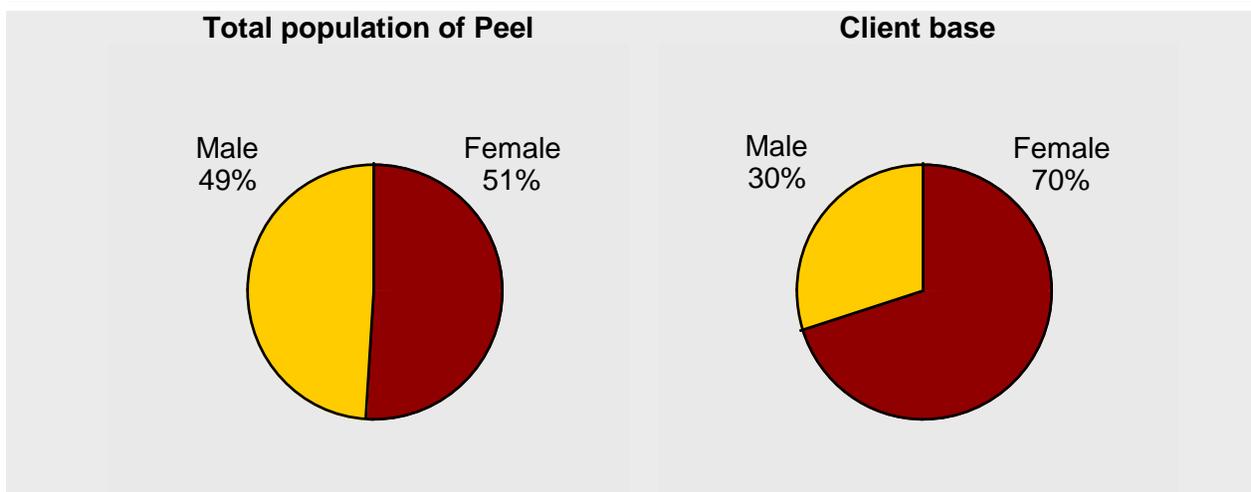
The Peel client base has a higher proportion of people aged 65+ (23 percent) than in the general population (13 percent). While the proportions of people 18-24 and 45-64 are relatively similar for both groups, the difference in the percent of 65+ residents is balanced out by fewer people aged 25-44 (33 percent) for the client base versus the general population (43 percent).

**Figure 2. Age: General population versus the client base**



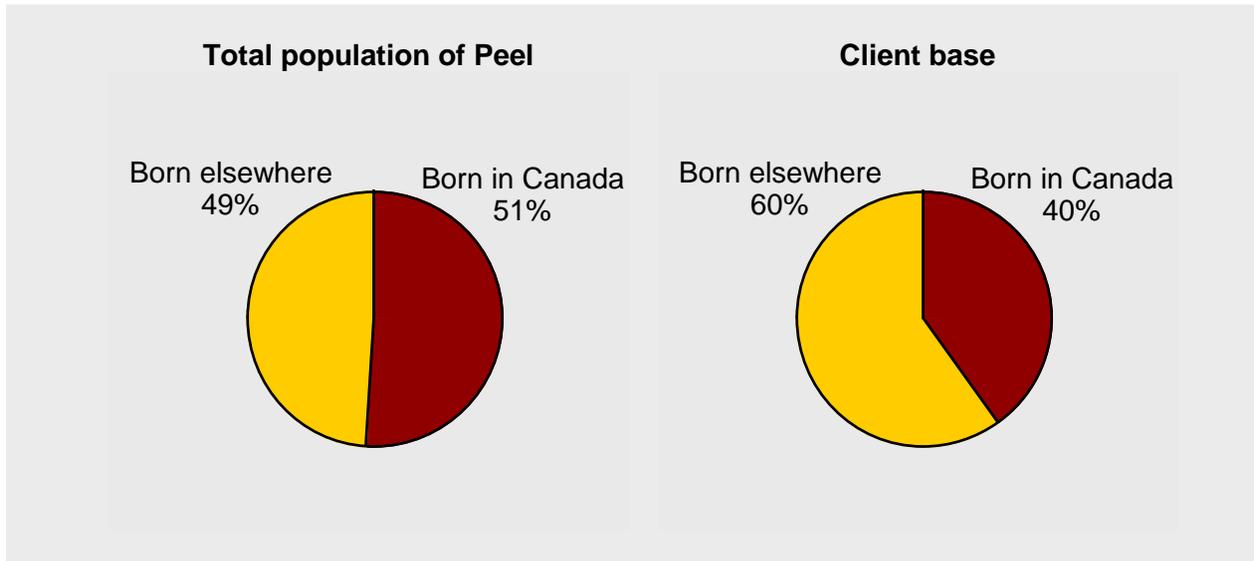
Among Peel clients the proportion of women is higher (70 percent) than in the general population (51 percent).

**Figure 3. Gender: General population versus the client base**



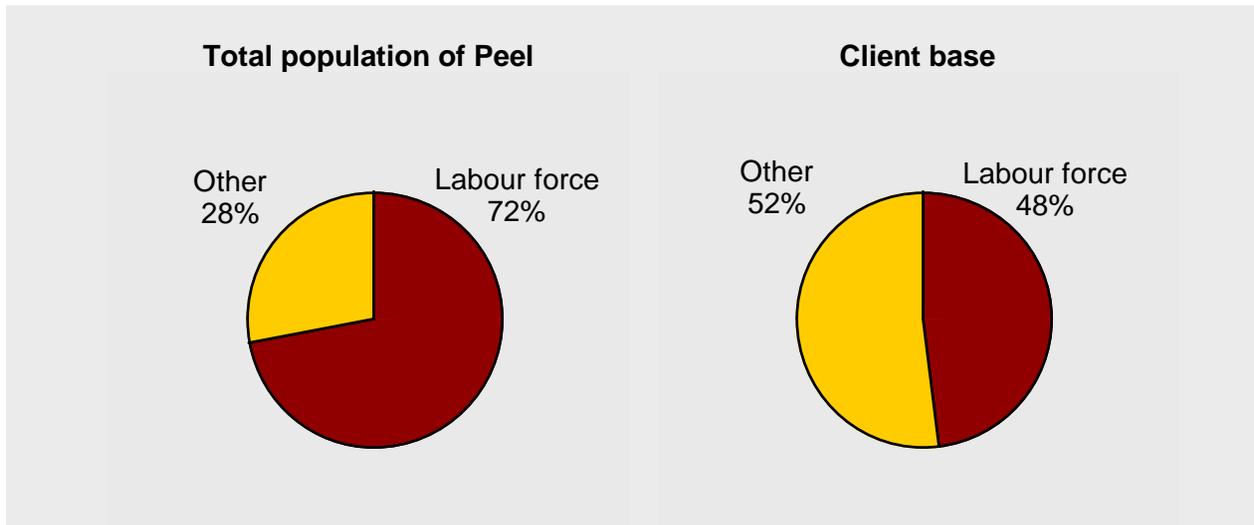
Among Peel clients the proportion of immigrants is higher (60 percent) than in the general population (49 percent). Interestingly, immigrants make up almost half of the total population of Peel.

**Figure 4. Immigrant status: General population versus the client base**



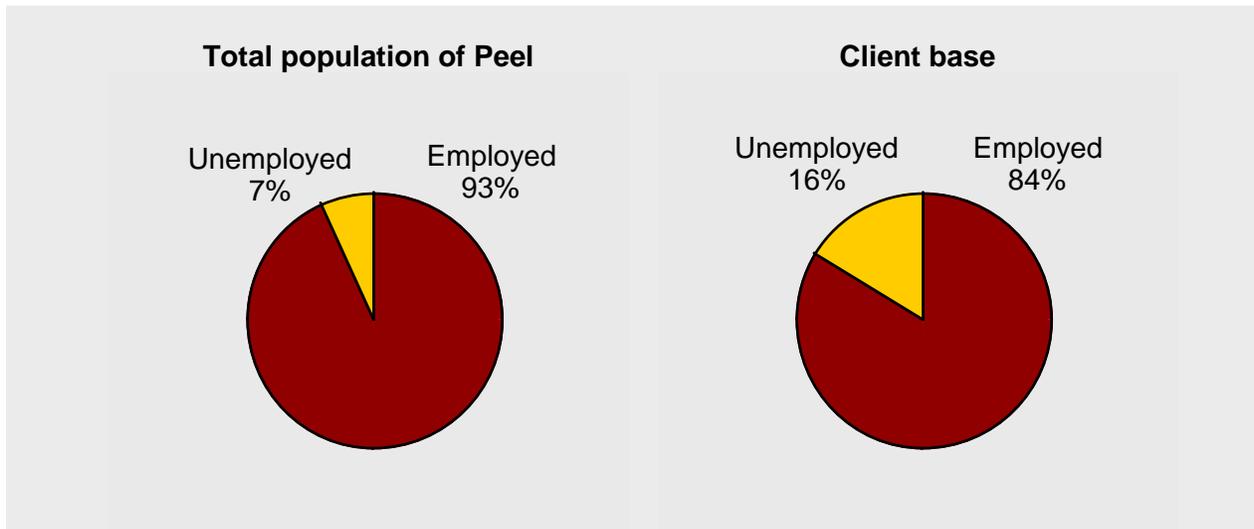
Among Peel clients the labour force participation rate is lower (44 percent) than in the general population (72 percent). This is not surprising given the higher proportion of 65+ residents in the client base population.

**Figure 5. Labour force participation: General population versus the client base**



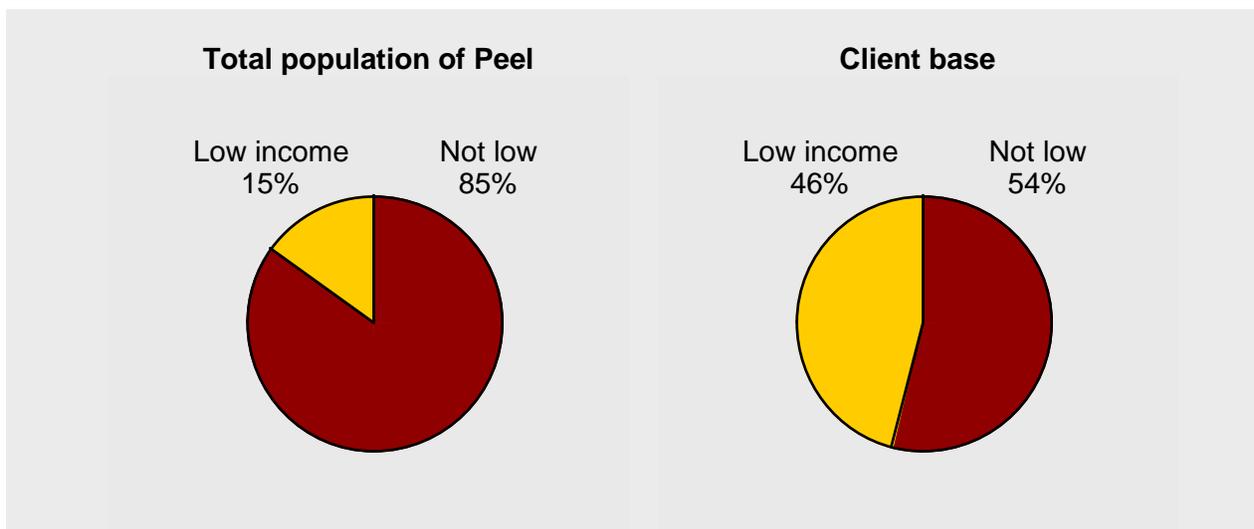
The unemployment rate for Peel clients (19 percent) is more than twice as high as the general population (7 percent). This is an expected difference given the participation of Ontario Works clients in the study.

**Figure 6. Unemployment rate: General population versus the client base**



Among Peel clients there are three times as many low-income families and individuals (46 percent) than in the general population (15 percent).

