



USDA Farm Service Agency Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program Customer Satisfaction Survey

Final Report
May 2007

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Introduction

This report is about customer perceptions of services from the Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency. This report was produced by CFI Group in collaboration with the University of Michigan. If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact CFI Group at 734-930-9090.

Overview of ACSI Methodology

ACSI is produced by the University of Michigan in partnership with CFI Group, and the American Society for Quality. The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) is the national indicator of customer evaluations of the quality of goods and services available to U.S. residents. It is the only uniform, cross-industry/government measure of customer satisfaction. Since 1994, the ACSI has measured satisfaction, its causes, and its effects, for seven economic sectors, 41 industries and more than 200 private sector companies. ACSI has measured more than 100 programs of federal government agencies since 1999. This allows benchmarking between the public and private sectors and provides information unique to each agency on how its activities that interface with the public affect the satisfaction of customers. The effects of satisfaction are estimated, in turn, on specific objectives (such as public trust).

Additional information can be found in the appendices of this report.

Appendix A: Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in the study was developed through a collaborative effort between CFI Group and the USDA Farm Service Agency. The questionnaire used for the study is shown in Appendix A in the back of this report.

Appendix B: Respondent Background

The USDA Farm Service Agency provided respondent sample of customers who had participated in the Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program. Demographics such as age, race, income and gender and other background information about respondents such as distance to county office, ownership of PC, frequency of visiting county office, etc. can be found in Appendix B.

Appendix C: Attribute Score Tables

Respondents were asked to evaluate items on a 1 to 10 scale. Results to these questions are reported on a scale of 0 to 100 and are included in Appendix C: Attribute Tables. Aggregate scores are included in these tables as well as comparisons of scores by segments, such as age, income, distance to county office and others.

Appendix D: Verbatims

Verbatim comments from all open-ended responses are included in Appendix D.

Data Collection

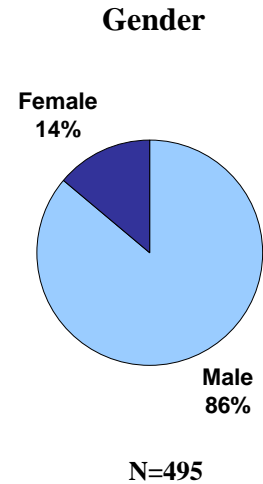
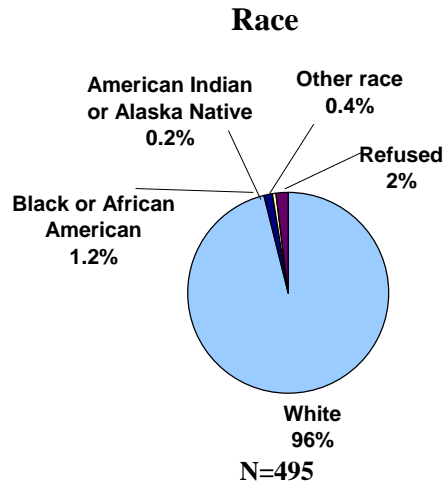
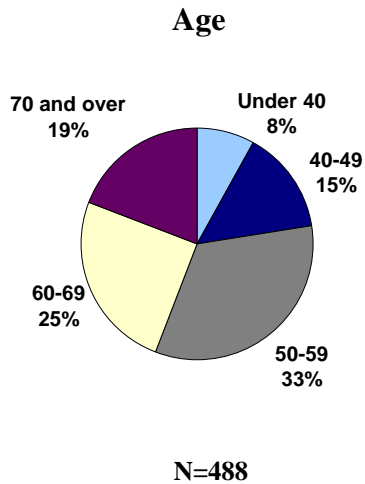
Interviews were conducted between January 16 and February 14, 2007 by the professional interviewers of PGM Inc. working under monitored supervision according to specifications from CFI Group. Interviewers used CATI (computer-assisted-telephone-interviewing) terminals programmed for the specific questionnaire. The USDA Farm Service Agency provided CFI Group with customer names of those who participated in the Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program. A total of 500 responses were collected. Of these, 495 responses were valid for modeling purposes. Valid responses are those where the respondent provided answers to a majority (50%) of the customer satisfaction model questions. A more in-depth explanation of the model follows on page 9. Respondent cooperation, participation among those who were qualified and successfully contacted was 94.5%. The response rate, which also accounts for non-interview events, such as when a respondent could not be reached after multiple attempts (busy, answering machine, voice mail, etc.) was 24.7%.

ACSI Code	Definition	n
U	UNIVERSE OF SAMPLED TELEPHONE NUMBERS	3480
	Interviews	
I	Total completed interviews	500
P	Partial interviews	3
I+P	Total interviews	503
	Eligible cases that are not interviewed (Non-respondents)	
	Break-offs	0
	Refusal, qualified cases	26
RQ	Total qualified cases refusals	26
	Cases of unknown eligibility (Unknown eligibility/No contact—Non-interview)	
	Refusal before screening for eligible respondent	253
	No answer	1405
	Not available during study	114
	Answering machine/voice mail	466
	Busy	46
	Foreign language/hard of hearing	58
UE	Total unknown eligibility	2342
	Cases that are not eligible (Non-eligible Respondents)	
	Disconnect/out of service	177
	Computer/FAX	38
	Wrong number	147
	Filter	117
	Other Non-eligible respondent	13
NER	Total Non-eligible Respondents	492
	Quota Filled so respondent not eligible for interview	
	Case of quota-filled subgroup	0
	Scheduled for callback, but subgroup quota filled or interview period ended	117
QF	Total Quota Filled Respondents	117
U	Universe of Sampled Numbers	3480
NER	Less Non-eligible Respondents	492
QF	Less Quota Filled Respondents	117
EU	Universe of Eligible Numbers	2871

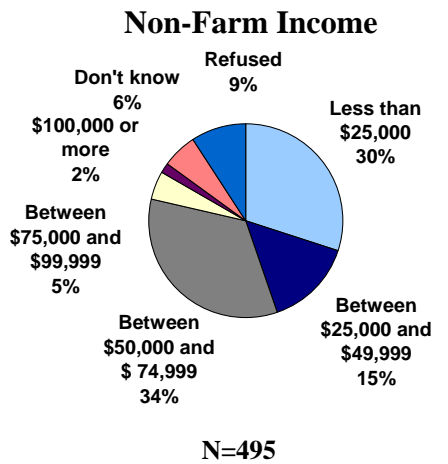
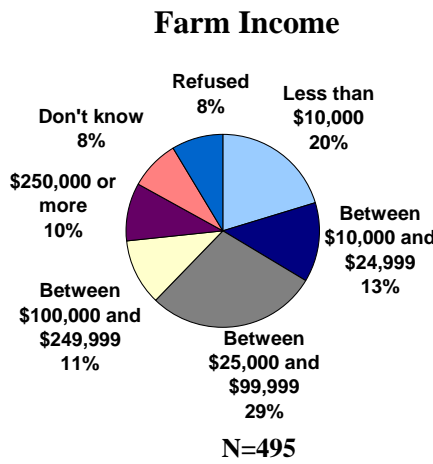
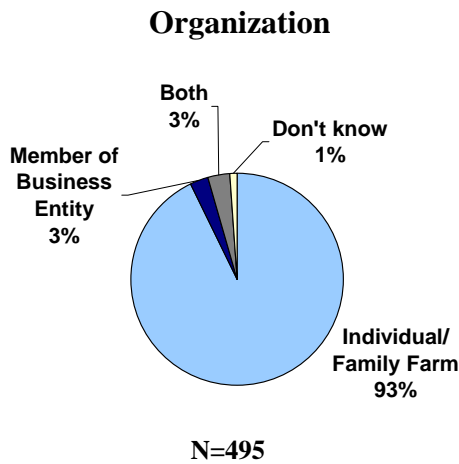
COOPERATION RATE (AAPOR (2)) = I/(I+P)+RQ	94.5%
e = (I+P+RQ+QF)/(I+P+RQ+QF+NER)	56.8%
RESPONSE RATE (AAPOR RR(3)) = I+COOP(QF)/(I+P+RQ+QF+NER+e(UE))	24.7%

