

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.

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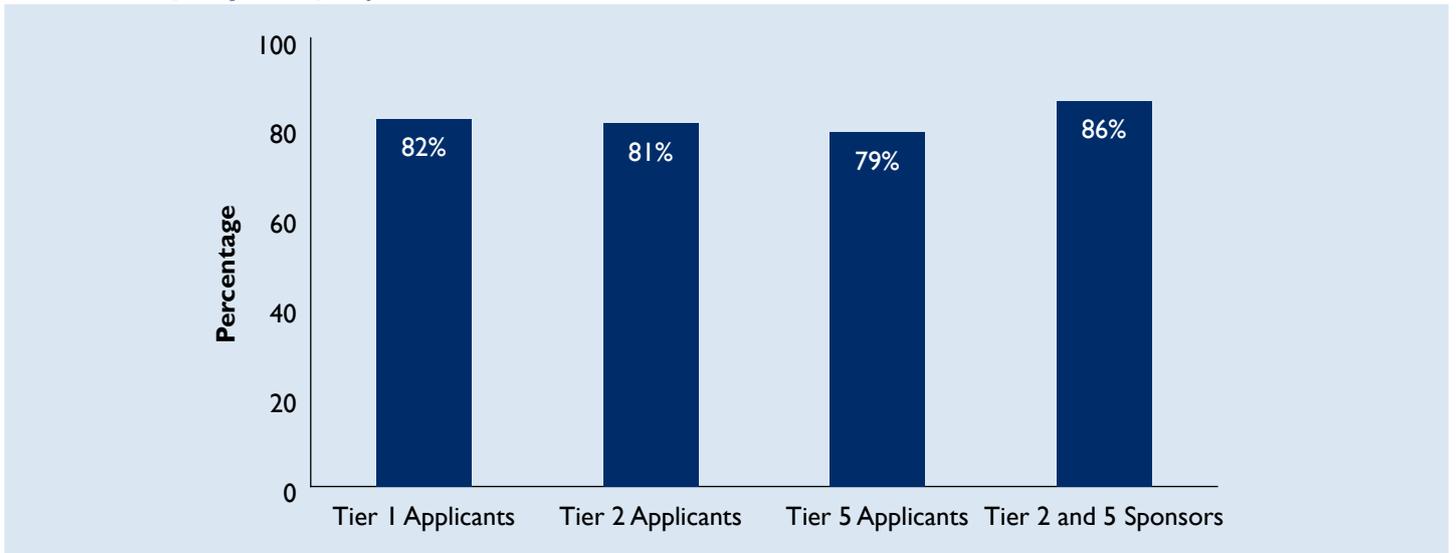
Keywords

Points based system
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Migrant workers

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



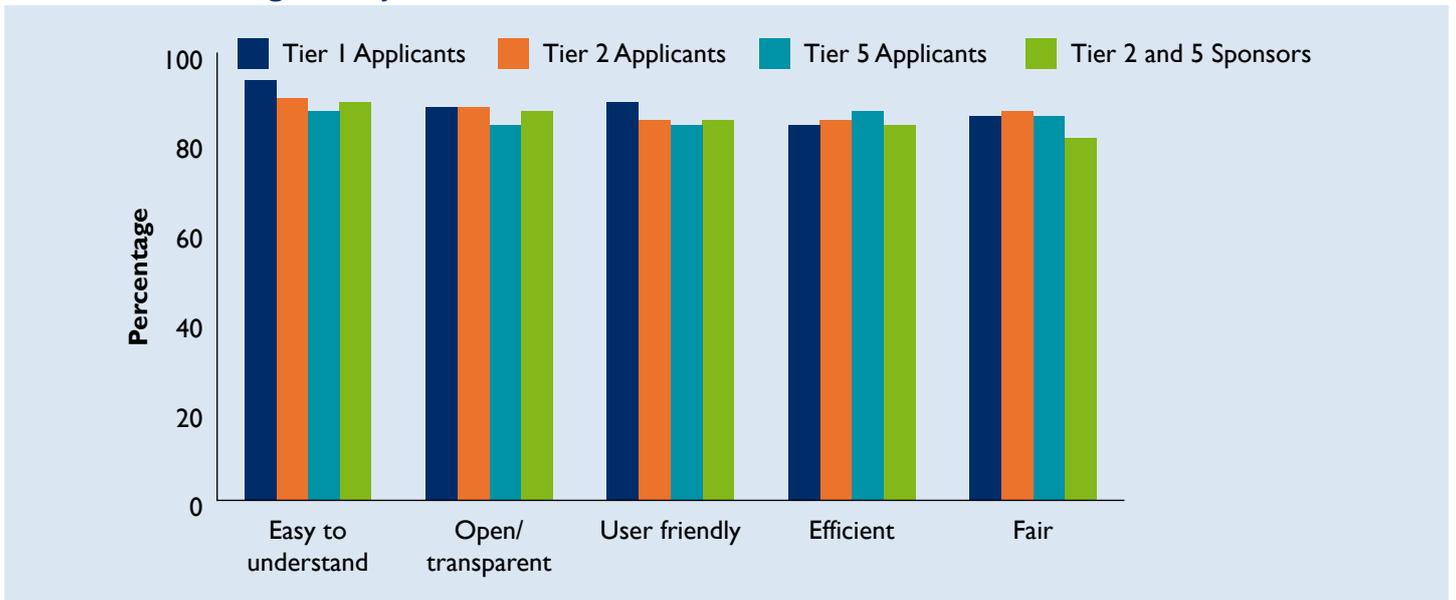
Tier 1 Applicants n=1,564; Tier 5 Applicants n=788; Tier 2 Applicants n=1,105; Tier 2 and 5 Sponsors n=1,521.