**Figure 7. Income level: General population versus the client base**



### 3. WHAT DO OUR CLIENTS KNOW ABOUT US?

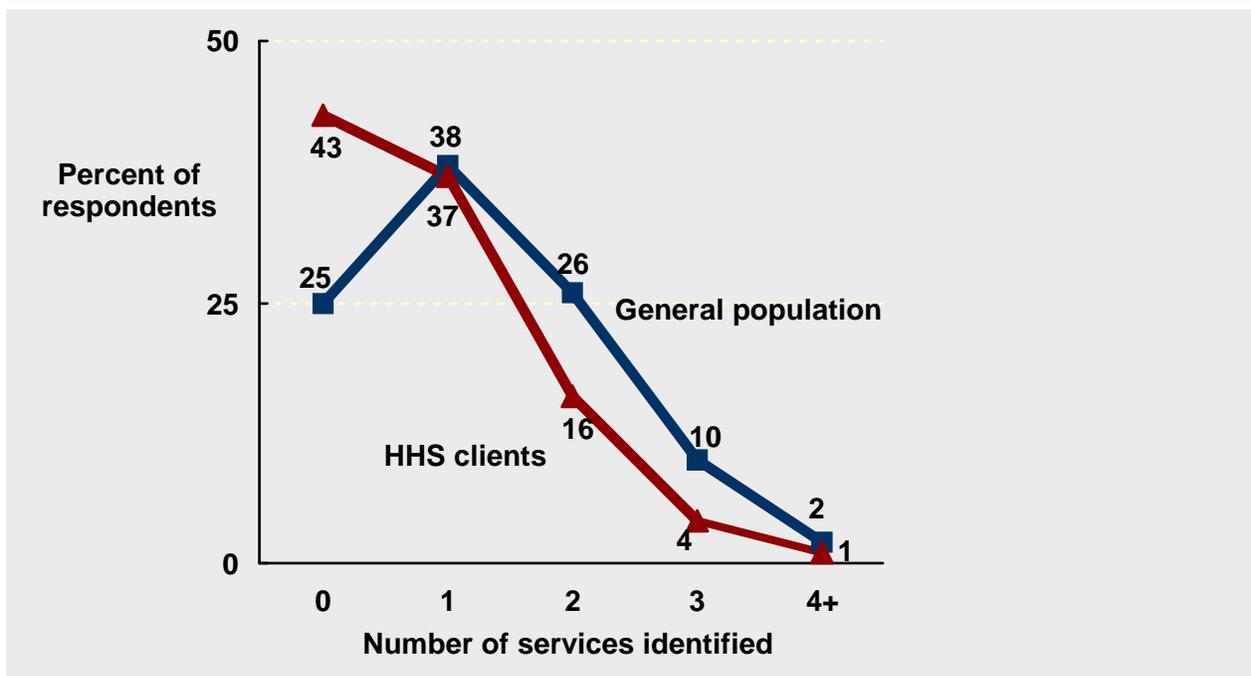
Respondents were queried on two important dimensions of awareness.

Peel residents were first asked: “Can you think of any services that are provided by the Region of Peel?”

Respondents named as many services as they could and interviewers checked off the relevant responses from a list of 21 Peel services.

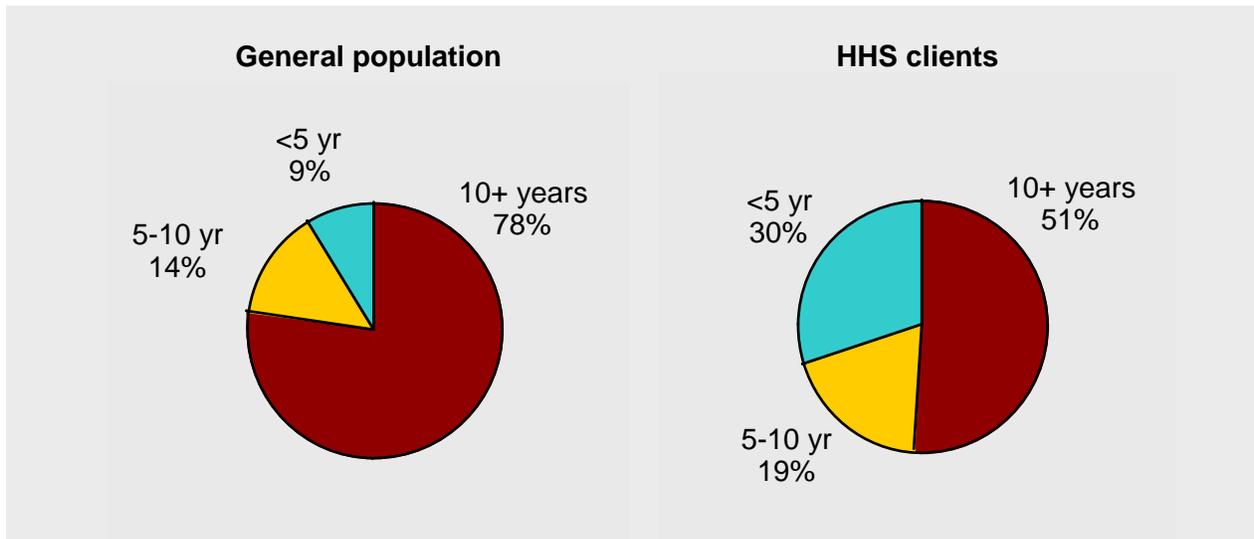
Human and Health Services clients overall were less likely to be able to name Peel services. While 25 percent of the general population could not name a single service, 43 percent of Peel clients could not name a single service, even though all clients by definition participate in at least one service. It is possible that Peel services are integrated into HHS clients’ lives to such a high degree that they don’t perceive them as distinct services. Only 21 percent of HHS clients could name 2 or more services, while 38 percent of the general population named 2 or more. Few respondents in either group were able to name 4 or more services.

**Figure 8. Can you think of any services that are provided by the Region of Peel?**



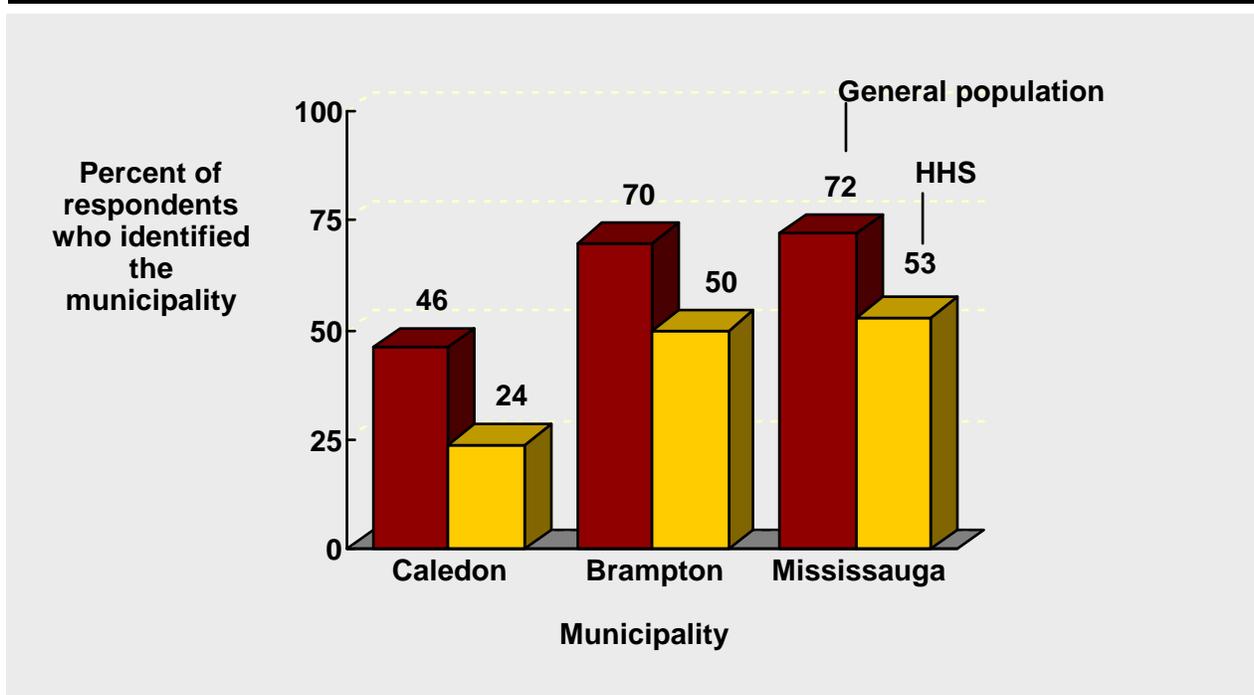
One other likely factor in HHS clients' inability to name Peel services can be seen in Figure 9. Respondents in the general population have lived in Peel longer than HHS clients. Over three-fourths of the general population have lived in Peel for 10 or more years, while just over a half of the HHS clients have lived in Peel for 10 or more years. Just under one in ten respondents in the general population has lived in Peel for less than 5 years, while almost one-third of HHS clients have moved to Peel in the past 5 years.

**Figure 9. Length of time living in Peel: General population versus the client base**



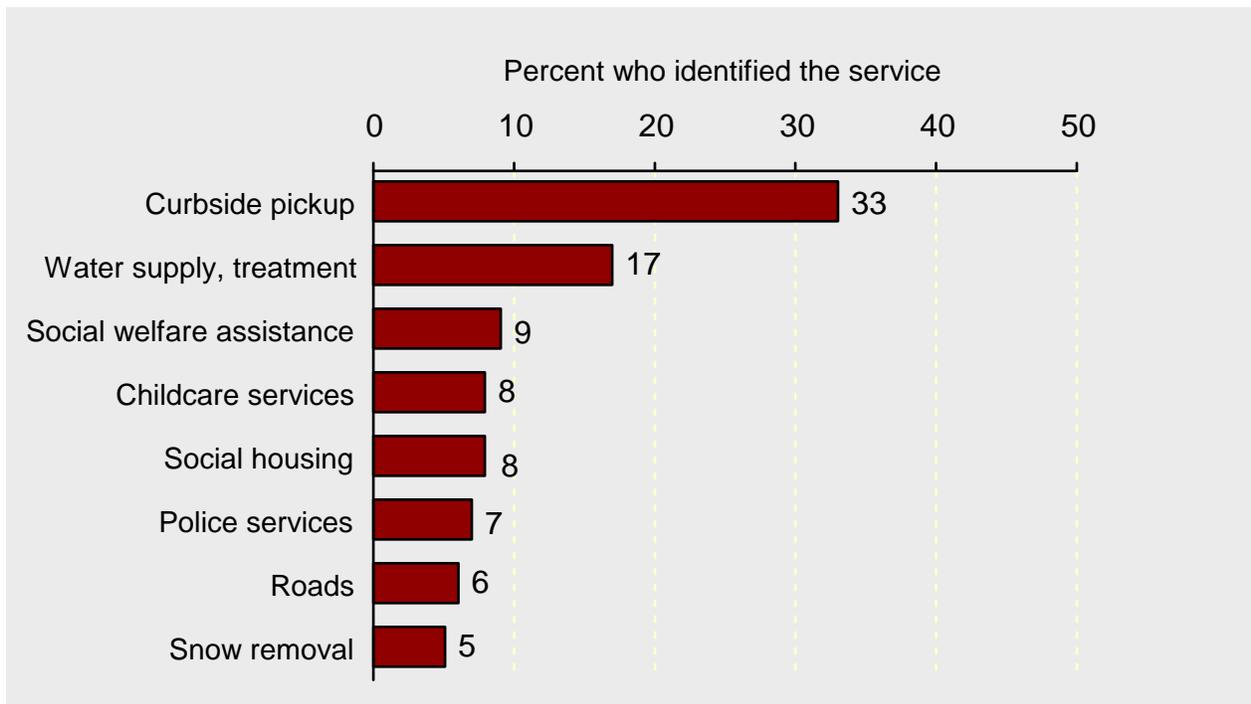
Peel residents were also asked whether they could name the cities and towns that make up the Region of Peel. Forty-two percent of the general population could name all three municipalities. Both HHS clients and the general population were less likely to name Caledon compared to the other two municipalities. In fact, less than half of the general population could name Caledon.

**Figure 10. “Do you happen to know the cities and towns that make up the Region of Peel?”**



One-third of respondents identified “Curbside pickup” as a Peel service, while 17 percent identified “Water supply, treatment.” These responses are logical given the prevalence of garbage and water in everyday lives. The inclusion of HHS clients led to observable responses regarding “Social welfare assistance,” “Childcare services,” and “Social housing.”

