

Users' views of the Points-Based System

Aims

This report presents a summary of findings from research conducted with applicants, sponsors and UK Border Agency staff regarding their experiences of the new Points-Based System (PBS), which was introduced in February 2008. The PBS is described in more detail in section 1 of the main report.

The aim of this research was to explore how the PBS was being received by those using it in its early stages and to identify potential areas for improvement. The UK Border Agency was keen to gather evidence from a range of different users, including Tier 1, 2 and 5 applicants who had applied to work in the UK, as well as their sponsors and representatives, and UK Border Agency staff.

Method

The research was conducted using an online survey method (postal questionnaires were also sent out to Tier 1 applicants during the pilot stage of the research), with different groups being surveyed at different times, reflecting the staggered introduction of the new system.

- The Tier 1 survey was conducted between February and April 2009, one year after Tier 1 roll-out.
- The Tier 2 and 5 surveys were carried out between February and March 2010, 16 months after Tier 2 and 5 roll-out.
- The Tier 2 and Tier 5 Sponsor and Representatives Survey was conducted over the same time period, two years after licensing began.
- Staff were surveyed between April and May 2010, one year after all tiers had been rolled out to allow some time for staff to become familiar with processes.

Findings

Overall, satisfaction with the PBS is high amongst applicants and sponsors

- There was a high level of satisfaction with the PBS application and sponsorship processes, with around eight in ten applicants and sponsors saying they were very or fairly satisfied with the process, across all of the groups surveyed.

Contents

1 Aims	1
2 Method	1
3 Tier 1 (highly skilled) applicants	2
4 Tier 2 (skilled) applicants	7
5 Tier 5 (temporary workers and youth mobility) applicants	12
6 The views of sponsors and representatives	15
7 The views of UK Border Agency staff	18
Appendix	23