Respondent Background

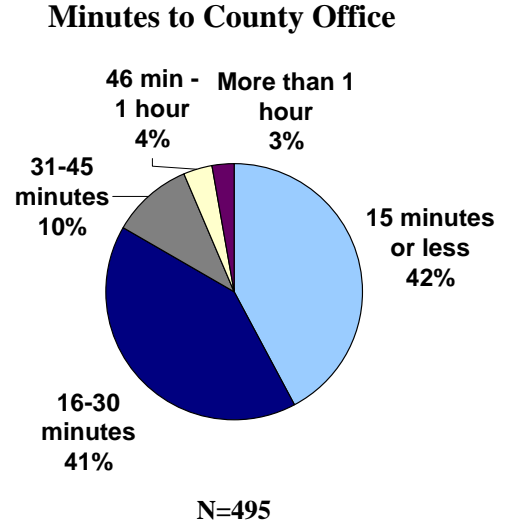
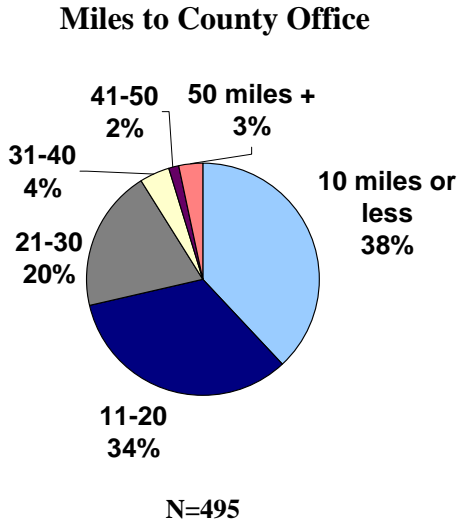
Respondents represented a wide range of ages from under 40 to 70 and over. One-third of the respondents were in their 50s and one-quarter were in their 60s. The respondents were mostly White (96%) with Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native and Asian each comprising less than 2%. These sample sizes are too low to include analysis by race in this report. With respect to gender, most of the respondents were male (86%).



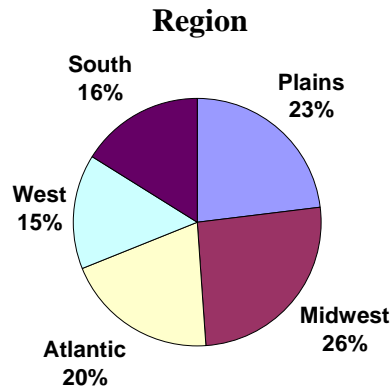
With respect to organization, most respondents (93%) categorized themselves solely as individual or family farm. Farm income was under \$25,000 for one-third of respondents, while 21% reported farm income of over \$100,000. Non-farm income was less than \$25,000 for 30% of respondents and only 2% had non-farm income of \$100,000 or higher.



Nearly three-quarters (72%) of the respondents live within 20 miles of the county office and 83% live within a 30-minute drive to the office. Only 3% live more than 50 miles or more than an hour drive away.



Respondents represented all regions of the country with 23% from the Plains, 26% from the Midwest, 20% from the Atlantic region, 15% from the West and 16% from the South.



The following are the states comprising each region as defined by USDA NASS for purposes of this report:

Atlantic: CT, DE, KY, ME, MD, MA, NH, NJ, NY, NC, PA, RI, TN, VA, VT, WV

Midwest: IL, IN, IA, MI, MN, MO, OH, WI

South: AL, AR, FL, GA, LA, MS, SC

Plains: KS, NE, ND, OK, SD, TX

West: AZ, CA, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR, UT, WA, WY

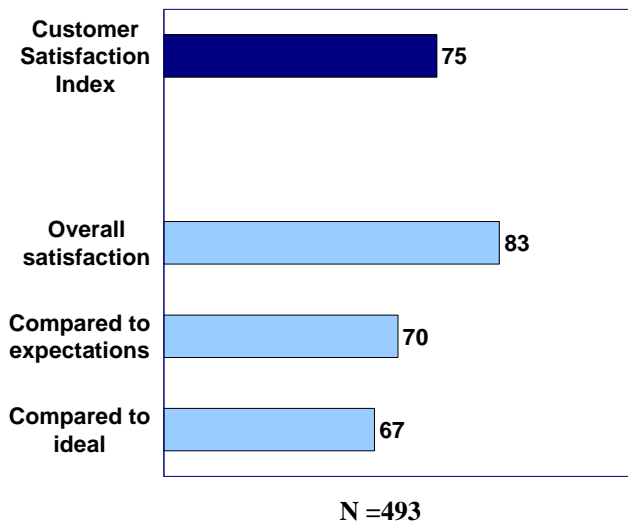
Customer Satisfaction (ACSI)

The **Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI)** is a weighted average of the three ACSI benchmark questions in the questionnaire in Appendix A. The questions are answered on 1-10 scale and converted to a 0-100 scale for reporting purposes. The three questions measure: “Overall satisfaction”, “Satisfaction compared to expectations” and “Satisfaction compared to an ideal organization.” The model assigns the weights to each question in a way that maximizes the ability of the index to predict changes in agency outcomes.

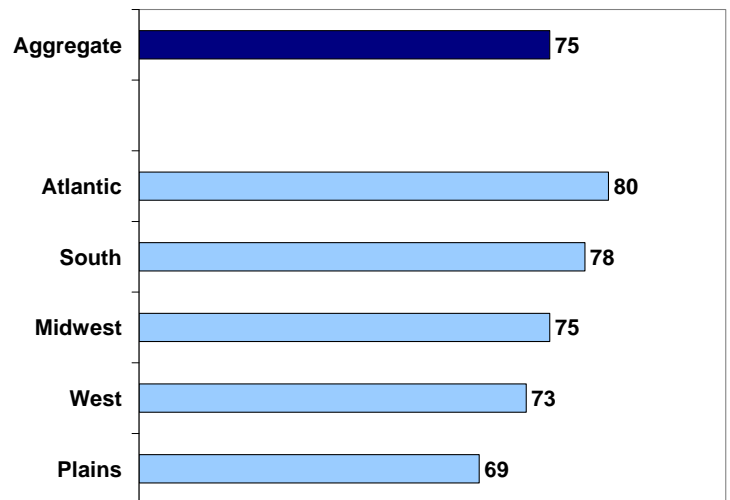
The 2007 Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) for the Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program from the USDA Farm Service Agency is 75 on a 0-100 scale. This score is higher than the Federal Government’s Customer Satisfaction Index for 2006 (72). The three-point difference is statistically significant at a 90% level of confidence. Benchmarks with other Government and USDA satisfaction scores are shown on the following page. Regional differences in the Customer Satisfaction Index are shown below. Atlantic and South regions reported higher satisfaction with DCP and Plains reported lower satisfaction. The score for Plains is significantly different than the scores for the Atlantic and South at a 90% level of confidence.

There have been previous ACSI measures conducted for the FSA. In 2001, there were two ACSI studies conducted for the FSA. One measured satisfaction with recipients of direct farm loans; and one measured satisfaction with recipients of farm program benefits, including commodity loan or LDP. Satisfaction scores for these studies were 65 and 68 respectively. The 2007 scores show significant overall improvement for FSA.