**Figure 11. "Can you think of any services that are provided by the Region of Peel?"**



## 4. HOW SATISFIED ARE PEEL CLIENTS WITH OUR SERVICES?

The research was designed to include as many services that Peel provides to citizens as possible. Some selection was necessary, particularly in the area of Public Health. Some Public Health services raise privacy issues, and with other services it is difficult to identify appropriate respondents. This can be the case with educational initiatives such as anti-smoking campaigns, and areas such as inspection services which are largely invisible to the public.

Table 3 reports the scores for the 26 services that were included.

The ETPS and Corporate Services are provided to all residents on an equal basis. Ratings of these services are therefore taken from the general population sample, which is representative of the population of Peel as a whole.

<b>Table 3. Ratings of individual services</b>			
<b>HUMAN SERVICES</b>		<b>HEALTH SERVICES</b>	
Active OW clients	7.5	Long Term Care Service	8.2
Recent OW clients	6.5	Falls Prevention Clinics	8.3
Homeless/Transitional Housing Clients	7.3	Smoking Cessation clinics	8.9
Directly Operated Childcare: Full fee	8.2	Dental Screening Service (CINOT)	7.2
Directly Operated Childcare: Subsidized	8.2	Breastfeeding Support	8.5
Contracted Childcare Sites: Subsidized	9.2	Prenatal Services	9.1
Childcare Subsidy Wait List	3.5	Healthy Babies Healthy Children	8.8
Rent Supplement Clients, commercial buildings	6.7		
Peel Living Residents	7.5	<b>ETPS</b>	
Peel Living Wait List	4.8	Water Quality	7.5
		Water Billing and Collection Service	8.0
		Water Meter Repairs and Maintenance	8.3
<b>CORPORATE SERVICES</b>		TransHelp Service	7.5
Heritage Complex	7.9	Roads	6.8
Client Contact Centre	7.6	Waste Collection Service (curbside pickup)	8.0
		Community Recycling Service	8.6

HHS are provided selectively to those who need them. Clients of these services represent small segments of the population and it is not possible to get accurate ratings of these services in a survey of the population at large. Ratings were therefore obtained from current clients of these

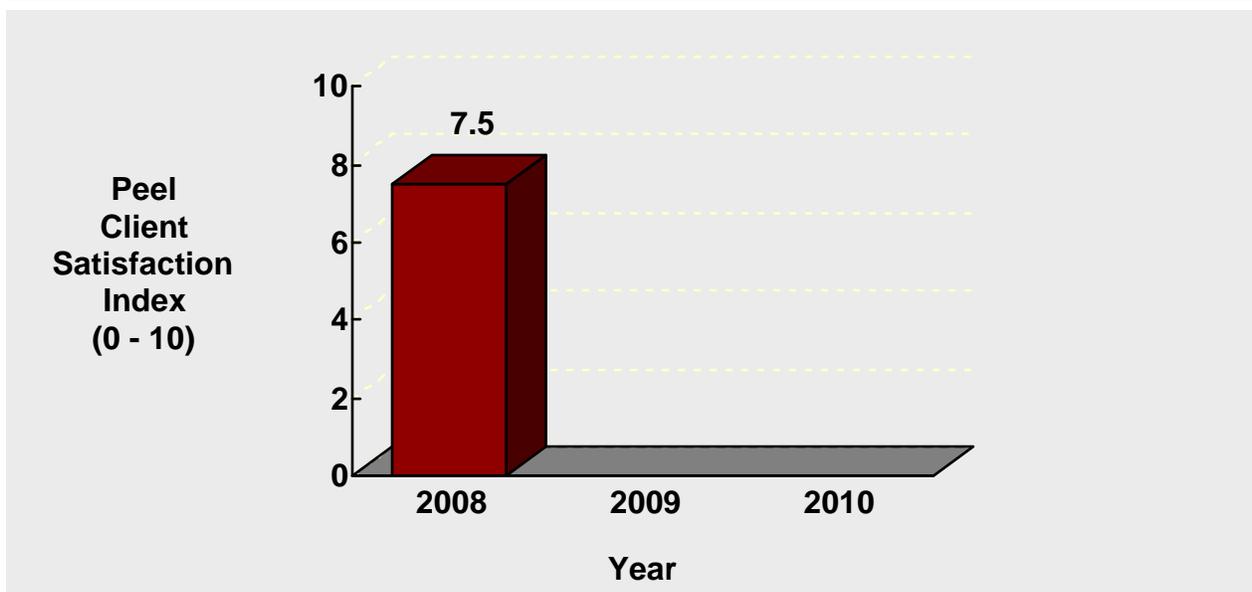
services. The ratings of these services in Table 3 are based largely on these client ratings. They also include any members of the general population who used the service in the past year.

## Peel Client Satisfaction Index

The individual scores are combined into a single Client Satisfaction Index (CSI) that summarizes citizens' perceptions of the Region's overall performance. This index will serve as a reference point for assessing service improvement efforts as Peel goes forward.

The index is a weighted average of the 26 ratings in Table 3, where each score is weighted according to the proportion of the budget that the program uses.

**Figure 12. Peel Client Satisfaction Index**



The index currently stands at 7.5 out of 10. A natural question is, how does this stack up against other jurisdictions? While no other jurisdiction has a satisfaction index that parallels Peel's CSI, comparative information on a number of services is available. Citizens First 5 (CF5) is a national survey in which the Region of Peel was a partner. It is a national project that obtained ratings from 6,000 Canadians in late 2007 on a broad range of government services.

Table 4 compares scores from the current Peel survey with CF5 results for each of five ETPS services:

- Column 1 contains ratings from the present 2008 survey, as reported in Table 3
- Column 2 shows Peel's ratings from Citizens First 5
- Column 3 shows residents of other Canadian municipalities rated their municipal services.

There is little difference between Peel and other municipalities on water quality and garbage collection. (Differences of .5 points or less are within the range of sampling error). On the other services – recycling, snow removal and road maintenance – Peel stands well above the national average.

<b>Table 4. Peel compares well with the rest of Canada</b>			
<b>Service</b>	<b>Peel, 2008</b>	<b>Peel, CF5</b>	<b>Rest of Canada, CF5</b>
Water quality	7.5	8.0	7.8
Garbage collection	8.0	8.1	7.9
Recycling	8.6	8.4	7.3
Snow removal	7.5	6.6	5.9
Road maintenance	6.3	6.5	5.0

Table 5 extends the comparison to five other service areas. The number of Peel respondents in CF5 who had used these services is too low to report reliable results, so the “Peel CF5” column is missing. For each of these services, Peel scores higher than the rest of Canada.

<b>Table 5. Additional service quality comparisons with CF5</b>		
<b>Service</b>	<b>Peel, 2008</b>	<b>Rest of Canada, CF5</b>
<b>CF5: Information services of your municipality</b>		6.6
The Client Contact Centre	7.6	
<b>CF5: Subsidized public daycare</b>		6.9
Directly Operated Childcare: Subsidized families	8.2	
Contracted Childcare sites: Subsidized families	9.2	
<b>CF5: Lived or stayed in public housing</b>		4.8
Rent supplement clients, commercial buildings	6.7	
Peel Living residents	7.5	
<b>CF5: Social assistance, welfare</b>		5.8
Active OW clients	7.5	
Recent OW clients (within past year)	6.5	
<b>CF5: Lived or stayed at a shelter or hostel</b>		5.0
Homeless/Transitional Housing Clients	7.3	

## 5. WHAT DRIVES CLIENT SATISFACTION WITH PEEL SERVICES?

In any service encounter, some clients will be very satisfied, some will be very dissatisfied and the majority are generally somewhere in between. Clients have reasons for deciding on one rating or another. Sometimes the reasons are idiosyncratic, but for the most part they make sense. This chapter explores what separates satisfied and dissatisfied clients. It considers the broad range of Peel services and asks whether there is a set of factors, common to all service encounters, that drives client satisfaction.

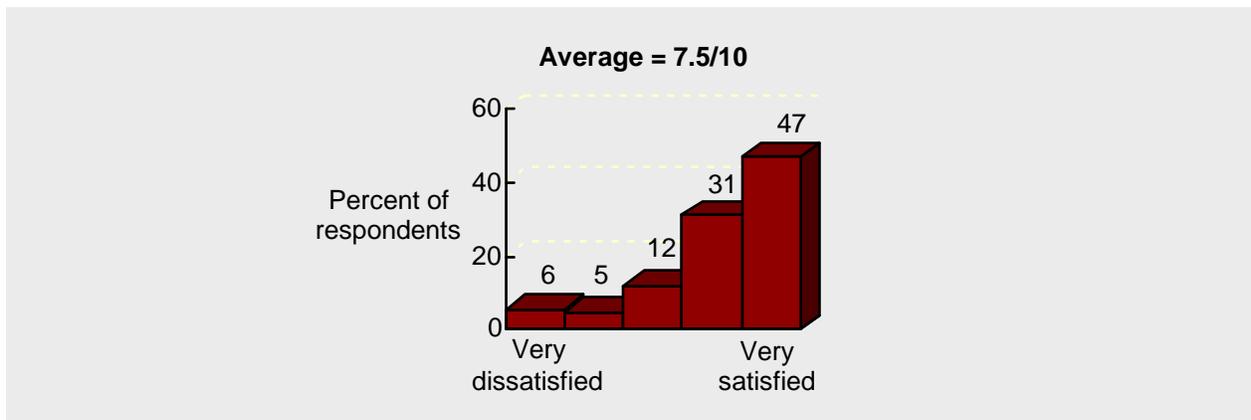
The survey asked each respondent to identify their most recent direct service experience with the Region of Peel. For respondents in the general survey, those chosen at random from the entire population, these services were most often ETPS services, though some were in the areas of Health and Human Services. Respondents who were selected from the current clientele of Health and Human Services generally described their primary HHS service.

Table 6 shows the percentage of clients who described each service.

<b>Table 6. Services selected</b>			
<b>HUMAN SERVICES</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>HEALTH SERVICES</b>	<b>%</b>
Active OW clients	18	Long Term Care Service	1
Recent OW clients	5	Falls Prevention Clinics	<1
Homeless/Transitional Housing Clients	–	Smoking Cessation clinics	1
Directly Operated Childcare: Full fee	1	Dental Screening Service (CINOT)	1
Directly Operated Childcare: Subsidized	3	Breastfeeding Support	2
Contracted Childcare Sites: Subsidized	5	Prenatal Services	1
Childcare Subsidy Wait List	1	Healthy Babies, Healthy Children	7
Rent Supplement Clients, commercial buildings	1		
Peel Living Residents	9	<b>ETPS</b>	
Peel Living Wait List	7	Water Quality	1
		Water Billing and Collection Service	2
<b>CORPORATE SERVICES</b>		Water Meter Repairs and Maintenance	5
Heritage Complex	<1	TransHelp Service	2
Client Contact Centre	3	Roads	1
Peel website	5	Waste Collection Service (curbside pickup)	8
		Community Recycling Service	8

Figure 13 shows satisfaction ratings with the recent service. The large majority, 78 percent were satisfied with the experience, while 11 percent were dissatisfied and 12 percent neutral. The question that this chart asks is: What separates those who are satisfied from those who are not? Identifying the issues that dissatisfied clients face should enable the Region to improve services to this constituency.

**Figure 13. Satisfaction with the recent service**



## Do demographics explain differences in satisfaction?

An initial question is whether certain demographic segments are more or less satisfied. This was tested, and the short answer is that *demographics do little to explain the spread of scores* in Figure 13. Gender, length of residence in Canada, and first language are statistically unrelated to satisfaction. There is a very slight association of income with satisfaction:

- Among those with family incomes less than \$20,000, 70 percent were satisfied with the recent experience;
- In the mid-range, between \$20,000 and \$100,000, 78 were satisfied;
- In the upper range, over \$100,000, 89 percent were satisfied.

This, however, is hardly an explanation of satisfaction. It simply reflects the fact that those in the lowest income levels have problems that those with high incomes do not. For example, a substantial portion of the lowest income group is on a wait list. These clients are understandably less satisfied than others (see Table 3 for satisfaction scores of those on wait lists and those receiving service.) There is also a slight link between satisfaction and age, but this also does not offer particularly useful explanation. Young adults typically give slightly lower ratings to government (and many consumer) services, while those over age 65 typically give slightly higher ratings.

