

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.

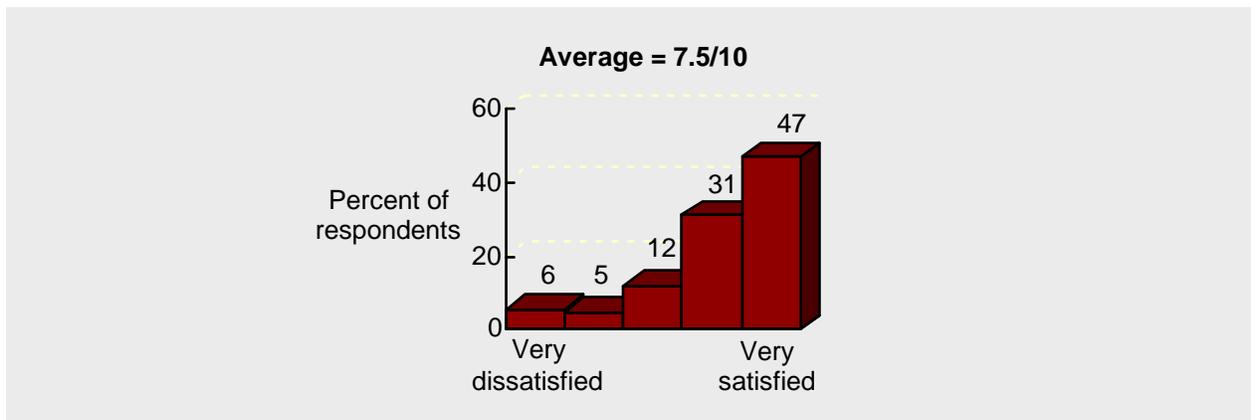
The survey asked each respondent to identify their most recent direct service experience with the Region of Peel. For respondents in the general survey, those chosen at random from the entire population, these services were most often ETPS services, though some were in the areas of Health and Human Services.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

Table 6. Services selected			
HUMAN SERVICES	%	HEALTH SERVICES	%
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	ETPS	
Peel Living Wait List	7	Water Quality	1
		Water Billing and Collection Service	2
CORPORATE SERVICES		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:

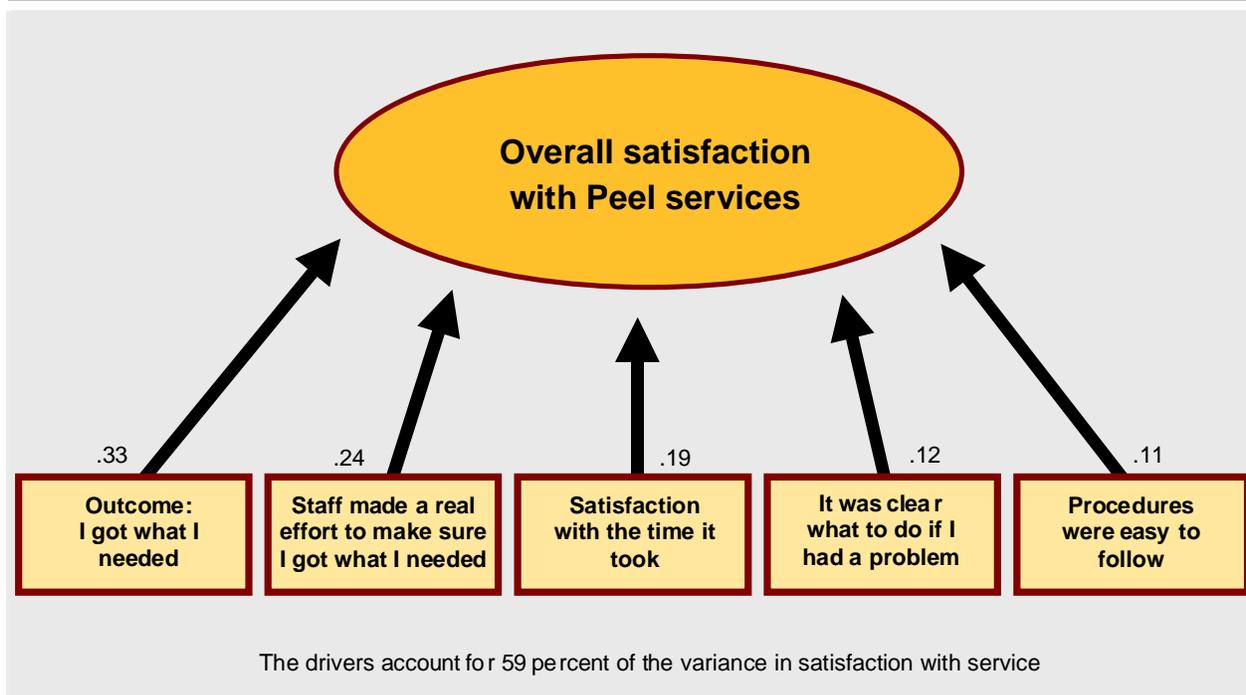
- What elements of the service delivery process have an important impact on satisfaction?
- How great an impact on satisfaction do these elements have?
- Are these elements – or “drivers” common across many services, or do they vary from one service to the next?