Customer Satisfaction Index



Customer Satisfaction Index – By Region

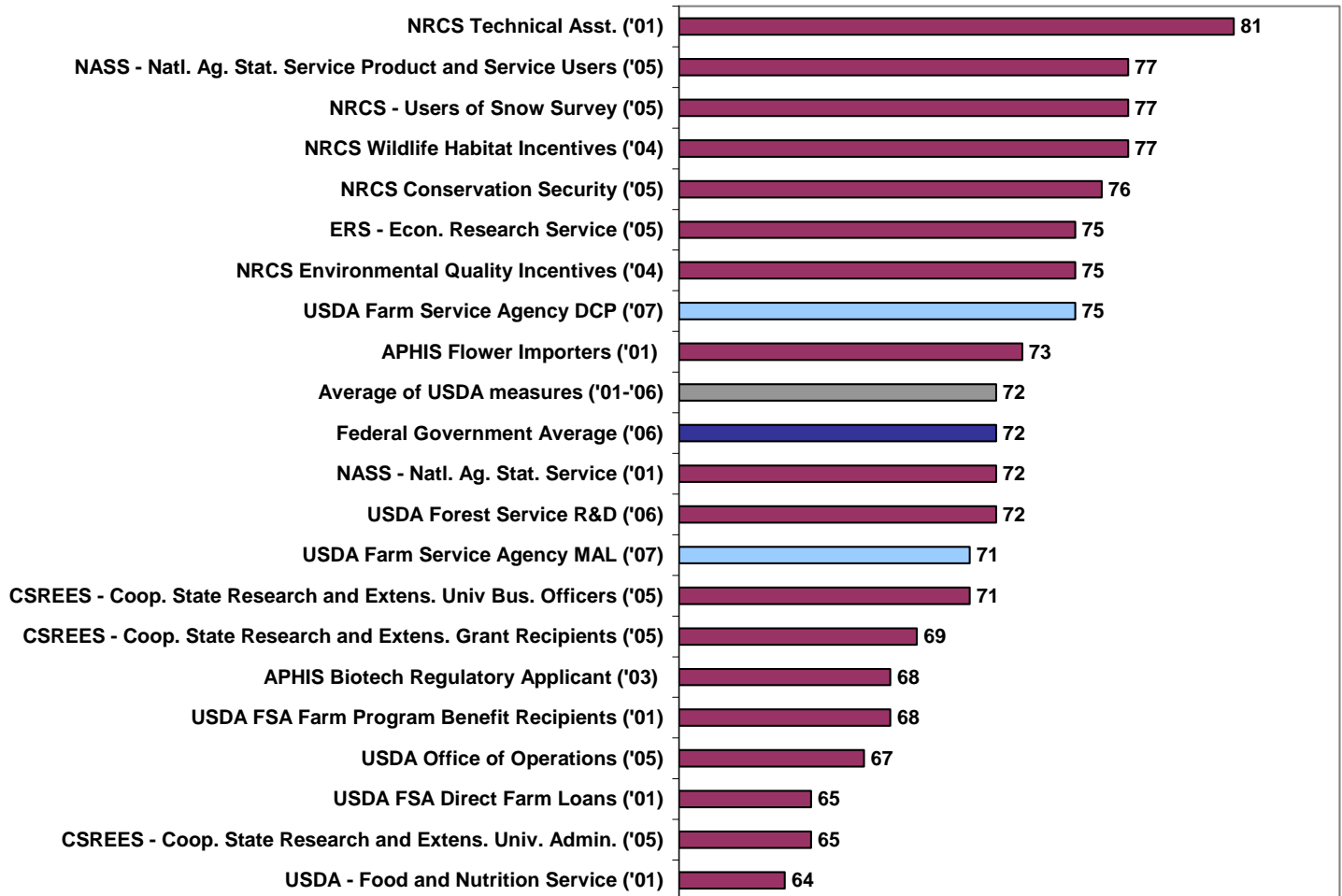


Benchmarks

Satisfaction scores from other USDA satisfaction measures are listed below, as well the ACSI for the Federal Government average. Satisfaction with the Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program is higher than satisfaction with Marketing Assistance Loans. DCP also outscores the Federal Government average. *Both differences are statistically significant at a 90% level of confidence.*

Satisfaction scores in the 70s are typical for government agencies. An analysis of over 200 federal government ACSI scores, which were reported from 2001-2006 shows that 43% of the measures were in the 70s. ACSI scores in the 60s and 80s were less frequent accounting for 22% and 21% of the scores respectively. Scores 90 and above are quite rare. Only 2.6% of the reported federal government scores from 2001-2006 were in the 90s. Satisfaction measures from other USDA programs that were conducted from 2001 to 2006 and reported are also shown in the chart below. These scores typically are in the 70s, with a range from 64 to 81.

Satisfaction Benchmarks



Federal Government Average is shown in dark blue. Scores for the Farm Service Agency Marketing Assistance Loans and Direct and Counter-cyclical Payments are shown in light blue. All other individual USDA scores are shown in purple and the average of the USDA Measures that were reported in the 2001-2006 period is in gray.

Customer Satisfaction Model

The Farm Service Agency Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program Customer Satisfaction model illustrated on the following page should be viewed as a cause-and-effect model that moves from left to right. The rectangles are multi-variable components that are measured by survey questions. The numbers in the lower right corners of the rectangles represent the strength of the effect of the component on the left to the one to which the arrow points on the right. These values represent "impacts." The larger the impact value, the more effect the component on the left has on the one on the right.

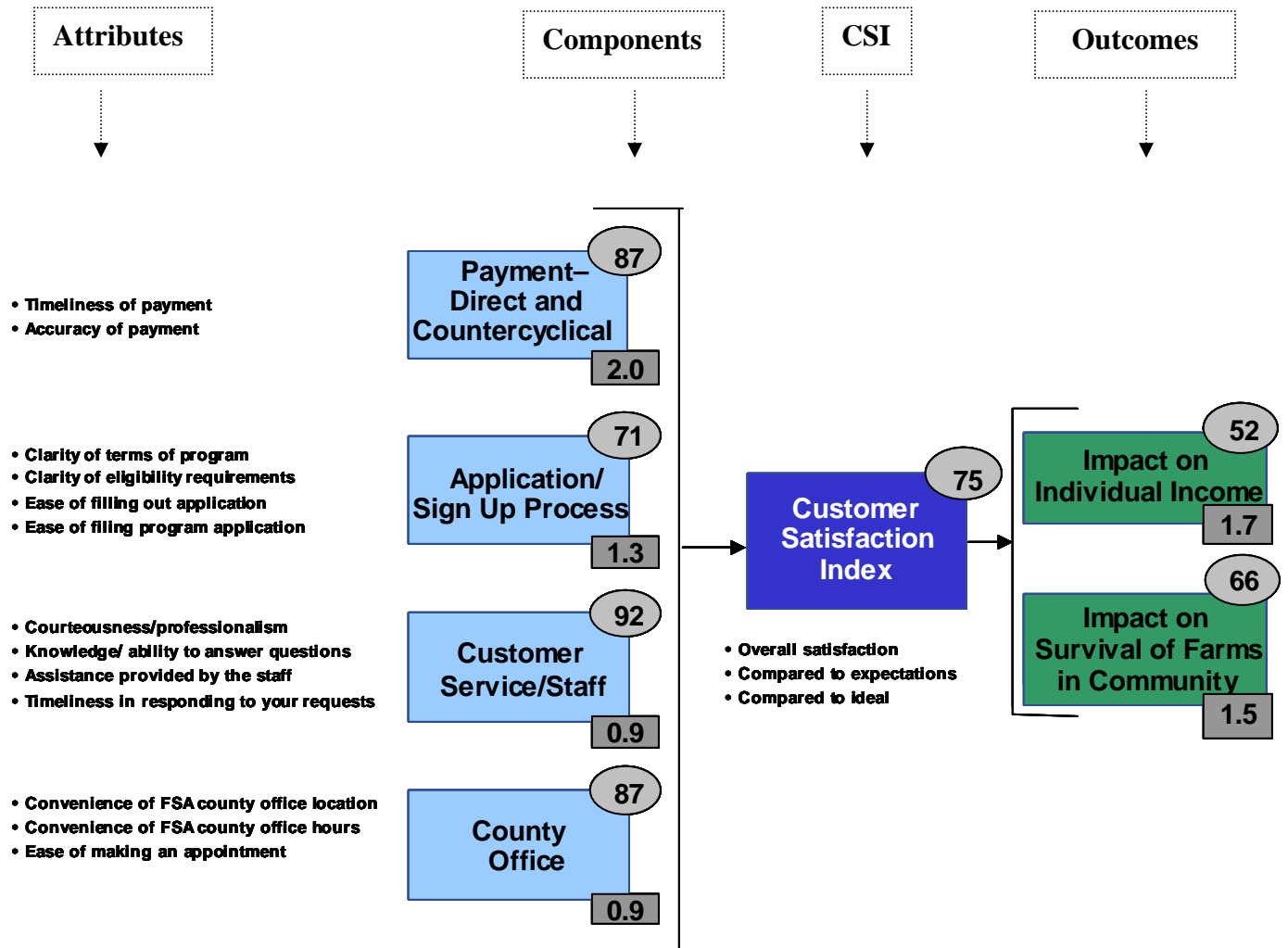
The USDA Farm Services Agency can use the scores (in ovals) and impacts (in rectangles) from the model shown on the next page to target areas for improvement that will have the greatest leverage on Customer Satisfaction with the Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program. Attribute scores are the mean (average) respondent scores to each individual question that was asked in the survey. Respondents are asked to rate each item on a 1-10 scale with "1" being "poor" and "10" being "excellent." CFI Group converts the mean responses to these items to a 0-100 scale for reporting purposes. It is important to note that these scores are averages, not percentages. The score is best thought of as an index, with "0" meaning "poor" and "100" meaning "excellent."