Thus, demographics do not provide much insight into satisfaction with Peel's services. In fact, this is a very positive finding. It means that no identifiable segment of the population has been left by the wayside. **Peel serves all the major demographic groups equally well.**

## Drivers of satisfaction

With demographics ruled out, the search for an explanation of client satisfaction turns to the service delivery process itself:

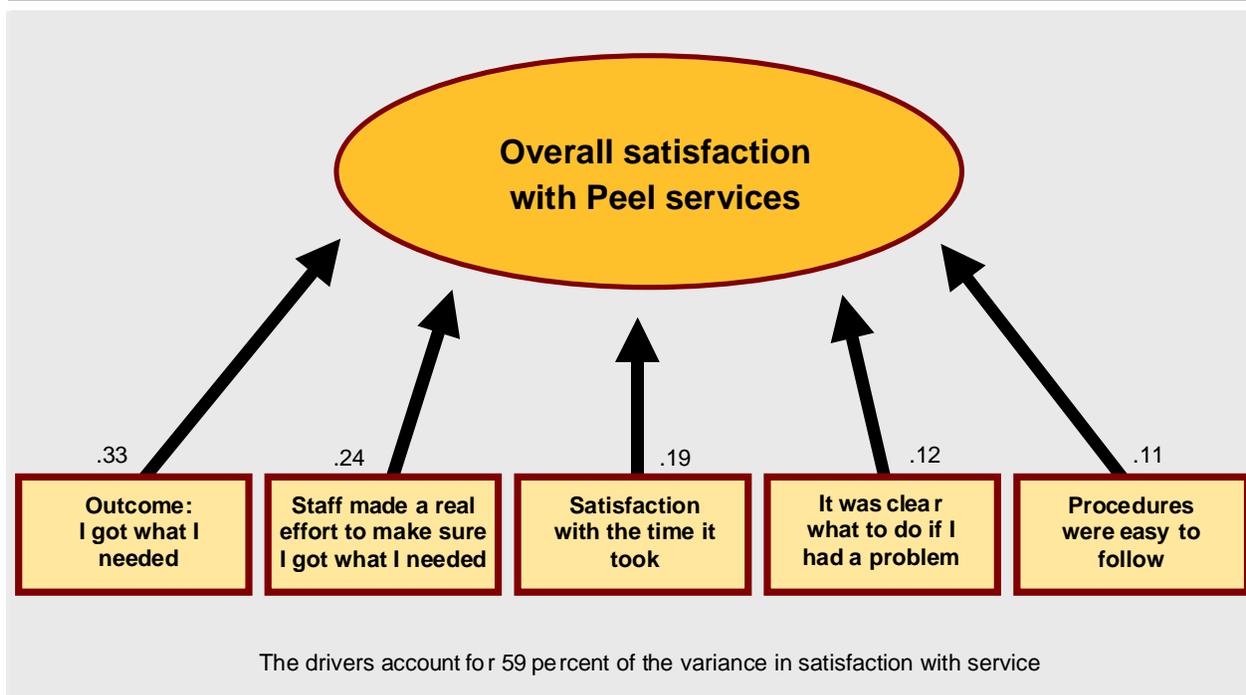
- What elements of the service delivery process have an important impact on satisfaction?
- How great an impact on satisfaction do these elements have?
- Are these elements – or “drivers” common across many services, or do they vary from one service to the next?

Peel provides a wide array of services, (Table 6) and it is possible that the factors underlying client satisfaction are very different from one service to another. If this were the case there would be no common set of drivers.

In order to identify drivers, respondents were asked a detailed series of questions about their recent service, including the ease of accessing the service, their perceptions of the staff they dealt with, the amount of time it took, and others. These data were then analyzed to determine drivers of client satisfaction.

**The analysis identified five elements that drive satisfaction across all Peel services** (Figure 14). **The existence of a set of common drivers means that Peel can adopt a unified approach to service improvement.** All divisions and programs can benefit from a common approach to service improvement.

**Figure 14. Drivers of satisfaction for the entire client base**



*See the Appendix for a discussion of “variance”.*

The drivers are listed beginning with the strongest – Outcome. The number above the driver indicates the relative importance of that driver.<sup>1</sup>

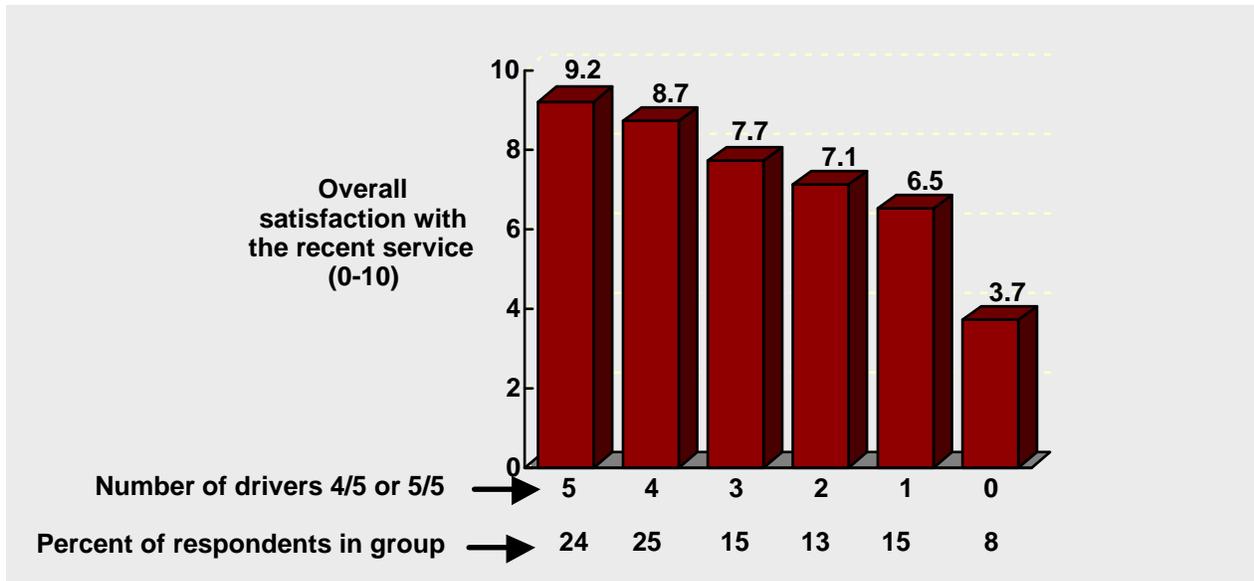
The impact that the drivers have on client satisfaction is illustrated in Figure 15.

The first column represents the 24 percent of respondents whose service experience was ideal, or close to ideal. They had a favourable outcome and they rated Peel’s performance at either 4/5 or 5/5 on each of the drivers: in their experience, staff made a real effort, the service was provided in a timely manner, it was clear what to do if there were a problem, and procedures were easy to follow. These clients rated service at 9.2 out of 10 on average. **It is important to note that these highly satisfied clients do not cluster in any program or division – they are distributed across the full range of Peel services.**

The second column represents the 25% of clients for whom just one of the drivers fell short. Either outcome was unsatisfactory or performance fell below the 4 out of 5 mark on one of the other drivers. There is a slight decrement in overall satisfaction for this group, although their overall satisfaction score remains very high at 8.7 out of 10.

Each succeeding column adds an additional driver that falls below the 4 out of 5 standard, and overall satisfaction decreases incrementally as a result. When all the drivers are low, overall satisfaction is just 3.7 out of 10. This was the experience of 8 percent of clients in the survey.

**Figure 15. Impact of the drivers on overall satisfaction**



<sup>1</sup> The number above the driver is a standardized regression coefficient. The value -.19 for “Satisfaction with the time it took” means that a 1-unit increase in client ratings of timeliness will lead to an increase of .19 units in overall satisfaction.

Figure 15 represents a slight simplification, in that the drivers do not have equal impacts – it matters more if a client fails to get the outcome they need than if service is less than timely. Still, it shows the incremental impact that the drivers have. Each one of them is important. Clients who experience good service on each dimension are extremely satisfied, but to the extent that any drivers slip, so does client satisfaction.

## Implications

Two important points emerge from these results.

First, it is apparent that the Region of Peel can provide a very high degree of service to its citizens. One-quarter of clients are in the first group in Figure 15 and another quarter just fractionally behind in the second group. Peel does not, therefore have to re-think its approach to service delivery. (If the most satisfied clients were in the 6 to 7 out of 10 range, a wholesale re-vamping of service delivery might be in order, but this is clearly not Peel's situation).

The current results emphasize that high scores come from service delivery that is consistently high across the full set of drivers. **Improvements will arise by giving all clients the level of service that one-half of clients receive today.**

Second, there are, of course, limitations to what Peel can do. It is not always possible to give clients the outcome they want. These limitations probably arise more in the Human Services area than elsewhere, and they place a ceiling on this driver. With the other drivers, there is theoretically no ceiling. Staff can make an effort on behalf of every client, though if workload is high and time is short it may not be a practical reality. Timely service is clearly possible, as most clients give good ratings for timeliness, however delays caused by inefficient processes or regulations may impact others.

In a word, the driver results suggest that gains in client satisfaction scores can be achieved through a common improvement approach – to ensure that service delivery processes work in all contexts, at all times. With a baseline CSI of 7.5, it is likely that gains may be relatively small, but still very important.

## Where to start

Is there a logical beginning point where Peel should focus its service improvement efforts? In general, the greatest gains can be realized by addressing:

- Drivers that have a large impact, and/or;
- Drivers where current performance is relatively low. (Increasing ratings on a driver from 6 out of 10 to 7 will have the same impact on overall satisfaction as increasing ratings from 8 out of 10 to 9, but the former is generally a lot easier to accomplish).

Table 7 presents the relevant results. The relative impact of the drivers is repeated from Figure 14 – Outcome is the strongest, followed by staff effort and timeliness.

In terms of performance, outcome and the other four drivers are measured on different scales and so are not directly comparable. However the four drivers measured on the 0-to-10 scale are all very similar in performance.

These results do not prescribe any necessary starting point. Outcome appears to offer promise, though, as mentioned earlier, it may not be possible to increase the 72 percent figure beyond some ceiling dictated by prevailing realities (for example, Peel is not in a position to eliminate waiting lists in some areas). Staff effort and timely service offer good prospects as well.

From a corporate perspective, the best strategy may be to promote knowledge of these results and let each program determine the avenues for improvement that are most relevant to them.

**Table 7. Current performance on the drivers**

Driver	Performance	Impact
Outcome (% who got what they needed)	72%	.33
Staff made a real effort to help me get what I needed	7.8	.24
I was satisfied with the time it took	7.7	.19
It was clear what to do if I had a problem	7.8	.12
Procedures were easy to follow	8.2	.11

*Values for 'Impact' are standardized regression coefficients.*

**Other correlates of satisfaction**

The drivers tell a compelling story: are there any other useful insights? To round out the investigation, tests were conducted to determine whether there is a relationship between satisfaction and:

- Awareness of Peel services: Are those who have greater knowledge of the services that Peel delivers more or less satisfied?
- Number of channels used to get the service: Do one- or two-channel service experiences generate higher satisfaction than multi-channel experiences?

Neither of these elements has a meaningful impact on satisfaction, leaving the drivers as the keys to service improvement.

## Satisfied and less satisfied clients

In focusing service improvements it can be useful to ask whether dissatisfied clients are found disproportionately in certain areas. Earlier sections of this chapter have found that dissatisfaction is not linked to any meaningful degree to:

- Demographic segments;
- Those who are more or less aware of Peel's services;
- Those who use more or fewer channels to get service.

This section asks a final question in this vein – whether dissatisfaction is higher in certain services than in others. This is, in fact, just a slightly different perspective on the results in Table 3, which shows overall satisfaction scores by service.