- 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.

Users' views of the Points-Based System

I Aims

The UK Border Agency surveyed users of the Points-Based System (PBS) in order to understand how the new processes were being received and to ensure they were working effectively. The results from these surveys will help to inform future development of the PBS for managing migration into the UK for non-EEA migrants.

Introduced in February 2008, the PBS provides a clearer, more transparent and objective immigration system, consolidating approximately 80 immigration routes into just five tiers. Under the PBS, prospective migrants are judged using objective criteria to ensure consistency. These criteria are made clear to prospective migrants in guidance and via an online assessment tool, through which they can self-assess their application.

There are five tiers of the PBS for different groups of migrant workers to apply to come to the UK under:

- Tier 1 highly skilled migrants;
- Tier 2 skilled migrants with a job offer;
- Tier 3 low-skilled workers;
- Tier 4 students; and
- Tier 5 temporary workers and youth mobility.

In Tier 1 (for highly skilled workers) and Tier 2 (for skilled workers with a job offer), points are awarded for attributes such as age, previous or prospective salary, qualifications and English-language ability. For each tier, applicants need to score enough points to gain permission to enter or stay in the United Kingdom. Tier 3 (for low-skilled workers) is currently closed to applications from outside the European Union.

Due to the sheer scale of the PBS, and the significant change to processes it brought about, the UK Border Agency wanted to evaluate it in order to learn from the experiences of the users of the system and so continue to improve the immigration system going forward. The UK Border Agency therefore commissioned its Analysis,

Research and Knowledge Management unit (ARK) to conduct customer insight to explore how well the PBS has been working in its early stages and to assess whether core PBS objectives (easy to use, open and transparent, user-friendly, efficient and fair) were being met.

ARK's research gathered evidence on key issues surrounding the implementation of the PBS and this report presents quantitative findings into applicants' experiences of applying to work in the UK through Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 5. It also includes findings from sponsors and representatives.

The PBS is underpinned by sponsor licensing, which is based on the principle that those who benefit from migration (e.g. employers, colleges etc.) should play their part in ensuring that the system is not abused. Potential sponsors must apply for, and obtain, a sponsor licence before they can bring a migrant into the UK. As part of the licensing process, the UK Border Agency checks that the potential sponsor is bona fide, and capable of meeting their sponsorship duties, which include record-keeping, reporting, complying with the law and cooperating with the UK Border Agency.

The final group surveyed in this research comprises UK Border Agency staff who have been working on the PBS.

2 Method

Several surveys were undertaken using a combination of in-house development and analysis and (for Tier 1 applicants only) contracted external support from BMRB Ltd looking at different groups of users, as outlined below.

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Tier 1 Applicant Survey (achieved sample size: 1,564)

- This was conducted using both postal and online questionnaires in order to trial the best approach for the remaining surveys.
- Representative PBS applicants (both granted and refused) who applied for a PBS Tier 1 visa between February and October 2008 were surveyed between February and April 2009, one year after Tier 1 roll-out.
- Detailed findings from the Tier 1 Applicant Survey were published on the Home Office website in December 2009.¹

Tier 2 Applicant Survey (achieved sample size: 1,467) and Tier 5 Applicant Survey (achieved sample size: 1,054)

- PBS applicants (both granted and refused) who applied for a PBS Tier 2 or Tier 5 visa between April and September 2009 were surveyed between February and March 2010, 16 months after Tier 2 and 5 roll-out.

Tier 2 and Tier 5 Sponsor Survey (achieved sample size: 2,212) and Representatives Survey (achieved sample size: 499)

- Tier 2 and 5 sponsors granted a sponsor licence between the start of the PBS sponsorship system in February 2008 and November 2009 were surveyed between February and March 2010, two years after licensing began.
- Tier 4 sponsors were not included because the tier was not fully implemented at the time of survey.
- PBS representatives (who can represent both applicants and sponsors) were surveyed, but only a small sample size was achieved. Where the sample size is sufficient then findings about representatives have been included in the report; otherwise they have been excluded.