A component score in the ovals in the upper right corners is the weighted average of the individual attribute ratings given by each respondent to the questions presented in the survey. A score is a relative measure of performance for a component, as given for a particular set of respondents. In the model illustrated on the following page, scores for attributes such as "Timeliness of payment" and "Accuracy of payment" create the component score for "Payment-Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment."

Impacts should be read as the effect on the subsequent component if the initial driver (component) were to be improved or decreased by five points. The reason that a 5-point increment is used to explain the impact is that a 5-point increase is large enough to be noteworthy to an organization in terms of improved performance and in typical studies (where at least 250 responses are collected) is statistically significant as well. For example, if the score for Payment-Direct and Counter-cyclical Payments increased by 5 points (87 to 92), Customer Satisfaction would increase by the amount of its impact, 2.0 points, (from 75 to 77). If the driver increases by less than or more than five points, the resulting change in the subsequent component would be the corresponding fraction of the original impact. Impacts are additive. Thus, if multiple areas were to each improve by 5 points the related improvement in satisfaction will be the sum of the impacts.

Similarly, if the Customer Satisfaction Index were to increase by 5 points, outcomes such as the respondents' perception of "Program impact on individual farm income" or "Survival of farms" would increase by the amount of their impact. In the case of Program Impact, a 5-point increase in satisfaction would increase "Program Impact" by 1.7 points from 52 to 53.7. As with scores, impacts are also relative to one another. A low impact does not mean a component is unimportant. Rather, it means that a five-point change in that one component is unlikely to result in much improvement in Satisfaction at this time. Therefore, components with higher impacts are generally recommended for improvement first, especially if scores are lower for those components.

USDA Farm Service Agency Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program Customer Satisfaction Model

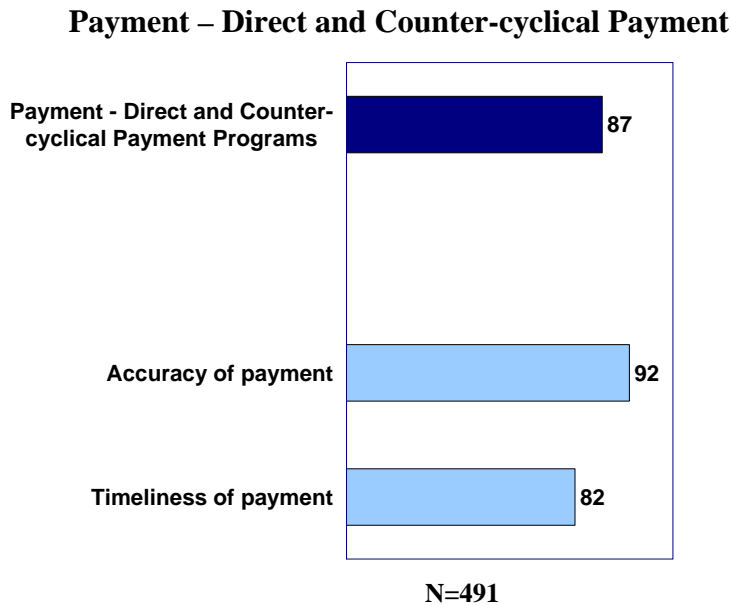


N =495

Drivers of Customer Satisfaction

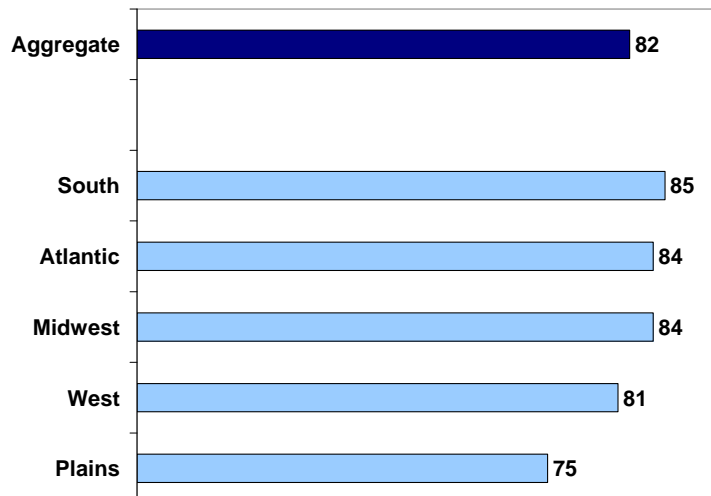
**Payment – Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment
Impact 2.0**

The payment that respondents receive from the Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program is the biggest driver of customer satisfaction with an impact of 2.0. Overall, Payments received a high rating, with respondents rating the payments highest for accuracy (92). Timeliness, while scoring well (82), may be an opportunity to improve. Given the high-impact that Payments have, efforts to improve upon timeliness or manage customers’ expectations about timeliness will allow FSA to leverage this key driver of customer satisfaction.



With respect to the timeliness of payments the South, Atlantic and Midwest regions appear to be most contented with timeliness, while the Plains scores the lowest. *Plains score for “timeliness of payment” is significantly lower than the scores from all other regions at a 90% level of confidence.*

Timeliness of Payment – Region Scores

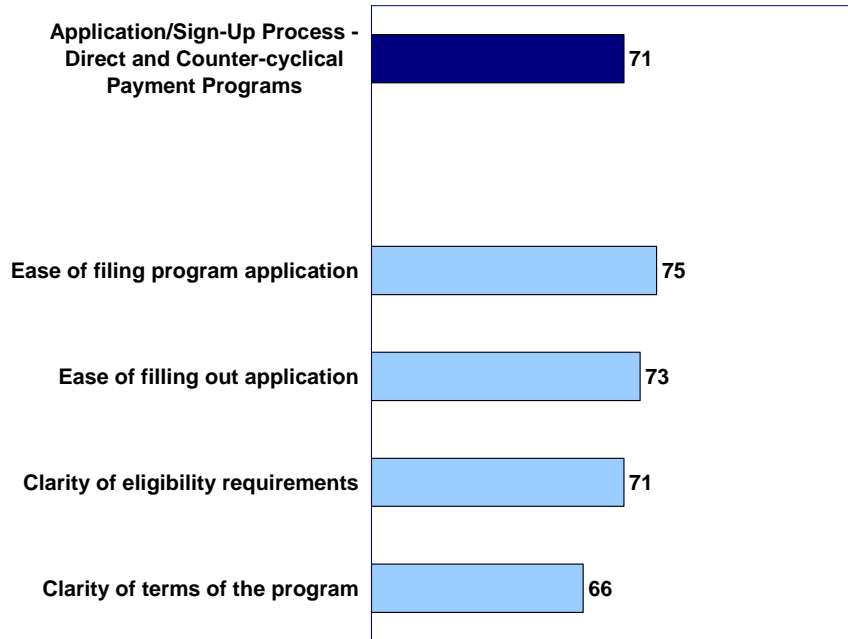


Application/Sign Up Process

Impact 1.3

The Application and Sign Up Process has a high impact on customer satisfaction with an impact of 1.3. However, this area was also the lowest scoring of all drivers with a rating of 71. Of the Application/Sign Up items rated, respondents gave the lowest ratings to the “clarity of terms of the program.” However, the remainder of the scores for this area (ranging in the low to mid 70s) reflects there may be other opportunities to improve the performance in this key driver of satisfaction.