**Error! Reference source not found.** shows that there is actually rather little variation in the proportion of dissatisfied clients from one service to another. A major determinant of dissatisfaction is being on a wait list, which is no surprise. With wait lists removed:

- The percentage of **dissatisfied** clients varies from 5 percent to 11 percent of clients, a range of 6 percentage points;
- The percentage of **neutral** clients varies from 5 percent to 19 percent of clients, a range of 14 percentage points;
- The percentage of **satisfied** clients varies from 71 percent to 91 percent of clients, a range of 20 percentage points;

**Table 8. Client satisfaction by service area**

Service	Percent of clients		
	Dissatisfied (1, 2 / 5)	Neutral (3/5)	Satisfied (4, 5/5)
ETPS services: General population survey	6	18	77
ETPS: Clients who described an ETPS service in the recent experience section of the survey	11	10	79
Childcare	3	6	91
Peel Living	9	19	72
Ontario Works	10	19	71
Public Health	5	5	90
Corporate (Contact Centre, Internet, Heritage Complex)	6	10	84
Wait lists clients: Childcare and Peel Living	40	26	34

To round out the discussion, Table 9 contrasts how satisfied, neutral and dissatisfied customers rated the drivers of satisfaction. They diverge sharply on each one. This is really a statement of the obvious – the drivers are the elements of the service experience that most clearly distinguish satisfied from dissatisfied clients.

**Table 9. Current performance on the drivers**

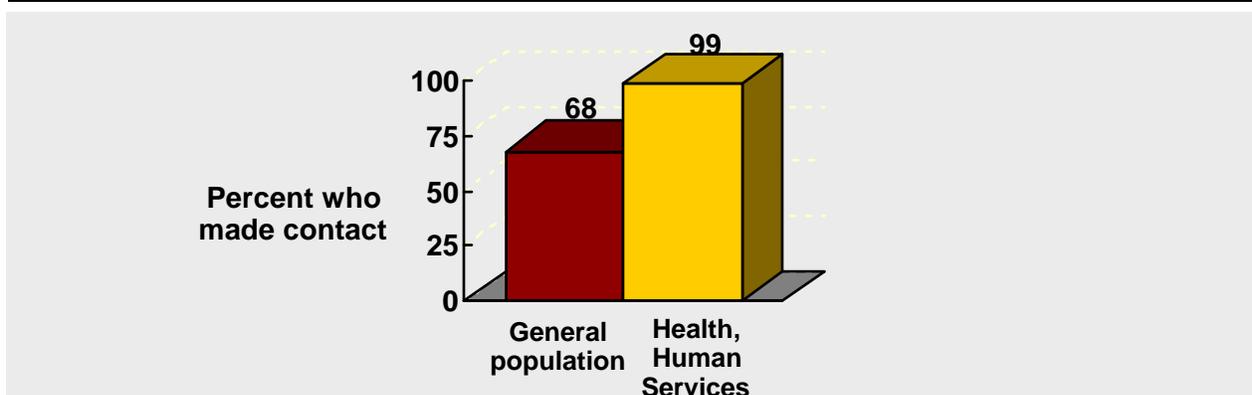
Driver	Percent of clients		
	Dissatisfied (1, 2 / 5)	Neutral (3/5)	Satisfied (4, 5/5)
Outcome (% who got what they needed)	16%	34%	87%
Staff made a real effort to help me get what I needed	3.5	5.9	8.8
I was satisfied with the time it took	3.8	5.6	8.7
It was clear what to do if I had a problem	3.9	5.8	8.7
Procedures were easy to follow	5.6	6.6	8.7
<b>Overall satisfaction with recent service</b>	1.1	5.0	9.1

## 6. ACCESS

Just over two-thirds of the general population in Peel had some sort of contact with the Region of Peel (68 percent). Although there are ways to increase satisfaction and confidence without direct contact, Peel's best prospect is when it has direct contact with its citizens. Peel should consider this a great opportunity for improving satisfaction and confidence in Peel when service quality is high. Of course, the inverse is also true. When service quality is low, the high contact rate presents a risk of lowering satisfaction and confidence levels.

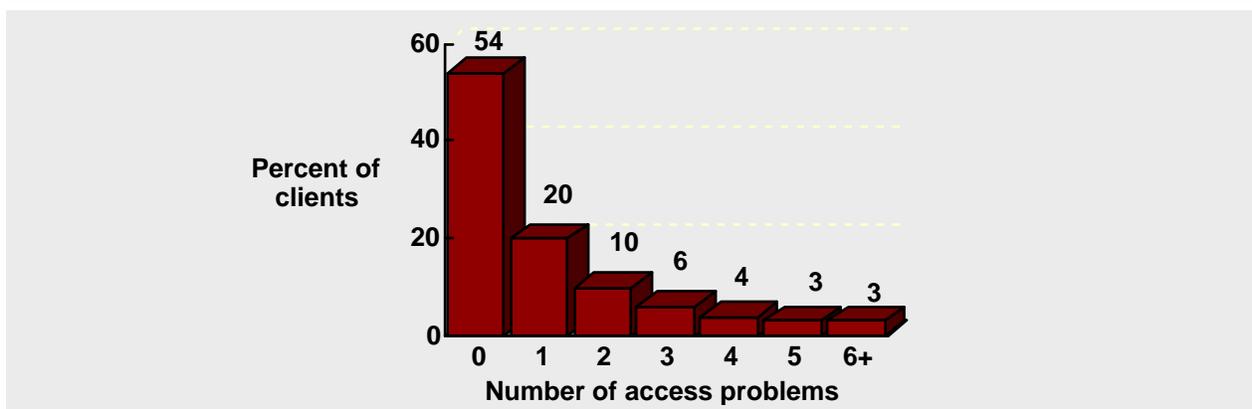
Given the nature of their relationship to Peel, almost all HHS clients have regular contact.

**Figure 16. The majority of citizens had contact with Peel in the past year**



Contact with more than two-thirds of one million citizens represents a great deal of interaction. How smoothly does it go? When describing their recent service experience, survey respondents enumerated any difficulties that they encountered in accessing the service on each channel that they used – on the phone, at a Peel office, and so on. Figure 17 shows the incidence of access problems – 54 percent of clients had none, 20 percent reported one, and 6 percent reported five or more.

**Figure 17. Frequency of access problems**



## The impact of access problems

Although all access problems are important and should be taken seriously, it is important to focus on those which are potentially causing the most damage to citizen and client satisfaction levels. There are some problems which do not have as serious an impact on satisfaction as others, and Peel should be focusing on those which have the greatest impact. The impact of access problems can vary, from problems such as ‘I had problems finding the right [Web]site’ which causes a decrease in satisfaction of 0.5 points, to ‘Peel staff did not take enough time to explain things to me’ which causes a decrease in satisfaction of 3.9 points.

**Table 10. Access problems decrease satisfaction**

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Percent of clients</b>	<b>Decrease in satisfaction (0 – 10)</b>
<b>Among all clients...</b>		
Access to staff was difficult	14	3.5
I got incorrect/conflicting information from different sources	15	3.0
The process was too complicated / too much red tape	17	3.1
Didn't know where to get information that I needed*	14	2.2
The hours of service did not suit my schedule	11	2.1
<b>Among those who visited a Peel office or other site...</b>		
Peel staff did not take enough time to explain things to me	9	3.9
I had to wait too long in line	9	2.3
I got bounced around from one person/department to another	8	2.2
Peel office was located in an inconvenient location	22	1.3
<b>Among those who used the telephone...</b>		
Peel staff did not take enough time to explain things to me	12	3.9
No response / slow response to my phone message	22	2.5
I got bounced around from one person/department to another	18	2.3
I had to wait too long on hold	20	1.8
<b>Among those who used the Internet...</b>		
I had trouble finding the right email address / no response*	14	3.6
I had trouble finding the information I needed	27	1.8
I had trouble finding the right site	9	0.5

\* Question not asked of HHS clients

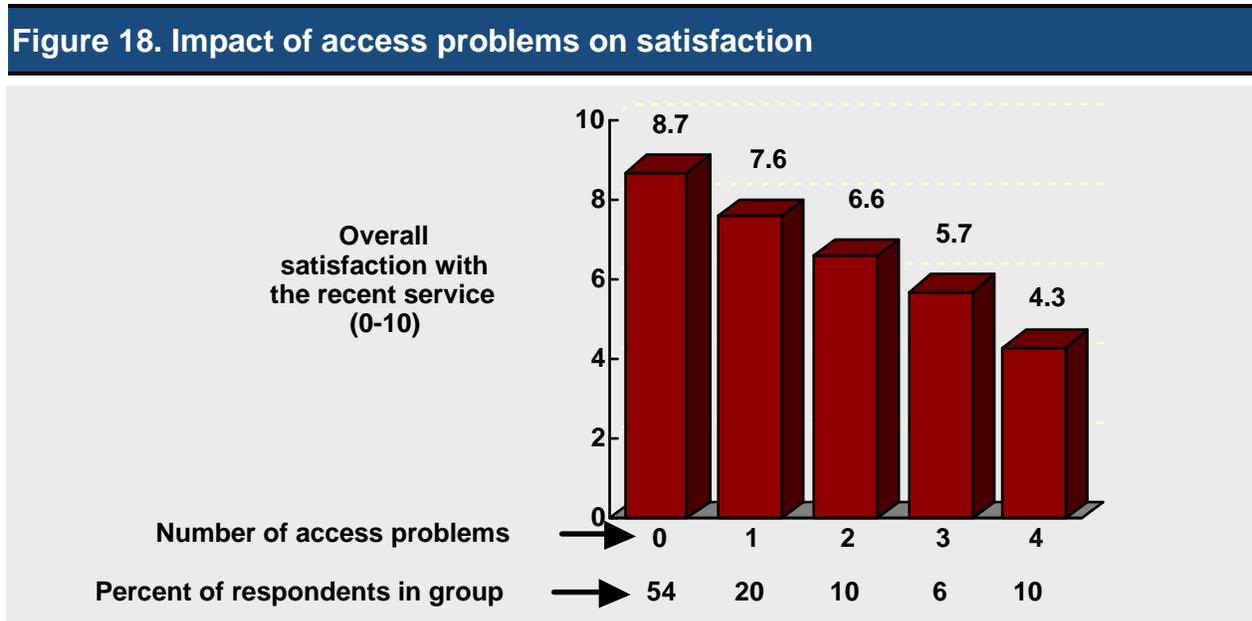
Table 4 also highlights that the most frequent problems are not always the most damaging issues. For respondents who visited a Peel office, 'Peel office was located in an inconvenient location' was more than twice as frequent as any other problem. While office location does affect satisfaction, and should be addressed given its frequency, it clearly represents a more difficult and costlier issue to fix. The other office access problems, even though they were less frequent, each caused more damage to satisfaction, and may be easier to resolve. In fact, the negative impact of an inconvenient office location can be reduced simply by making that office visit smoother and faster for Peel residents.

## Access problems and overall satisfaction with service delivery

While Table 4 provides direction for specific action, Figure 18 highlights a more general but equally important finding. While specific problems will have more or less impact on satisfaction, when Peel residents experience multiple access problems, the overall experience can seriously decrease satisfaction levels.

Not surprisingly, respondents who experienced no access problems had very high satisfaction scores (8.7). Over half (56 percent) of respondents who had contact with Peel experienced no access problems and therefore were relatively satisfied. One access problem (18 percent of respondents) dropped satisfaction by an entire point to 7.7. This is lower than respondents who had no access problems, however it still represents a satisfied score.

When respondents experienced 2 access problems, their scores became less than satisfied (7.0). With 3 or more access problems, satisfaction scores begin to plummet. Although only 16 percent of respondents experienced 3 or more problems, just over 1 in 10 Peel residents who had contact with Peel experienced 4 or more access problems, resulting in satisfaction scores of 4.4.



## A look at dissatisfied clients

Eleven percent of clients gave their recent experience a “dissatisfied” rating of just 1 or 2 out of 5 (see Figure 13). Clearly, this group faced **more** access problems than did satisfied clients. Did they also face **different** access problems – that is, are there certain access problems that crop up more frequently among the dissatisfied group?

The answer is yes. Dissatisfied clients more frequently reported that staff did not take enough time to explain things and that access to staff was difficult. **In other words, dissatisfied clients more frequently have problems getting through to staff.** Other aspects – the “process” elements such as telephone problems and complex procedures do not differentiate satisfied and dissatisfied clients as strongly.

