

Summary of findings from the Annual Survey of MPs and their Staff

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Survey overview

Introduction

1. The Annual User Survey of MPs and their Staff is conducted at the end of each year as a way for IPSA to gain insight into how well it is meeting the needs of its customers. As part of a series of consultations throughout the year, the feedback obtained through this survey is instrumental in evaluating and enhancing the services provided.
2. We aim to support trust in democracy. To achieve this objective, our focus is on allowing MPs to focus on what really matters, facilitated by a streamlined, regulatory service. This is reflected in IPSA's new regulatory philosophy.
3. IPSA has implemented several improvements to its services based on customer feedback, as part of a key initiative within the Transformation Programme that commenced in 2021. After three years of the programme, we can see that this has had an overall positive effect – respondents who rated IPSA's performance as good or very good increased from 34.8% in 2020 to 65.3% in 2023. Most notably, MPs' 'Proxies' (nominated members of staff that are able to engage with IPSA on an MP's behalf) who rated IPSA's service as good or very good increased from 56.7% in 2020 to 77.5% in 2023.
4. However, ongoing customer feedback indicates that there are still aspects of our services which require improvement. 9.9% of respondents still rate IPSA's performance as poor and the proportion of MPs who rate our service as good has fallen from 42.3% in 2022 to 31.6% in 2023. Analysis of responses to free-text questions reveals key areas for improvement, many of which align with concerns identified in previous annual user surveys. These will be considered as part of the upcoming Improving IPSA Programme.

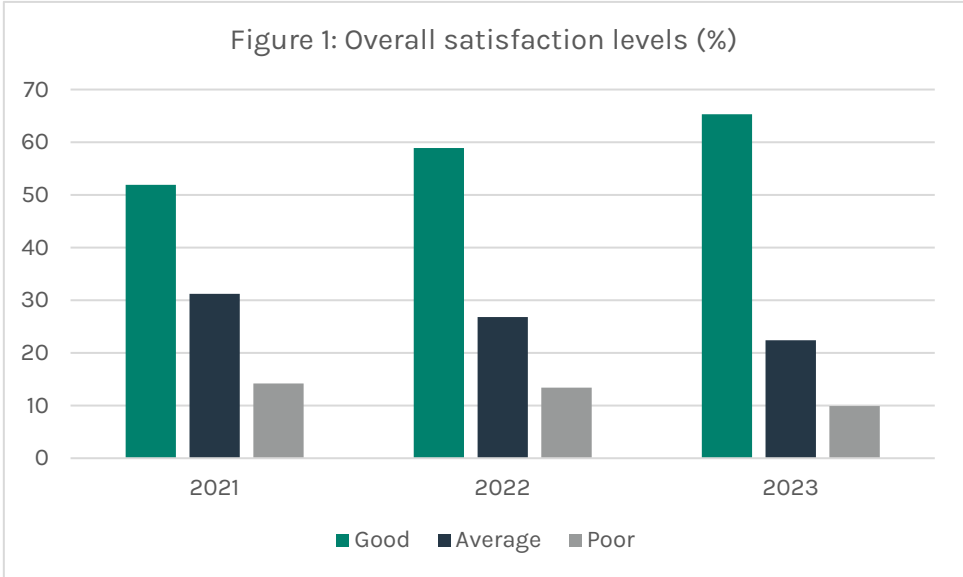
Survey details

5. This survey ran from 30 November till 23 December 2023. We received 294 responses in total, with 38 responses from MPs, 138 from MPs' Proxies and 118 from other staff members. Comparing this to the response rate from 2022, we can see that there has been a substantial decrease in participation: there were 418 respondents last year, of whom 52 were MPs, 217 were MPs' Proxies and 149 were other staff. The results show a steep decline in response rates since 2021 (459 participants) with the 2023 response rate being the lowest since 2019 (243 participants). To encourage higher participation rates to increase the reliability of the data collected, we will reflect on the nature and timing of future surveys.
6. It's important to highlight that the participation rate represents only a small percentage of the total customer base that received the survey (only 5.8% of MPs

and 6.8% of staff members completed the survey). While the findings may therefore not capture a fully statistically representative sample of all customers, they do offer valuable insights into customers' individual experience. These insights help identify where our services provide the most value, as well as highlight areas that require improvement. IPSA actively engages with MPs and their staff through various consultations throughout the year to ensure a thorough understanding of the challenges faced.