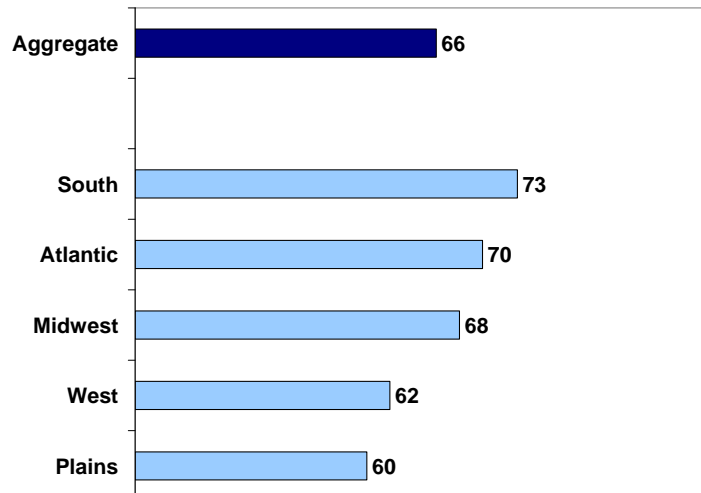
Application/Sign Up Process



N=491

Clarity of terms of the program appears to be more problematic for respondents in the West and Plains. Their scores are significantly lower compared to those from respondents in the other three regions. *These differences all are significant at a 90% level of confidence.*

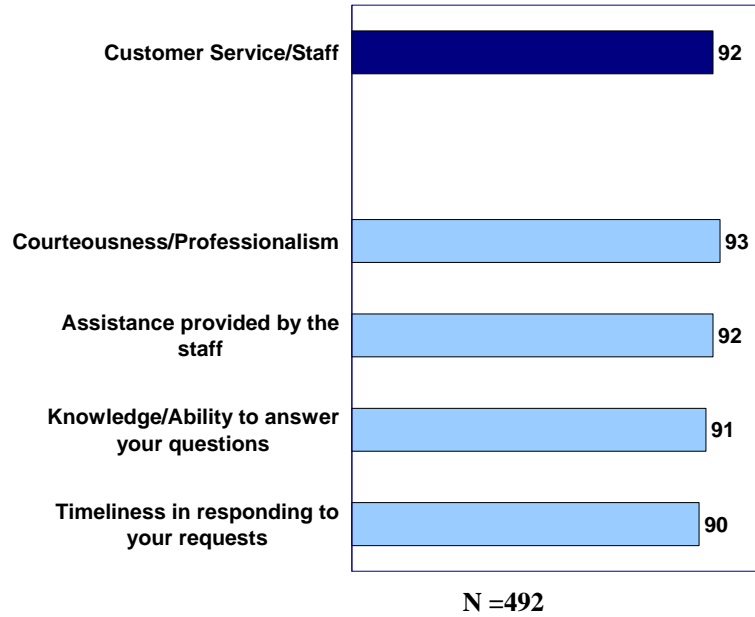
Clarity of Terms – Region Scores



Customer Service/Staff
Impact 0.9

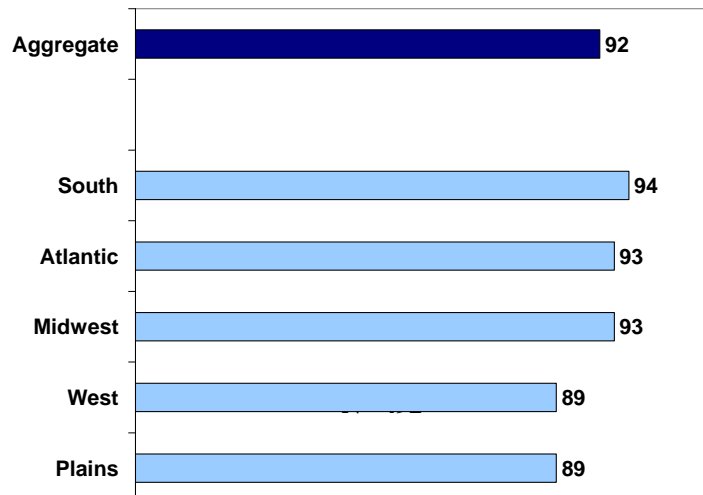
Respondents found the Customer Service/Staff was the greatest strength of the Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program with a score of 92. Scores for components in the 90s indicate a high level of performance. Every Customer Service/Staff item evaluated scored in the 90s. Respondents found the staff to be courteous, knowledgeable and timely in their responses. Customer Service/Staff has an impact of 0.9 on satisfaction.

Customer Service/Staff



Some regional differences were noted in Customer Service/Staff. While performance is high across all regions, the South, Atlantic and Midwest earned the highest marks. Scores for each of the three regions are significantly higher compared to the scores from West and Plains respondents. *These differences are significant at a 90% level of confidence.*

Customer Service/Staff – Region Scores

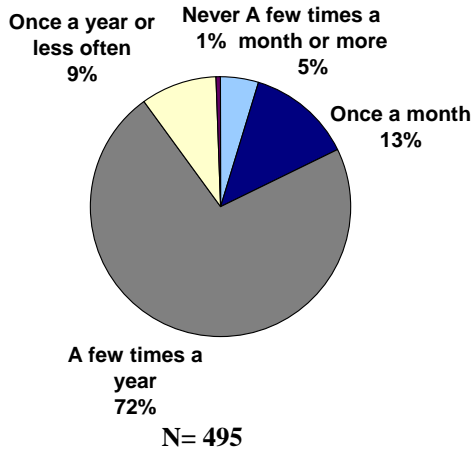


County Office

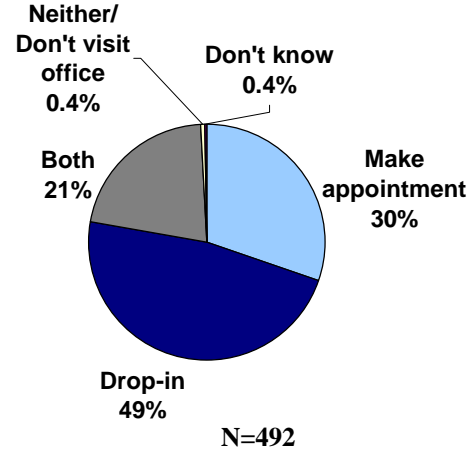
Impact 0.9

Nearly three-quarters of respondents (72%) mentioned visiting a county office a few times a year with another 18% visiting more frequently. Nearly half (49%) of respondents choose to drop-in without making an appointment, while 30% prefer to make an appointment and 21% do both.

How frequently visit

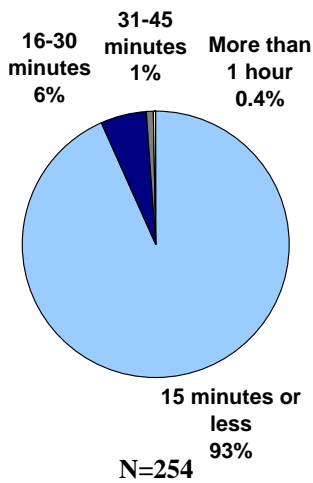


Make an appointment or drop-in

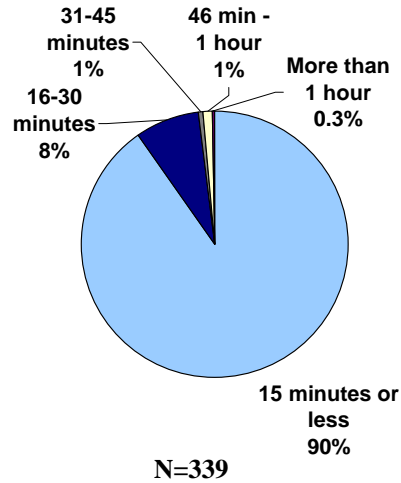


Wait time was not an issue for most respondents. When an appointment was made the wait time in 93% of the cases was 15 minutes or less. When an appointment was not made, in 90% of the cases the wait was still 15 minutes or less.