Table 11 quantifies this pattern in terms of the ratio of dissatisfied to satisfied clients that report each access problem. The ratio for “staff not taking time” in the office context is 15 to 1 – dissatisfied clients very frequently report this problem while satisfied clients rarely do.

The importance of staff taking time is emphasized by two related findings:

- This problem causes a large decrease in overall satisfaction (Table 10), and;
- Staff taking time with clients is essentially a re-statement of the second driver of satisfaction (Figure 14), “Staff made a real effort to help me get what I needed”.

**Table 11. Access problems among satisfied and dissatisfied clients**

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Ratio of dissatisfied to satisfied clients</b>
Peel staff did not take enough time to explain things to you (Office)	15:1
Peel staff did not take enough time to explain things to you (Phone)	10:1
Access to staff was difficult (General)	7:1
The process was too complicated, or there was too much red tape (General)	6:1
You got incorrect or conflicting information from different sources (General)	6:1
The Peel office was in an inconvenient location (Office)	6:1
You got bounced around from one person or department to another (Office)	5:1
You had to wait too long in line at a Peel office (Office)	5:1
You didn't know where to get information that you needed (General)	4:1
The hours of service did not suit my schedule (General)	4:1
You got bounced around from one person or department to another (Phone)	4:1
There was no response or a slow response to your phone messages (Phone)	3:1
You had trouble finding the information you needed (Internet)	3:1

*In the first line of the table, 45 percent of dissatisfied clients and 3 percent of satisfied clients reported this problem, for a ratio of 15:1*

## Access problems in demographic segments

It might seem likely that certain demographic groups would have greater difficulty accessing service than others. This is the case, but the degree to which demographics determine ease of access is very slight, and the difference is not always in the expected direction. For example, those whose first language is English report more access problems than those with English as a second language.

**The essential point of these results is that demographic variables each account for 2 percent or less of the variance in access – a negligible amount.**

**Table 12. Demographics have little impact on difficulty in access**

Demographic variable	Segment	No. of access problems	% of variance explained
Gender	Female	1.2	<1
	Male	1.0	
First language	English	1.2	1
	Other	.9	
Lived in Canada	Entire life	1.2	<1
	Immigrated	1.0	
Age	Under 25	1.8	2
	26-34	1.1	
	35-49	1.1	
	50-64	.9	
	65+	1.0	
Education	Some public or HS	1.2	1
	Completed HS	1.2	
	Some post-secondary	1.4	
	Completed post-sec.	1.0	
	Graduate, prof. degree	.9	
Occupation	Employed	1.1	2
	Student	1.7	
	Looking for work	1.5	
	Other	1.0	
Income	<\$40,000	1.3	2
	\$40,000 - \$80,000	.9	
	>\$80,000	.7	

## Access channels

Detailed questions on channels of access were asked to those in the Public Health and Human Services groups. This section describes their channel use.

Across the board, the telephone stands out as critical to Peel's quality of service delivery. **The phone is the initial channel of contact for two-thirds of clients, and the primary channel for more than half. Clients' satisfaction ratings for the phone are 8,0 out of 10, which is extraordinarily high.**

Citizens First 5 found that, across all government services in Canada, satisfaction with the telephone stood at just 54 out of 100, i.e. 5.4 out of 10. The reason that underlies this low rating is the number of access problems that citizens encounter – busy signals, lengthy waits on hold, frustrating automated answering systems and the like. Clients who call Peel's Contact Centre do not experience these issues, and satisfaction is correspondingly high.

**Good telephone service is a major reason why Peel's overall service quality ratings are higher than those of most other governments.**

Health / Human services			
Channel	Initial channel	Main channel	Satisfaction with channel
Telephone	66	55	8.0
In-person visit to office/centre/clinic	22	35	8.3
Website	4	2	8.0
Mail	4	4	–
Visit from Peel staff	3	4	9.0

## Hours of operation

Questions about hours of operation were asked to the Health and Human Services clients only.

Although most clients were satisfied with Peel’s hours of operation, fewer “Child Care” clients found them satisfactory. This is not a surprising result given the unpredictable nature of child care needs, which theoretically could be at any time of the day, 7 days a week.

**Table 13. “Are Peel’s regular hours of operation satisfactory?”**

Service	Percent of respondents	
	Yes	No
Peel Living clients	85	15
OW clients	82	18
Child Care clients	68	32
Health Services clients	80	20
<b>Overall</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>20</b>

For clients who were not satisfied by Peel’s hours of operation, the vast majority preferred access to Peel’s services after 4:30 pm – after normal working/business hours. More than one-third of clients suggested access to Peel on Saturdays. Both of these responses point to Peel clients wanting access to Peel during times when they are more available themselves (hence the reluctance to suggest hours before 8:30 am).

**Table 14. Preference for additional hours (if regular hours are not satisfactory)**

When would you prefer additional hours?	Percent of respondents	
	Yes	No
Before 8:30 AM	6	94
After 4:30 PM	80	20
On Saturday	39	61

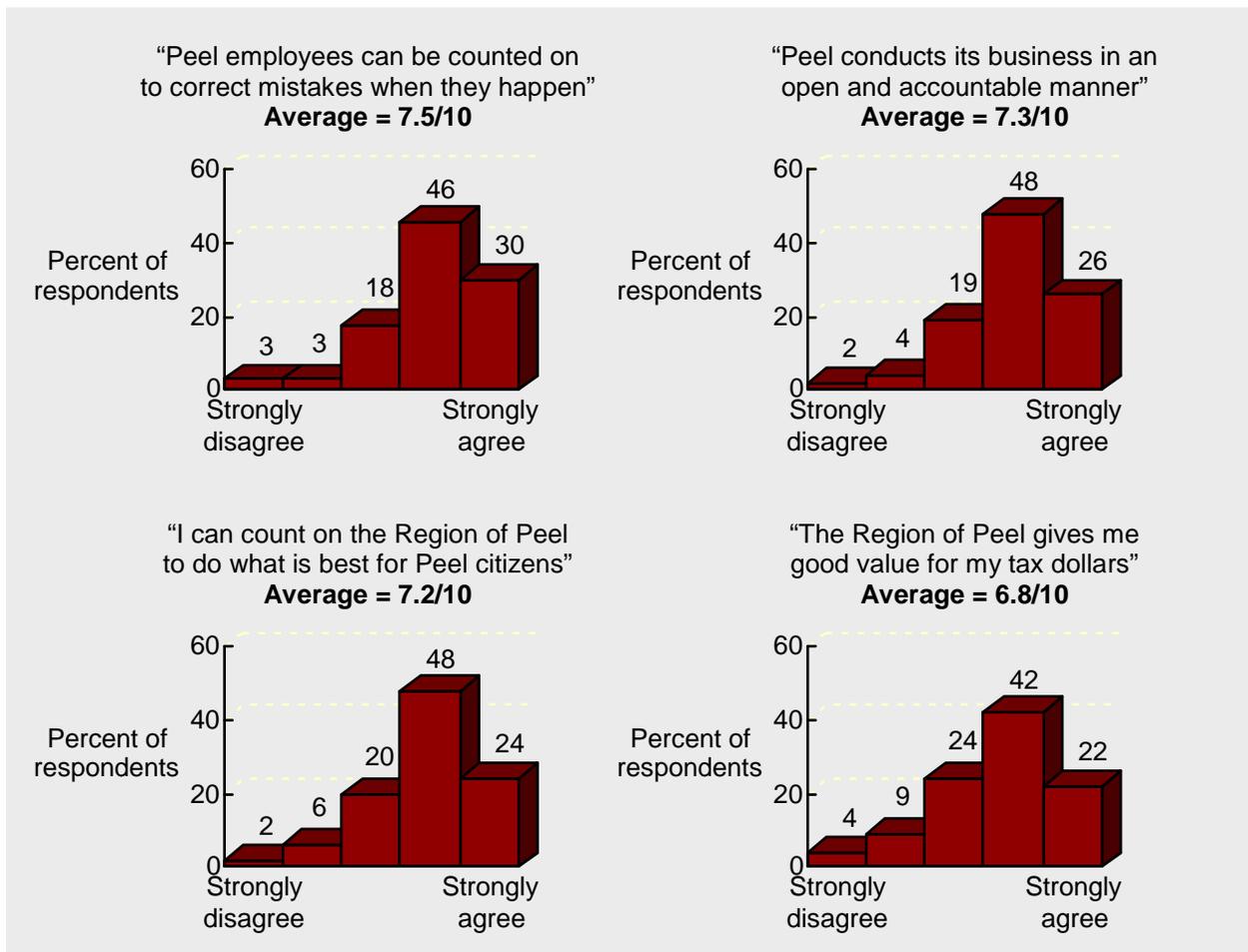
*“Yes” responses add to more than 100 as clients could select multiple options.*

## 7. TRUST & CONFIDENCE IN THE REGION OF PEEL

Provision of services to citizens is a primary responsibility of governments. According to established theory, when governments do a good job they are rewarded by receiving the confidence of their citizens. The relation between service quality and confidence has been studied over many years in Canada and internationally. It is a complex phenomenon, because many other things can also affect confidence. Primary among these are the citizens' perceptions of elected officials, of public sector service providers and of the policies that governments embrace.

The present survey limits the enquiry to the direct impact that quality of service has on confidence: to what extent do citizens' perceptions of Regional services determine their confidence in the Region? To begin with, Figure 19 shows client response to four measures of trust and confidence.

**Figure 19. Measures of trust and confidence in the Region of Peel**

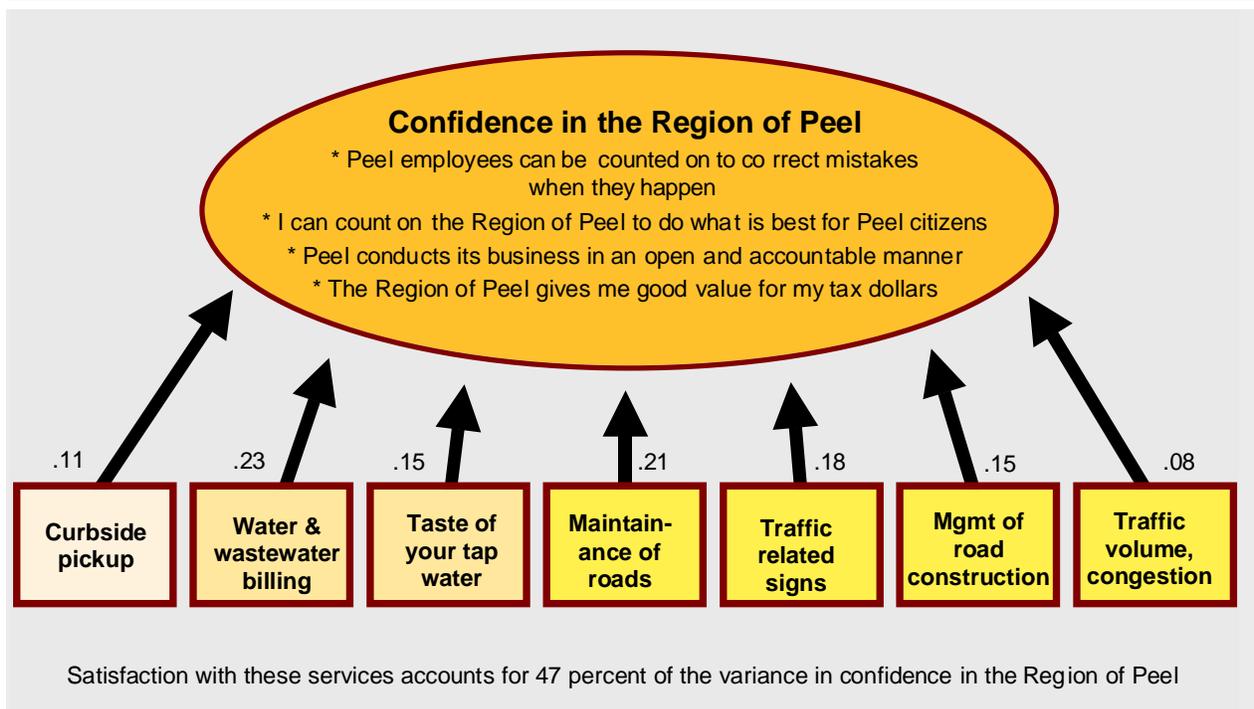


Confidence in government is a complex idea and no single survey question gives a complete measure of it. One solution is to use the four items in combination: each statements addresses a somewhat different aspect of trust and confidence and together they form a scale that captures several critical elements of confidence.