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.¹

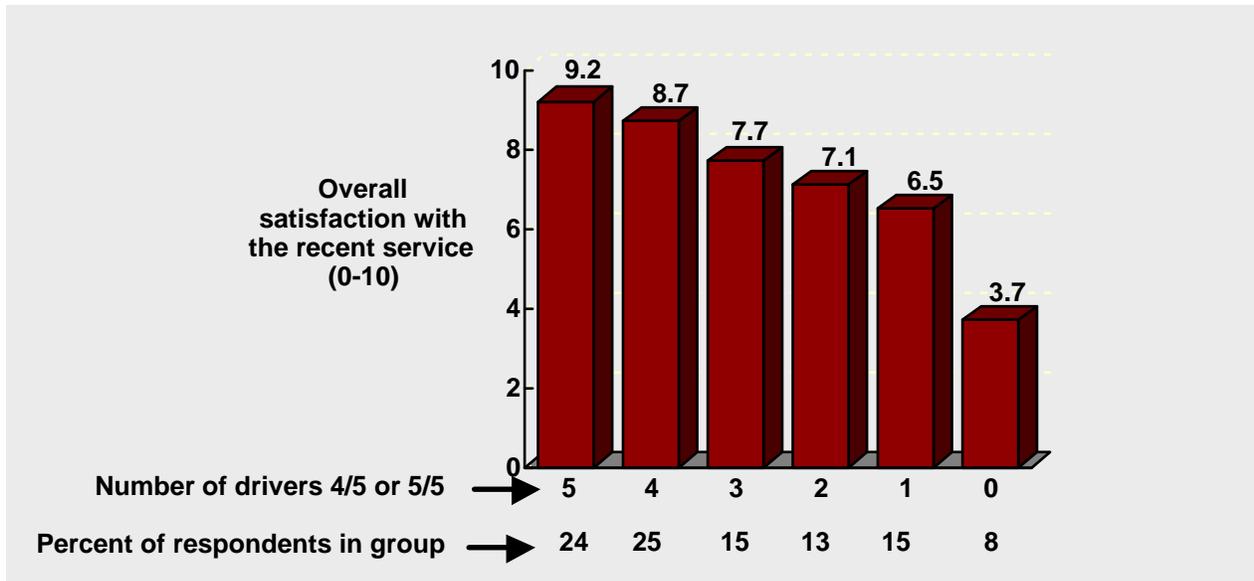
The impact that the drivers have on client satisfaction is illustrated in Figure 15.

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



¹ 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
Overall satisfaction with recent service	1.1	5.0	9.1