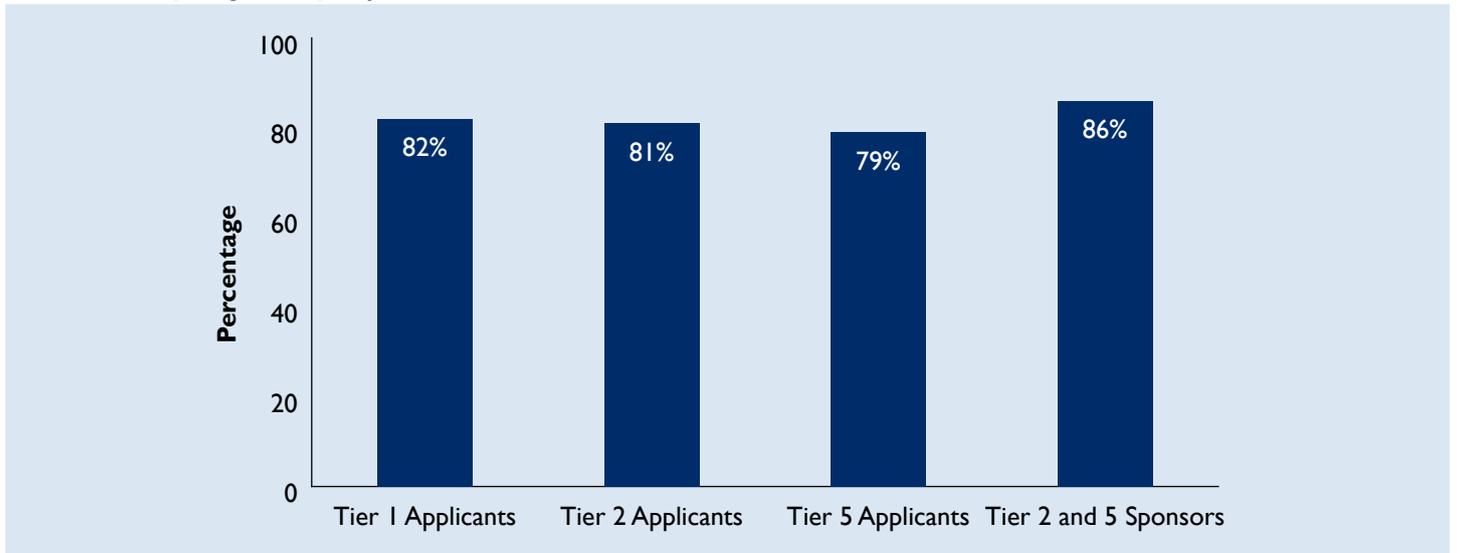
Keywords

Points based system
Tier 1
Tier 2
Tier 5
UK Border Agency staff
Sponsors
Highly skilled migrants
Migrant workers

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors, not necessarily those of the Home Office (nor do they reflect Government policy).

You may re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/> or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or e-mail: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

Figure S1 Overall satisfaction with the PBS (percentage of applicants and sponsors agreeing very or fairly satisfied)



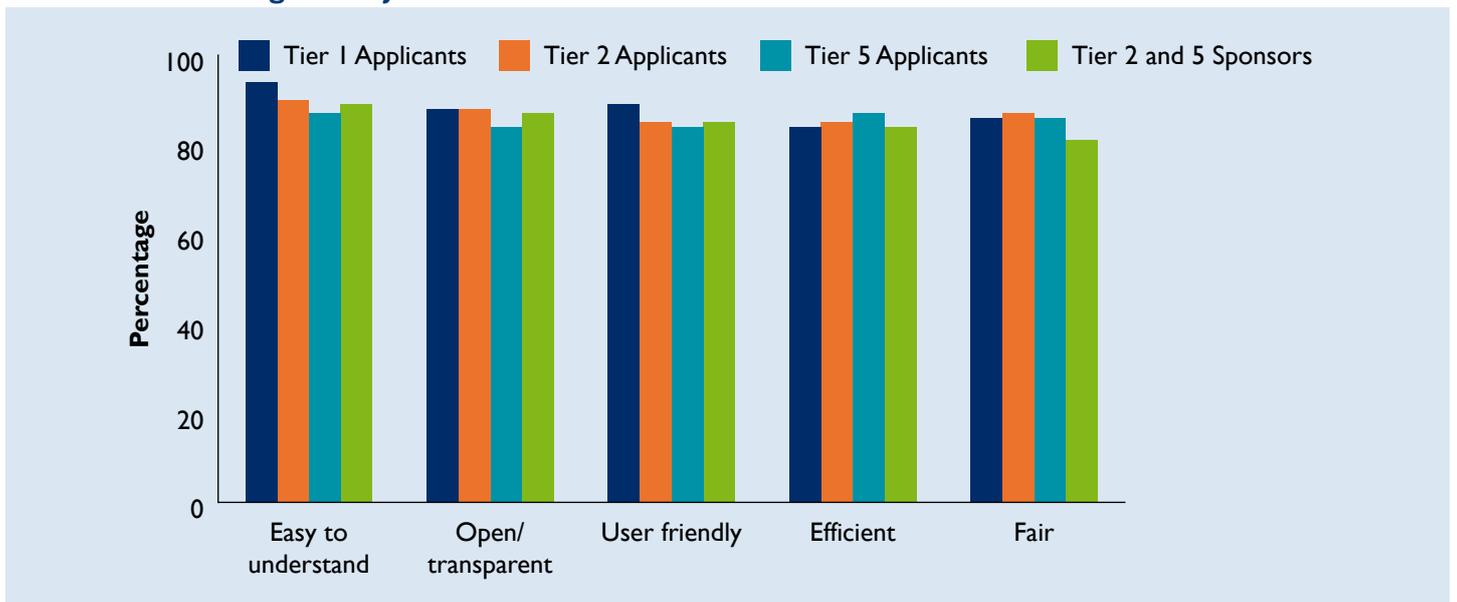
Tier 1 Applicants n=1,564; Tier 5 Applicants n=788; Tier 2 Applicants n=1,105; Tier 2 and 5 Sponsors n=1,521.