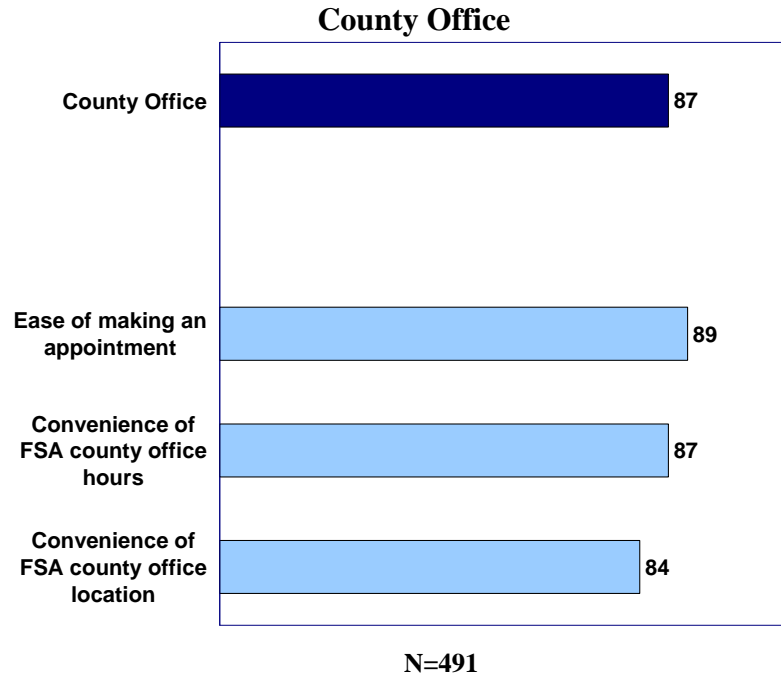
Wait Time – Appointment made



Wait Time – No appointment made

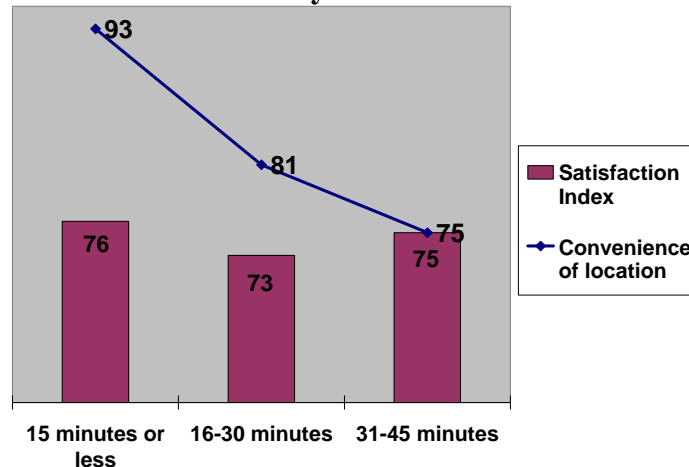


Overall, respondents found the County Office to be accessible and gave high ratings to the ease of making appointment and convenience of county office hours. The FSA county office location was mostly convenient at an aggregate level as well. All ratings for County Office items are in the 80s. Of the satisfaction drivers County Office along with Customer Service/Staff had the lowest impact on satisfaction with an impact of 0.9 on customer satisfaction.



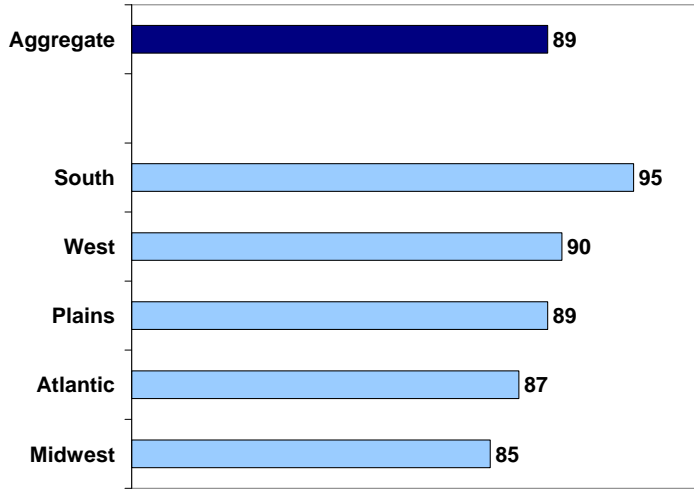
While “convenience of FSA county office location” has an inverse relationship with the respondents’ drive time to the Office, satisfaction does not. There was not a significant difference in satisfaction among those with the shortest drives (less than 15 minutes) compared to those with longer drives (up to 45 minutes). While the chart below shows “convenience of location scores” falling for those with longer drives, it shows satisfaction remaining constant. Note that those with drives over 45 minutes are excluded (due to low sample sizes). Ninety-three percent of respondents have drives of 45 minutes or less and are included in the chart below.

Convenience of location and Satisfaction by time to drive to County Office



At an aggregate level respondents felt that making an appointment was very easy. In particular, the South rated this item highest among regions. *The score for the South was significantly higher compared to all other region's scores for this item at a 90% level of confidence.*

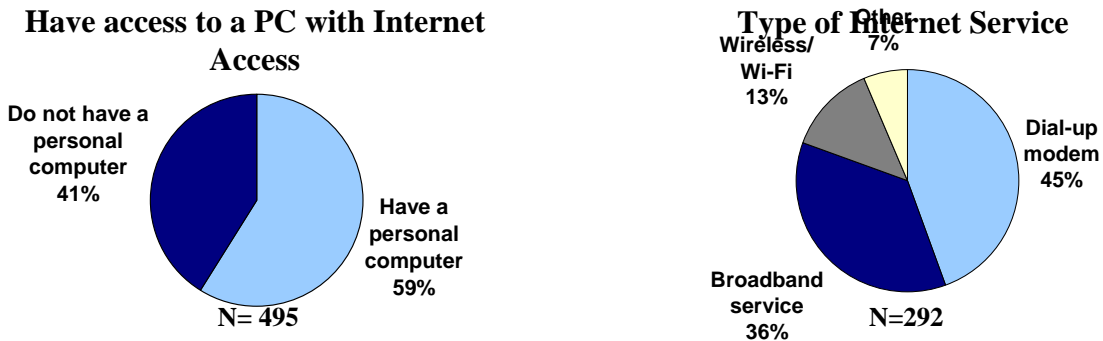
Ease of making an appointment – Region Scores



Other Findings

Delivery of services

For the most part, producers’ usage of computers to access the Internet is similar to the general U.S. population. Nearly three-fifths (59%) of the respondents have a PC that they can use to access the Internet. A recent study conduct by Pew Internet and American Life found 73% of U.S. adults are Internet users¹. *It should be noted that the Pew study found that Internet use is considerably lower among those ages 65 and above (33%²) compared to younger age groups and about one out of five DCP respondents were age 70 and over.* Age of DCP respondents likely accounts for some of the variance from the national average. Of those with access to the Internet, 45% have a dial-up model, while 49% have either Wireless/Wi-Fi or Broadband. Thus 29% of all respondents have high-speed Internet. This is lower than the national average. (A recent study conduct by Pew Internet and American Life found 42% of U.S. adults have high-speed access³.) Internet access for FSA customers has increased markedly from the 2001 ACSI study. In 2001, only 28% of Direct Farm Loan respondents and 41% of LDP respondents owned computers and had Internet access.



Respondents were asked about their preference for which services they would like to receive remotely, such as over the phone/fax and using the Internet. In rank ordering their top three choices among the services listed below, the service with the most first-preferred mentions and overall mentions was “Obtaining program information.” Sixty percent of respondents ranked obtaining program information either first, second or third. Information about status of application or payments ranked second in both most first-preferred and overall mentions.

Preference for services offered remotely

	First preferred service	Second preferred service	Third preferred service	Total mentions (First, second or third)
Number of Respondents	495	495	495	
Obtaining program information	26%	20%	14%	60%
Information about status of application or payments	20%	16%	21%	57%
Receiving assistance with completing forms	15%	21%	14%	50%
Apply for loans or Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs)	14%	15%	19%	48%
Obtaining application forms	13%	15%	17%	45%
Other	12%	14%	16%	42%
Percent Total	100%	101%	101%	

Note: Numbers total to more than 100% due to rounding.

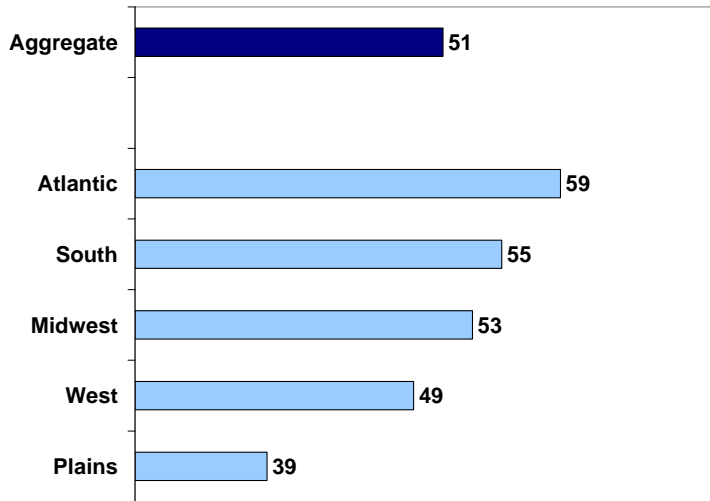
^{1,2} Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project, November 30 – December 30, 2006 Tracking Survey

³ Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project, Home Broadband Adoption 2006

Likelihood of conducting business without having to visit office

Respondents were asked the likelihood of conducting business without having to visit a county office if it meant saving them time and getting their payment faster. Overall respondents rated this item 51 on a scale of 0 to 100, where “0” means “not at all likely” and “100” means “very likely.” However, the choice to conduct business without having to visit a county office was much less likely for those in the Plains (39).

