



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

# Child Maintenance Service Client Satisfaction

Background information and methodology

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# Purpose of the statistics

## Context

Child maintenance is financial support between separated parents to help with the everyday living costs of looking after children.

If they agree, separated parents can arrange child maintenance themselves. This is called a 'family-based arrangement'. A family-based arrangement is a private way to sort out child maintenance. Parents arrange everything themselves and no-one else has to be involved.

The Child Maintenance Service (CMS), which replaces the Child Support Agency (CSA), is for when the parents can't agree to a family-based arrangement. Parents wishing to use the Child Maintenance Service must first speak to Child Maintenance Options (CM Options).

In June 2014 the Child Maintenance Service introduced a £20 fee for making a child maintenance application and ongoing charges for collecting child maintenance. The paying parent pays an additional 20% of their child maintenance and the receiving parent pays 4% of their child maintenance amount.

## Purpose

These statistics allow people to see client satisfaction scores with the Child Maintenance Service from the quarter ending November 2013 to the quarter ending August 2016.

The statistics are used by a wide variety of people within DWP. They are used to manage performance and improve the quality of the service provided to clients. They are also used to answer parliamentary questions and requests under the Freedom of Information Act.

## Source

The statistics in this report are based on the analysis of telephone interviews conducted by DWP agents. The survey is conducted once a month among parents who have had contact with the Child Maintenance Service in the preceding month. The sample is selected randomly, although certain groups of clients are excluded for practical reasons:

- Non-English speakers.
- Potentially Violent clients.
- Clients who have not given permission to be contacted for further research.
- Clients without a known address or contact number.

- Clients who have been contacted for surveying in the preceding six months.

The sample is drawn to a stratified simple random sample design, where the strata are the quarter of client contact, line of business that the client is dealing with and the client's role. Results are then weighted to be representative of the population by the same strata.

Interviewees are informed that their responses are kept confidential and that they can opt out or refuse to answer at any time.

## Limitations

There are some potential issues with the results:

1. Of the large sample selected for surveying, only a small proportion complete all interview questions. This is partly because clients cannot be contacted and partly because they refuse to participate. The resulting low response rate raises the possibility of non-response bias.
2. Surveys are conducted by DWP staff who are provided with interviewer training but are not classed as professional survey interviewers.
3. The exclusion of some clients (see above) could lead to biased results.
4. Results are weighted to make them representative of the quarter of client contact, line of business that the client is dealing with and the client's role.
5. During the quarter ending May 2015, the survey was moved from a 5 point scale to a 4 point scale. The option of "Don't know/can't remember" was removed. This led to increased sample sizes in the following quarters.
6. The client service question "During the last telephone conversation you had about your case, please can you state whether you strongly agree/agree/disagree/strongly disagree with the following statement. The case worker was polite and friendly?" was not asked until the quarter ending May 2015.
7. The client service question "During the last telephone conversation you had about your case, please can you state whether you strongly agree/agree/disagree/strongly disagree with the following statement. The case worker kept you informed of what was happening with your case?" was not asked during the quarter ending May 2015.

8. Initial sample sizes were much lower than in later surveys leading to some potential comparison issues.

Therefore, these estimates should be treated as a guide to satisfaction rather than an absolute figure.

## Definitions and terminology

**Satisfaction** is a measure of the Child Maintenance Services ability to meet or surpass client expectations as a whole. This will include the client's views on whether child maintenance is successfully being collected. It is measured by asking interviewees the following question:

Now thinking about your whole experience of the CMS, not just your (application/change of circumstances/arrears/complaint), how satisfied are you with the service the CMS has provided since (month)? Are you:

1. Very Satisfied
2. Satisfied
3. Dissatisfied
4. Very Dissatisfied
5. Don't know/can't remember

The Satisfaction rate is defined as the proportion of satisfied or very satisfied responses, excluding those that were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

**Overall Satisfaction** is measured by the response to the same question but all results between November 2013 and August 2016 are combined.

**Client Service** is a measure of how the interviewees rate the various aspects of the Child Maintenance Service. It is calculated by the summation of responses to eight client experience questions:

During the last telephone conversation you had about your case, please can you state whether you strongly agree/ agree/ disagree/ strongly disagree with each of the following statements. The case worker...

1. Was polite and friendly.
2. Treated you with courtesy and respect.
3. Was sensitive to your needs.
4. Was impartial and non-judgmental.
5. Provided you with written information when asked for it.
6. Displayed good knowledge of CMS processes.
7. Understood the details of your case.
8. Kept you informed of what was happening to your case.

**Overall Client Service** is calculated by combining the scores from eight questions about the client experience between November 2013 and August 2016.

## Status of the statistics

### **Ad-hoc statistics**

These statistics are badged as ad-hoc as they are a one off publication to support the evaluation of the Child Maintenance Reforms.

### **Quality Statement**

These statistics have been developed using guidelines set out by the UK Statistics Authority and are new official statistics. Users are invited to comment on the development and relevance of these statistics.

## Feedback

### **We welcome feedback**

DWP would like to hear your views on our statistical publications. If you use any of our statistics publications, we would be interested in hearing what you use them for and how well they meet your requirements. Please email DWP at [cm.analysis.research@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:cm.analysis.research@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## Useful links

The Child Maintenance Service website has further information:

<https://www.gov.uk/child-maintenance>

The Child Maintenance Options website has further information on their work:

<http://www.cmoptions.org/>

How we plan to evaluate child maintenance reform:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/387584/child-maintenance-reforms-evaluation-strategy.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/387584/child-maintenance-reforms-evaluation-strategy.pdf)