How, then, does service quality relate to confidence? Figure 20 shows how each of seven ETPS services contributes to confidence. Each contributes a significant increment; there is some variation in impact from service to service, but the seven services are more similar than they are different. Together they account for 47 percent of the variance in trust/confidence.

This is a strong result, and in fact it probably over-states the influence of service delivery in confidence. If other determinants of confidence were included (e.g. perceptions of government policies and elected officials) the role of service delivery could well decrease. For example, if citizens see their elected representatives as responsible in part for the quality of service delivery, then those representatives will become part of the confidence equation and the “pure” effect of service delivery observed in this study will be reduced. Identifying the contributions of these other factors to confidence in government is a worthwhile endeavour for the future.

**Figure 20. Impact of Regional services on confidence: General Population**



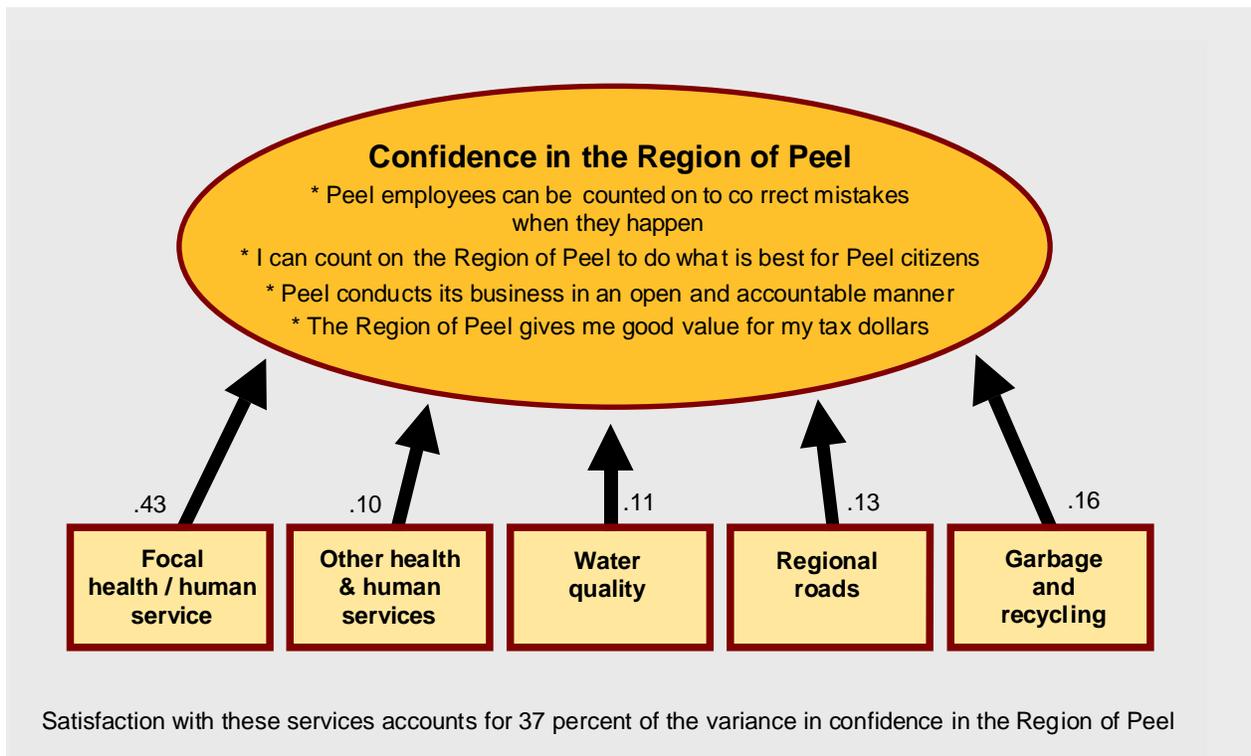
Numbers above the services are standardized regression coefficients. They indicate the impact that each service has on confidence.

The results in Figure 20 are based on the random sample of the Peel population and as such they apply to Peel citizens as a whole. The analysis was also conducted with Health and Human Services clients, with similar but not identical results. The Health and Human Services survey has many questions in common with the general survey, but less detail on ETPS services and more material on Health and Human Services. The ETPS services are represented by three overall ratings in the HHS survey.

The results for HHS clients emphasize the importance of the main service that they are receiving – OW, Peel Living, childcare, etc. This is labelled the ‘focal service’ in Figure 21, and it has a considerably stronger impact on confidence than do other services (although other services still play a role).

It is important to note that, as with the general sample, including the policy and political realms in this analysis would likely reduce the pure effect of service quality shown in Figure 21.

**Figure 21. Impact of Regional services on confidence: Health and Human Services**



*Note: Some Peel residents have limited knowledge of the services that the Region provides. For this reason, the questions on trust and confidence were placed at the end of the survey. In earlier sections, the interviewer had asked the respondent about each of the 25 services listed in Table 3, explaining what the service was if the client was unsure. When the trust and confidence section began, each respondent had received a good overview of the Region’s responsibilities.*

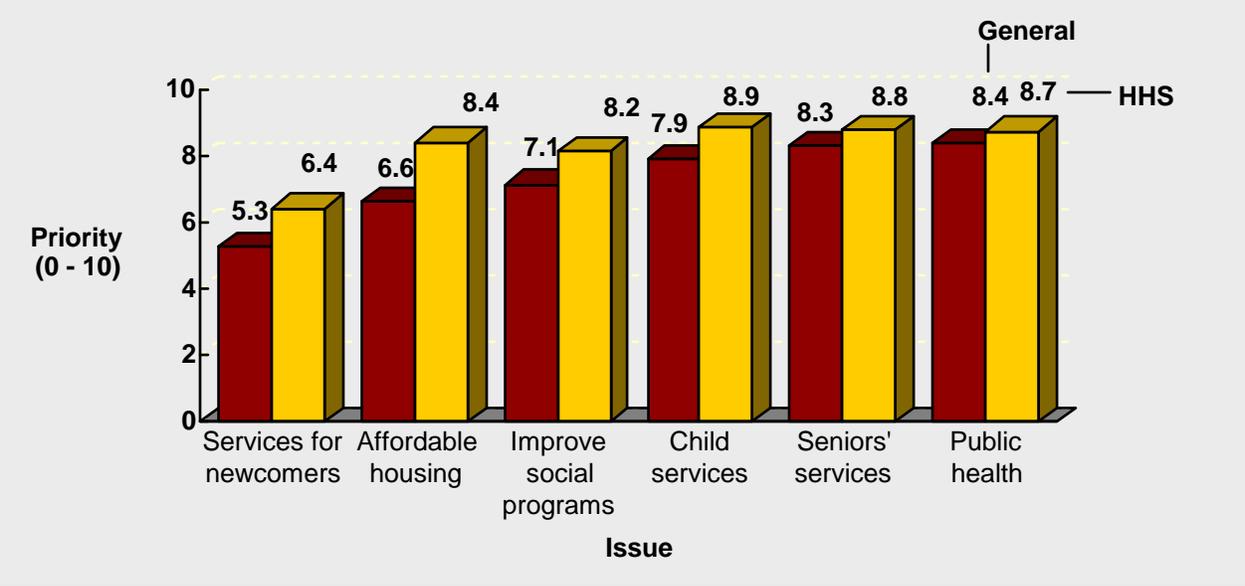
# 8. PRIORITIES FOR SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

Participants in both the general and HHS surveys were asked to state their priorities on a range of issues. The question was, “What priorities should governments place on these issues?’, and participants rated each on a scale from “Very low priority” to “Very high priority”.

The issues divide into two groups, those dealing with social services and those dealing with more general issues including ETPS services.

The HHS clients rated each of the social services as higher in priority than did those in the general population, (Figure 22). Each of these differences is statistically significant, but just one is what might be termed “large”. This is support for “More affordable housing”, where the difference approaches 2 points out of 10. For other services, the difference between the general population and HHS samples is no greater than 1.1 points out of 10.

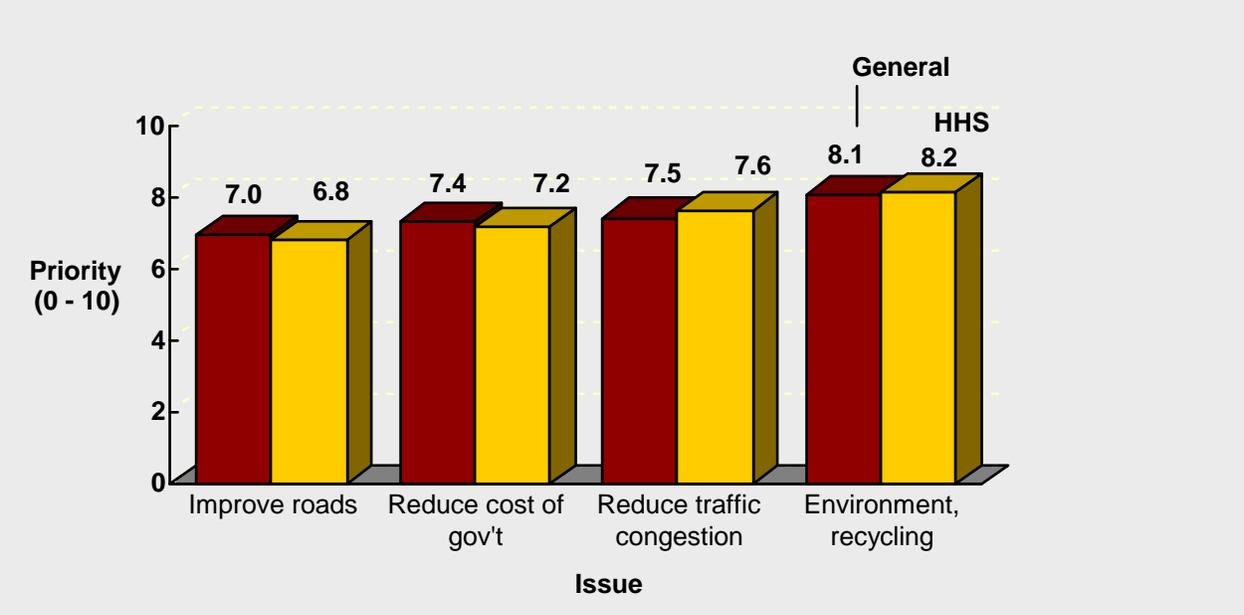
**Figure 22. Priorities for Health and Human Services**



*The general population and HHS sample differ significantly on each of these issues.*

In the second group of priorities, Figure 23, there are not statistically significant differences between the general and HHS samples. These issues include three ETPS services and the idea of “reducing the size and cost of government”.

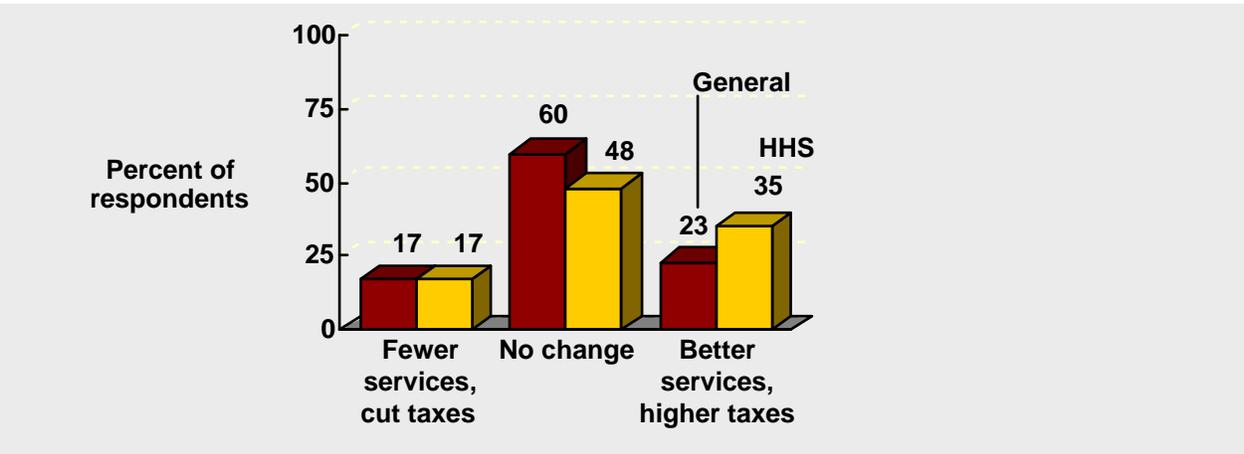
**Figure 23. Priorities for ETPS and cost of government**



The general population and HHS sample do not differ significantly on these issues.