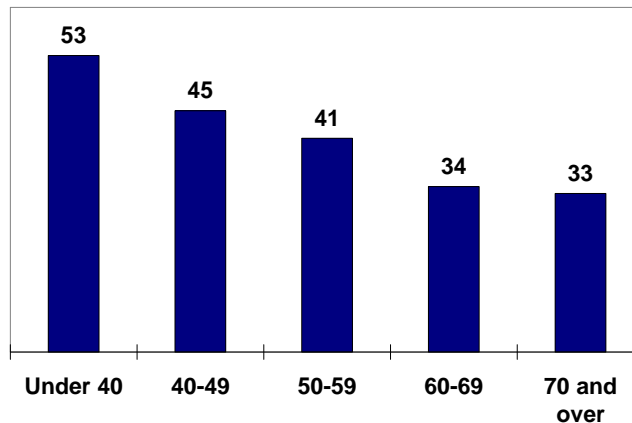
Likelihood of conducting business without having to visit office – Region Scores



Comfort using Internet to complete applications

Respondents were asked about their comfort in using the Internet to complete applications. Overall this item scored fairly low – 41 on a scale of 0 to 100, where “0” means “not at all comfortable” and “100” means “very comfortable.” The comfort in using the Internet to complete applications had an inverse relationship with age. Those under 40 rated comfort using Internet the highest (53).

Comfort using the Internet to complete applications by Age Groups



Scale from 0 to 100 where ‘0’ represents ‘Not at all comfortable’ and ‘100’ represents ‘very comfortable.’

Further analysis of distribution of scores shows that overall 26% of respondents felt mostly comfortable with using the Internet to complete applications. These respondents gave ratings of “8” or higher on the 1-10 scale. Like the overall mean score, the proportion of respondents who are most comfortable with the Internet for applications is also inversely related to age. While 42% of those under 40 rated their comfort “8” or higher, this proportion falls to 29% for those in their 40s. For those in their 50s (22%) 60s (23%) and 70s (21%) even fewer feel as comfortable.

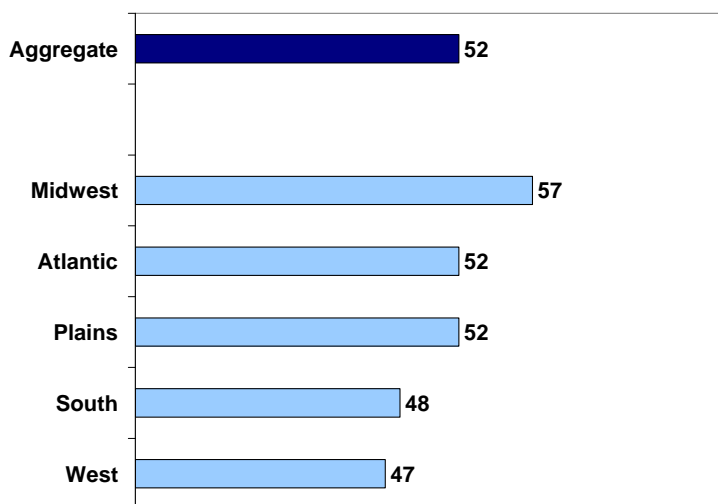
Conversely, 26% of all respondents felt “not at all” comfortable. These respondents rated their comfort a “1.” Again, age is somewhat directly related to the proportion of respondents not at all comfortable using the Internet for applications. Fewer than one-fifth of those under 40 or in their 40s rated their comfort this low. For those in their 50s the percent is slightly higher at 26% and for those in their 60s and 70s nearly one-third are not at all comfortable using the Internet for applications.

Outcomes of DCP Program

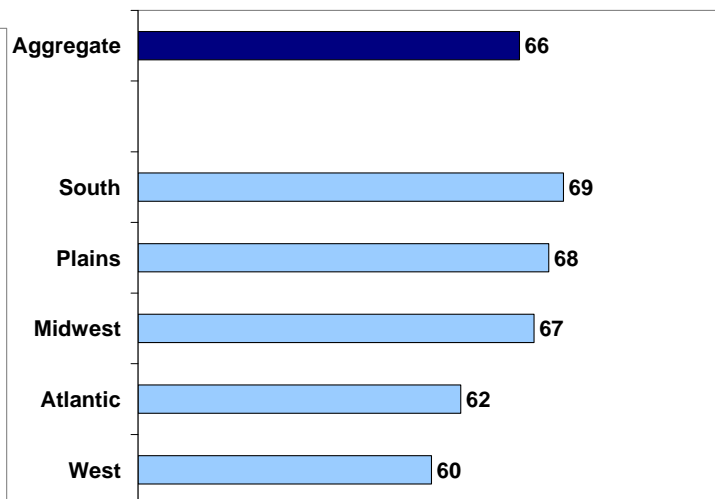
Respondents were asked about the impact that the Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program had on both their individual farm income and on the survival of the farms in their community over the past three years. On a scale where “0” means “not very much impact” and “100” means “a great deal of impact” the program impact on individual farm income received a rating of 52, while impact on survival of farms in their community scored higher (66).

Some regional differences in perceived impact the Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program had were noted. With respect to the impact the program has on individual farm income those in the Midwest gave higher ratings while those in the South and West gave lower ratings. Only differences between Midwest and South and Midwest and West are significant at a 90% level of confidence. Respondents in the Midwest, South and Plains rated the impact DCP had on the survival of farms in their community in the high 60s.

Impact of DCP program on farm income – Region Scores

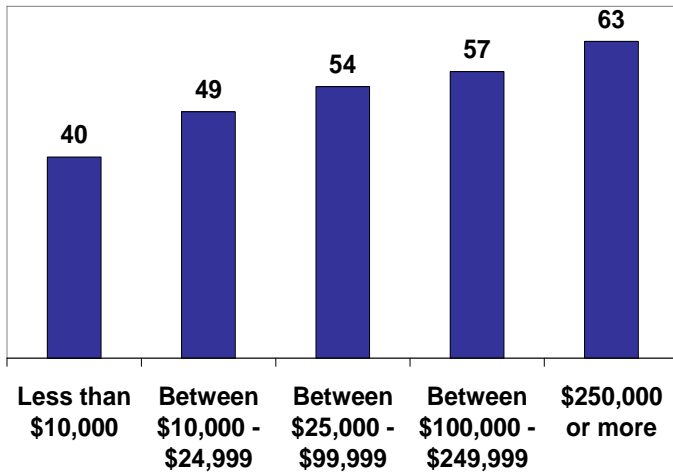


Impact of DCP program on survival of farms in community – Region Scores

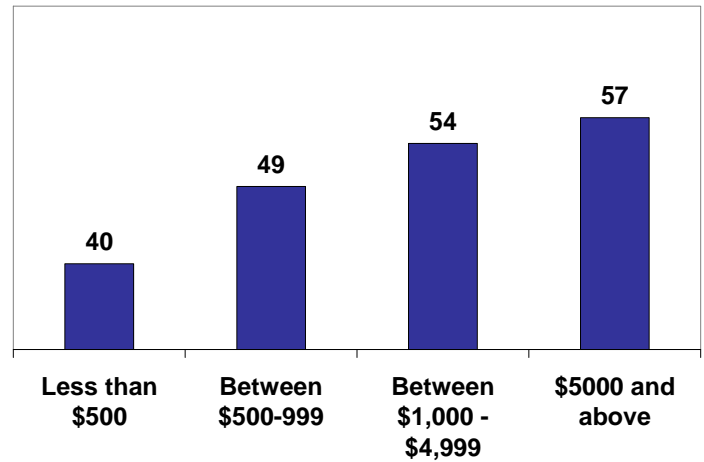


There was a direct relationship between both farm income level and payment amount levels and the rating of program impact on individual farm income. Those with higher incomes and/or payments rated the program impact on income higher.