- In-country applicants (for Tiers 1 and 2) tended to be more positive than out-of-country. Eighty-five per cent of Tier 1 in-country respondents said they were satisfied (n=1,101) compared to 71 per cent (n=463) of out-of-country respondents, suggesting that out-of-country applicants might have slightly more difficulty in using the system. Out-of-country respondents indicated that they were more likely to seek assistance than in-country respondents and expressed more difficulties in obtaining the correct documentation.

Applicants and sponsors generally agreed that the PBS was meeting its objectives which were being easy to understand, open/transparent, user-friendly, efficient and fair. However, UK Border Agency staff were less positive

- As Figure S2 shows, approximately eight in ten of all applicants and sponsors agreed the PBS was meeting its objectives of being easy to understand, open/transparent, user-friendly, efficient and fair.

Figure S2 Percentage of respondents agreeing the PBS is completely, mostly or to some extent meeting the objectives



Response bases vary between objectives/respondent groups and range between 774 and 1,564 responses.

Table S1 Percentage of respondents agreeing that compared to the previous system, the PBS was faster, slower or the same

	Faster	Slower	Same
Tier 1 Applicants	23%	36%	30%
Tier 2 Applicants	31%	25%	31%
Tier 5 Applicants	30%	28%	25%

Tier 1 applicants n=1,197; Tier 2 applicants n=675; Tier 5 applicants n=190.

- Staff, however, were less positive and fewer than six in ten felt the PBS was meeting its objectives, with lowest positive scores for the objectives of efficiency and fairness.

Experiences of the PBS compared favourably with experiences under previous immigration routes

- Of those applicants and sponsors who had experience of previous immigration systems, they generally believed the PBS was an improvement on those systems. However, as Table S1 shows, applicants were evenly split over whether the PBS was faster or slower than pre-PBS routes.

Online process is viewed favourably

- One of the most favourable aspects of the application process is the PBS Calculator to help check eligibility before applying.
- There was also demand for further ability to submit applications online amongst in-country Tier 1 applicants, an option which was not available at the time of the survey.

Satisfaction with speed of decision making has improved since the PBS was first rolled out, but managing expectations for decisions is important for overall satisfaction

- Decision times amongst applicants were variable, but only Tier 1 applicants reported any particular dissatisfaction with the speed of decision making, and this is likely to be a result of the survey being conducted shortly after implementation of the Tier 1 route.
- There was some demand for online-tracking options amongst Tier 1 applicants in order to monitor progress of an application.

Most found it easy to understand and to obtain relevant supporting documentation

- Although, a minority reported difficulty with obtaining proof of funds, previous earnings, translated or UK equivalents of foreign qualifications and proof of maternity or adoption-related absence.

Mixed experiences when seeking assistance from the UK Border Agency

- The majority of Tier 2 respondents found it took them more than one attempt to seek assistance from either the UK Border Agency Immigration Enquiries Bureau (80%, n=255), a Visa Application Centre or local embassy (62%, n=227). For a sizeable minority of respondents, it took five or more attempts to obtain the relevant assistance from these same sources (36% and 20% respectively).
- Tier 1 and Tier 5 respondents reported more positive experiences in seeking assistance, with most Tier 5 respondents reporting they obtained assistance in just one attempt.

Indications that some UK Border Agency staff required further training and support

- Guidance and IT systems were generally perceived as useful and easy to use, although there were exceptions.
- Some staff felt they had not received enough training and resources to implement the PBS effectively. Staff who felt they had received sufficient training were more positive about the PBS than those who had not.
- Just over half of the staff (53%) who responded to the survey felt that the UK border was less secure since the introduction of the PBS, with Border Force colleagues significantly more likely to perceive it as less secure than other staff.