A final question asked whether government should, in general, increase taxes to provide better services or provide fewer services and cut taxes. The most frequent response in both samples is, "No change". The HHS sample tilts slightly toward better services and higher taxes.

**Figure 24. Which direction should governments take?**



The general population and HHS sample differ significantly in response to this question.

## 9. DEMOGRAPHIC CONSIDERATIONS

Survey research traditionally includes an analysis of the role that demographic factors, such as gender, age and income level, play in shaping client perceptions. This analysis is included for the record, however most of the results are negative: demographic factors do not play a major role in the issues that this survey addresses.

The absence of demographic effects in Peel's present results are consistent with the findings of five studies of Citizens First over the past decade. In general, these factors appear to have little impact on citizens' perceptions of service quality or confidence in government. The reasons are likely that, a) government services are provided in the same manner to all, regardless of their demographic group, and b) governments strive to treat all citizens equally. The water supply, ambulance service, social assistance and other services work in the same manner regardless of a persons age or race or gender.

In the private sector, by contrast services are highly differentiated on a demographic basis. Most businesses, whether clothing or entertainment or restaurants, pitch their product to specific groups.

Table 15 summarizes the impact of seven demographic variables on three ETPS services. The first line reports the result of testing gender differences on satisfaction with curbside pickup, water quality and regional roads. In each of these three tests, there was not a statistically significant gender difference.

**Table 15. Demographics have next to no meaningful impact on satisfaction with ETPS services**

Demographic variable	Satisfaction with...		
	Curbside pickup	Water quality	Regional roads
Gender	–	–	–
First language: English vs others	–	–	2%
Immigrant vs not	–	–	2%
Age	–	2%	1%
Education	–	–	–
Occupation	1%	1%	1%
Income	–	–	–

– Not statistically significant

Percent is the amount of variance explained by the demographic variable

The second line of Table 15 shows that there was a statistically significant difference in satisfaction with regional roads on the basis of first language (those whose first language was English reported slightly lower satisfaction than those whose first language was not English). This difference, however, accounts for just 2 percent of the variance in response, meaning that the difference is negligible in any practical sense. With a large sample, very small differences can be statistically significant (meaning that another sample of the population would be very likely to give the same result).

In the present context, differences that account for less than 10 percent of the variance are of marginal interest. In contrast with the demographic variables now under consideration, drivers of satisfaction account for 59 percent of the variance in satisfaction with Peel service delivery

Table 16 reports clients' satisfaction with Health and Human Services. There are some small effects, particularly with respect to Peel Living. Age appears to be at the root of things: Older clients of Peel Living give higher satisfaction ratings than do younger clients. This underlies the Occupation difference: Retirees (i.e. older clients) give higher satisfaction ratings than to other occupational groups.

**Table 16. Demographics have a slight impact on satisfaction with Health and Human Services**

<b>Demographic variable</b>	<b>Ontario works</b>	<b>Peel Living</b>	<b>Public Health</b>
Gender	1%	–	–
First language: English vs others	2%	–	3%
Immigrant vs not	5%	–	–
Age	5%	12%	5%
Education	–	9%	–
Occupation	–	14%	–
Income	na	4%	–

– Not statistically significant

Percent is the amount of variance explained by the demographic variable

The situation with respect to confidence in the Region of Peel is quite clear: demographic factors have no meaningful impact (Table 17).

**Table 17. Demographics have no meaningful impact on confidence in government**

<b>Demographic variable</b>	<b>Confidence in the Region of Peel</b>
Gender	–
First language: English vs others	1%
Immigrant vs not	<1%
Age	1%
Education	–
Occupation	1%
Income	–

– *Not statistically significant*

*Percent is the amount of variance explained by the demographic variable*

# 10. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND FORWARD PATH

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## The Region of Peel's client base

The Region of Peel's clients include all its citizens, but as a service provider, Peel deals more intensively with those citizens who receive health and human services than with the population at large. An initial priority of this project was to develop a research method that enables Peel to look at its client base from both these perspectives – the one million individuals who live in Peel and the smaller proportion who receive health and human services at any point in time.

The solution was to design two overlapping but not identical surveys, one distributed to a random selection of the population and the other to clients of the Health and Human Services divisions.

## Client Satisfaction Index

In order to track the Region's overall performance in delivering a services, a Client Satisfaction Index (CSI) was defined. This incorporates satisfaction ratings of 25 different services. Each service contributes to the index in proportion to its budget. The index now stands at 7.5 out of 10.

## Drivers of satisfaction

The survey is based on a composite sample of clients from the three divisions, ETPS, Health and Human Services. These groups are combined in a rational manner, i.e. in proportion to budget. The sample represents the individuals that Peel employees deal with on a daily basis.

This approach derives from the Common Purpose Strategy, but it is important to test that it is valid. Can a single approach to service delivery meet the needs of such a diverse clientele?

The analysis of drivers of satisfaction shows that it can. There are five critical elements or "drivers" that create satisfaction with service delivery across the spectrum of clients. The are:

- Outcome: getting what you need
- Staff who make an extra effort to give clients what they need
- Timely service
- Knowing what to do when you encounter a problem
- Procedures and forms that are clear and easy to follow.

These drivers are general principles that will be effective in guiding service improvement efforts for all services. The fine detail of how they are put into practice may differ from service to service, and some direction on this is found in the divisional reports.

## Awareness of Peel and its services

The information at hand shows no meaningful link between clients' level of awareness of Peel services and either satisfaction with services or confidence in the Region. This should not be taken as a final verdict on the matter, as the measures of awareness in the survey were not strong or comprehensive.

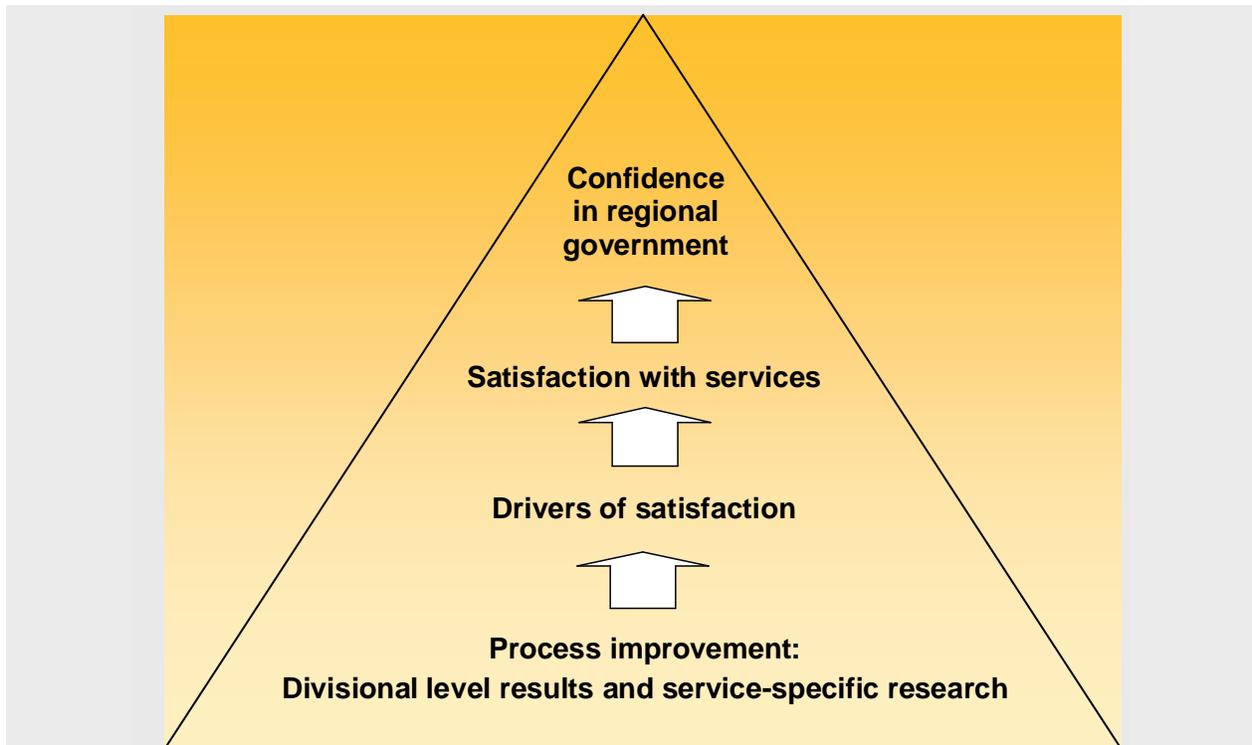
In fact, it is difficult to assess awareness in a telephone survey. It must be done at the very outset of the survey since, by the end, the interviewer has described most of the services that Peel provides, thereby raising the client's level of awareness considerably. Beginning a survey by quizzing the respondent is awkward. It is transparently a test, and citizens who have, often hesitantly, agreed to participate in the survey are put off by this approach.

In addition, the overall length of the survey meant that relatively little time could be devoted to the awareness issue. Thus, while a link between awareness and satisfaction has not been demonstrated, it has certainly not been ruled out. It would take a different piece of research, more focused on this issue, to give firm evidence one way or the other.

## Looking forward

The thrust of the Common Purpose Strategy is strongly supported by these client survey results. As illustrated in Figure 25, confidence in government rests (at least in part) on satisfaction with the services that government provides. The drivers of satisfaction point the way to providing higher levels of client satisfaction.

**Figure 25. Elements of the Common Purpose Strategy**



Looking forward, each program area can examine its business processes to ensure that they align with the drivers of satisfaction, thereby contributing to the cycle of increased client satisfaction and confidence in regional government.

Peel currently delivers a high level of service. More than three-quarters of customers rated their recent experience at 4 or 5 out of 5. This research attempted to identify “pockets” of dissatisfied clients on the basis of demographic characteristics and in specific service areas and in other ways. No such pockets were found (with the understandable exception of those on waiting lists for housing and childcare).

Peel’s best strategy for improving client satisfaction is to focus on the drivers and provide consistently high levels of service to all. The most critical elements are outcome (and as a public sector organization, Peel cannot always give clients what they want) and attentive staff who take the time to understand client needs and make a real effort to assist.

## **Trust and confidence in government**

Confidence in government underlies the democratic process and contributes to order and harmony in society. One of the reasons that governments strive to improve the quality of service delivery is that it leads to greater trust and confidence in public sector organizations.

The present survey results confirm a solid link between quality of service delivery and trust and confidence in government in the Region of Peel.

# APPENDIX: EXPLAINING VARIANCE

The 5 bars in the chart to the right show how people differ in satisfaction with some service. These differences can be represented mathematically, and the statistical term that describes the differences is variance. Variance is a measure of how people differ in their response.

Peel's client research seeks to understand why people differ – in mathematical terms it seeks to *explain* the variance in response. For example, suppose that all respondents aged 18-24 answered "very dissatisfied" (1 out of 5) to this question, while very person aged 25-34 answered 2 out of 5, and so on. Age would then account for 100 percent of the variance in response to this question – if you knew the respondent's age you would know exactly their position on the statement.



The opposite possibility is that age is completely unrelated to satisfaction. In this case, there would be the same proportion of 18-24 year olds (and each other age group) at each level of satisfaction. Knowing a person's age would give no hint as to whether they were satisfied with the service or not.

In practical terms, explaining 50 percent or more of the variance in some area means that one has a very good understanding of the situation. Research never explains 100 percent of the variance because people respond differently to events – timely service may be the most critical determinant of satisfaction for one person while getting help from staff may be for another.

Research that explains 20 or 30 percent of the variance in a situation is less compelling but may also be useful. Research that explains less than 10 percent is not, at least in the sphere of service delivery.