Impact of DCP program on farm income – Scores by Farm Income



Impact of DCP program on farm income – Scores by Payment



As to the factors that contributed to the change in impact that the Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program had on individual farm income and survival of farms in communities, the most cited factor was commodity prices. Over 61% mentioned Commodity Prices contributing to the change in impact that the program had on individual farm income, while 67% mentioned Commodity Prices as a contributor to the change in impact the program had on the survival of farms in their community. Change in production costs was second most mentioned on both accounts. Other contributing factors are listed in the table below. Verbatim comments for “Other” responses can be found in Appendix D.

Factors that contributed to change in impact

	Individual Farm Income	Survival of Farms
Commodity Prices	61%	67%
Change in Production Costs	51%	62%
Change in planted acreage	31%	36%
Competition	29%	35%
Insurance	26%	28%
Change in non-farm income	25%	28%
Other	18%	15%
Number of Respondents	495	495

Customer satisfaction had a rather modest impact on the customers’ perception of the impact that the Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program has on individual farm income and the survival of farms. As reflected in the “outcomes” depicted in the Customer Satisfaction Model, satisfaction has an impact of 1.7 on the perception of “impact of Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program on individual farm income” and an impact of 1.5 on the perception of “impact of Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program on survival of farms in their community.” Please note these outcome measures are customers’ perception of impact and have impact scores

much lower than what is typically observed for outcome impacts. Outcome impacts often are in the range of 4.0 – 5.0, where the relationship to the increase in satisfaction to the increase in the outcome measure is close to a one-to-one relationship.

Summary and Recommendations

Satisfaction with the Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment program compares favorably to the Federal Government average. There are some regional differences, with the Atlantic and South reporting higher satisfaction and Plains reporting lower satisfaction. In comparing satisfaction with the Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program to that of the Marketing Assistance Loan Program, satisfaction with the DCP Program outscored the MAL Program by a statistically significant 4 points.

Respondents saw the Customer Service/Staff as the greatest strength of the DCP Program. Additionally, the areas of Payment and County Office received positive ratings for their performances.

Payments and the Application/Sign Up Process are the key drivers of customer satisfaction for the DCP program. With respect to the Payments respondents received from the DCP Program, customers thought the payments were accurate and timely. The Application/Sign Up Process was rated the lowest of all areas evaluated. Respondents found clarity of the terms of the program was most problematic. This has been an issue with respondents for some time, as the 2001 study that was conducted for FSA found that “clarity of information” was the lowest scoring area. Plains and West respondents rated the area of Application/Sign-Up lower. Plains respondents also rated Payment lower than other regions did. These lower ratings in both key driver areas account for the lower satisfaction score in the Plains.

Respondents found the in office Customer Service and Staff to be excellent with ratings in the 90s for Customer Service/Staff related attributes. Respondents found the staff to be highly professional, knowledgeable and providing valuable assistance in a timely manner. Customers indicated that they visit the office at least a few times a year or more often as 90% of respondents fall into this category. Almost half of the respondents said they typically drop-in without making an appointment. The typical wait time is under 15 minutes, regardless of whether the appointment was made or not. Ninety-three percent of those who made an appointment waited 15 minutes or less, and 90% of those who did not have an appointment had a similarly short waiting period.

Respondents found the County Offices to have convenient hours and locations. They also found making an appointment was easy. An inverse relationship exists between the amount of time to drive to the office location and the rating of convenience of the location – the longer the drive the lower the rating of convenience. However, longer drives do not appear to mean lower satisfaction (at least for those driving no more than 45 minutes). Satisfaction for those with drives of less than 15 minutes; 16-30 minutes and 31-45 minutes were all fairly similar, as only a 3-point range in satisfaction scores exists among them.

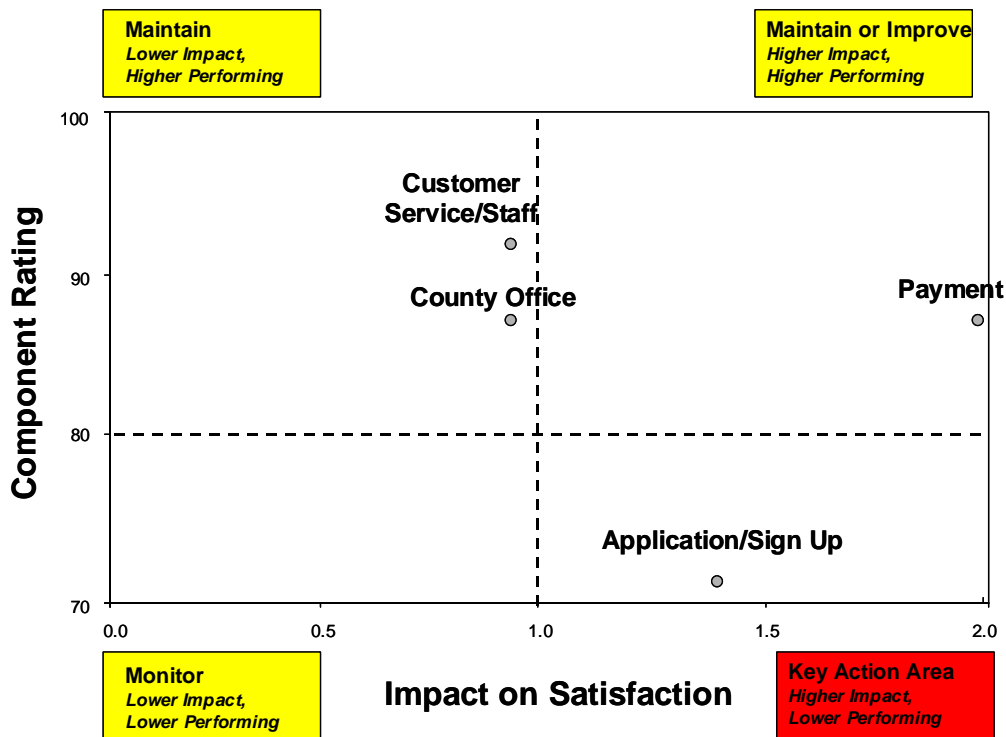
Nearly three-fifths of respondents have a PC with access to the Internet. This is below the national average, but it should be noted that a large number of DCP respondents were ages 70 and over – a group that typically has low Internet usage. Respondents indicated given the choice

of remotely offered services, obtaining program information and information about status of application or payments received the most mentions. Those services which can be offered remotely without the need for high-speed access should be considered first as high-speed access among DCP respondents was also below the national average.

At an aggregate level, respondents are moderately likely to conduct business without having to visit the office with a rating of “likelihood” of 51 on a scale of 0 to 100. However, many respondents tended to be at the extremes of very likely or not at all likely. One-quarter (24%) rated their likelihood a “1” and 39% rated their likelihood “8” or higher. Those in the Plains were least likely. Given the lower incidence of high-speed Internet it follows that respondents indicated they were not that likely to use the Internet to complete applications. However, an inverse relationship exists between age and likelihood to use the Internet to complete applications with the youngest (under 40) being the most likely. Thus, targeting younger producers with education and outreach efforts would be a logical starting point for encouraging online application usage.

Respondents thought the DCP Program had more impact on the survival of farms in their community compared to the impact it had on their own farm income. Ratings of impact on farm income increased among those with higher farm incomes and those receiving larger payments. Commodity prices and change in production costs were cited as factors contributing to the changing impact that the DCP Program has on both individual farm income and survival of farms in their community.

In order to increase customer satisfaction with the DCP Program, it is recommended to focus on the high-impact, lower performing areas first. Improvements in the application process should be a high priority. Target improving the clarity of terms of the program and the clarity of eligibility requirements. A review of applications and supporting information with users groups is one approach that will provide deeper insight into how to revise the materials. Given that respondents



in the West and Plains appear to find these areas a bit more problematic than those in other regions, it would be important to gain a separate understanding of their perspectives. Should focus groups be conducted as a follow-up activity, it would be advantageous to group respondents regionally. If FSA desires to have a more in-depth understanding of each region or of a particular region, with quantified results it is recommended that larger samples be collected at the regional level. For example, regional sample sizes of 250 respondents will allow for modeling at the regional level and typically provide scores with a precision of approximately +/- 2.1 points at a 90% level of confidence.

While Payment is a high-performing area, given the high impact it has on satisfaction, efforts to improve the rating of timeliness of payments will allow FSA to leverage this key driver. A more reliable web system would contribute to this effort. Improved communications that help manage customer expectations about the timeliness of payments is another opportunity to improve in the area of Payment. Customer service and County Office are both high-performing areas where performance should be maintained.

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