Key findings & satisfaction ratings

- 7. Similar to results seen in previous years, overall satisfaction ratings have improved. 65.3% of customers rated IPSA's performance as good or very good. This is an increase on last year's figure of 58.9%. However, despite this increase, there are still many areas of concern, and MPs notably have a significantly lower satisfaction score compared to their staff.



- 8. Feedback received from the survey provides a more detailed understanding of the types of concerns MPs and their staff face and the improvements they would like to see. Reviewing the written responses from the free-text questions, the following themes emerged:
 - **IPSA Online** – consistent with past feedback, participants' primary concern continues to be the online claims system. Responses indicate that the system is still not fit for purpose and should be either upgraded further or replaced with a completely new system. The system's interface is clunky, complicated, and not user-friendly; reports are not easy to generate; and it should be made more intuitive to make routine claiming more efficient.
 - **Customer service** – query response times are often slow, it can sometimes be difficult to speak to someone on the phone, and there was a big emphasis on the

importance of improving Account Manager accessibility, including increasing phone slots, initiating proactive communication, and facilitating face-to-face meetings.

- **Budgeting & reporting** – confidence in budget forecasts produced by the online system is low and reports are difficult to manage and complicated to run, leading to calls for these elements to be improved further to allow MPs and their staff to accurately track their finances.
 - **Budgets** – budgets should be increased, most notably the staffing budget. Staff are currently being underpaid and offices are understaffed. A particular concern that MPs and their staff told us about in the survey is that the current practice of publishing staffing costs under an MP’s overall business spend has led to them not utilising the staffing budget as intended due to worries about the reaction from the public and media.
 - **Online guidance** – online guidance is sometimes difficult to find, can be unclear and could be simplified. The guidance given is also at times inconsistent.
 - **Staff support** – IPSA should gain a clearer understanding of the roles, responsibilities and work environments of MPs’ staff and provide a level of HR support.
9. Other notable themes include calls for a pay increase for staff, dissatisfaction with the returned claims process (most notably, the notes that accompany returned claims), and appeals for IPSA to increase its public engagement efforts, aimed at providing further education to members of the public on why MPs are entitled to claim business costs.
10. However, we were pleased to see widespread positive feedback again, especially from MPs’ Proxies. Respondents are more satisfied with the customer service offered by our front-facing teams and note an increase in availability. Respondents have also noticed an improvement with IPSA’s communications and overall engagement. All feedback is being considered by the relevant teams within IPSA and will help to inform future enhancements to our services.

Conclusion

11. The Annual User Survey is conducted every year and is a vital way for us to collect feedback on our performance. Findings from the survey show an improvement with 65.3% of respondents rating IPSA's services as good. This is a notable improvement from last year's level of 59.8%. This suggests that the final year of our three-year transformation programme has been successful in improving the overall user experience for our customers.
12. Despite the noticeable improvements, we realise there are still areas of concern and therefore understand there is more to be done. For instance, users still want to see further improvements to IPSA Online to make it more user-friendly, including improving reporting and budgeting tools, users would like to see budgets increased, especially the staffing budget, email response times shortened, increased accessibility to Account Managers; users think the online guidance should be improved and made easier to find; and IPSA should provide a level of HR support for staff.
13. These findings will directly inform the Improving IPSA Programme, and a number of the changes we aim to introduce this coming year will support us in addressing the issues raised in the survey. These include short-term changes to how we display data on MPs' staffing and business costs and exploring the underlying principles in the longer term, pursuing a marketplace pilot to allow our customers to purchase goods such as office equipment centrally, which will help us assess the value of centralisation in general, and a review of the reimbursement model to assess alternative ways of providing access to funding without the need for our customers to reclaim retrospectively.