The PBS Staff Survey (achieved sample size: 1,870)

- An online survey was conducted between April and May 2010, one year after all tiers were rolled out to allow staff sufficient time to become familiar with processes.
- The method for the staff survey differed to the applicant and sponsor surveys as it relied on managers cascading the survey to staff and allowing

time to complete it. As a result, not all staff may have had opportunity to complete the survey.

Unless otherwise stated, differences reported between groups are statistically significant at a 95 per cent confidence level.

For more detailed information regarding the methodology, see the Technical Note in the Appendix.

3 Tier 1 (highly skilled) applicants

Key findings

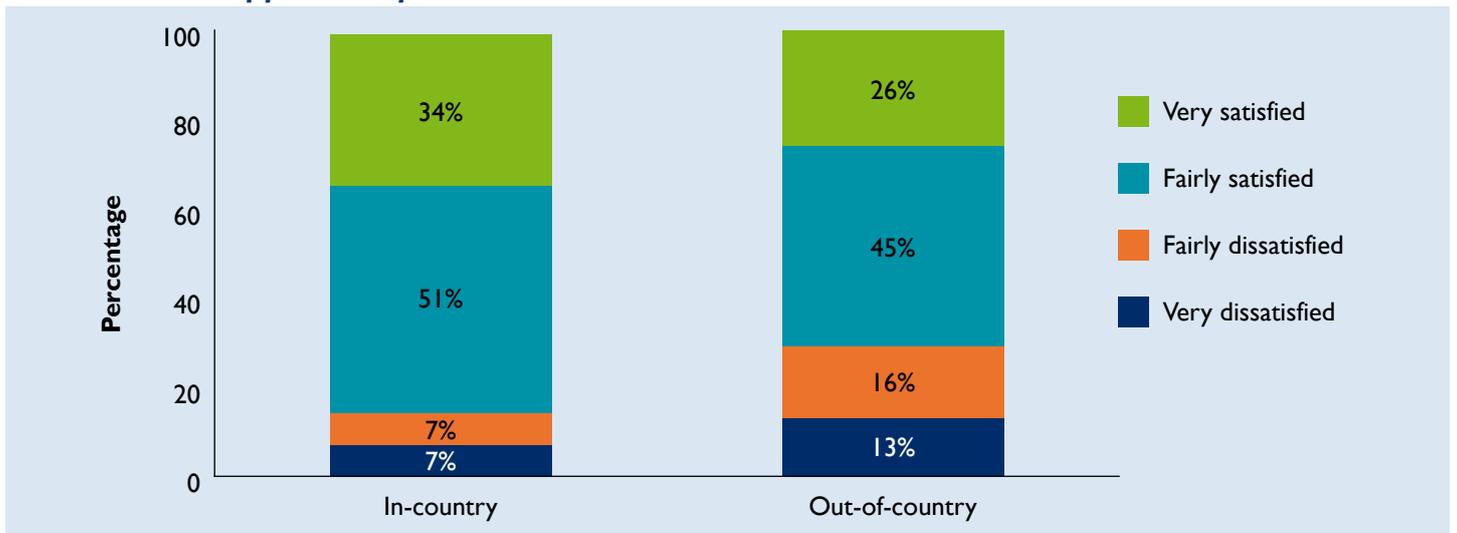
- Overall satisfaction with the PBS application process was high (more so for in-country applicants).
- The PBS compared favourably to previous routes.
- The majority of respondents found the application form easy to complete but 62 per cent said it took longer to complete than expected.
- Two-thirds of in-country applicants would prefer to submit online rather than on paper.
- There is little evidence to suggest the existence of the PBS in itself is encouraging migrants to apply; most applicants would have applied anyway.
- One of the most favourable aspects of the application process is the PBS Calculator to help check eligibility before applying.
- There were some difficulties in obtaining supporting evidence e.g. proof of funds and proof of previous earnings.

Satisfaction with and perceptions of the PBS

Overall satisfaction with the PBS application process among Tier 1 applicants was high. Eighty-two per cent of applicants (n=1,564) said that they were very or fairly satisfied with the process overall, with 33 per cent saying that they were very satisfied. Only seventeen per cent said they were very or fairly dissatisfied.

¹ Points-Based System Pilot Process Evaluation – Tier 1 Highly Skilled Applicant Survey (2009) Home Office Research Report 22. <http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/09/horr22c.pdf>

Figure 1 Percentage of Tier 1 in-country and out-of-country respondents' overall satisfaction with the application process



In-country applicants n=1,101; Out-of-country applicants n=463. NB: In-country applicants do not total 100 per cent due to rounding.

As Figure 1 shows, in-country applicants were more satisfied with the PBS application process overall than out-of-country applicants.

Eighty-five per cent of in-country respondents said they were satisfied (n=1,101) compared to 71 per cent (n=463) of out-of-country respondents.

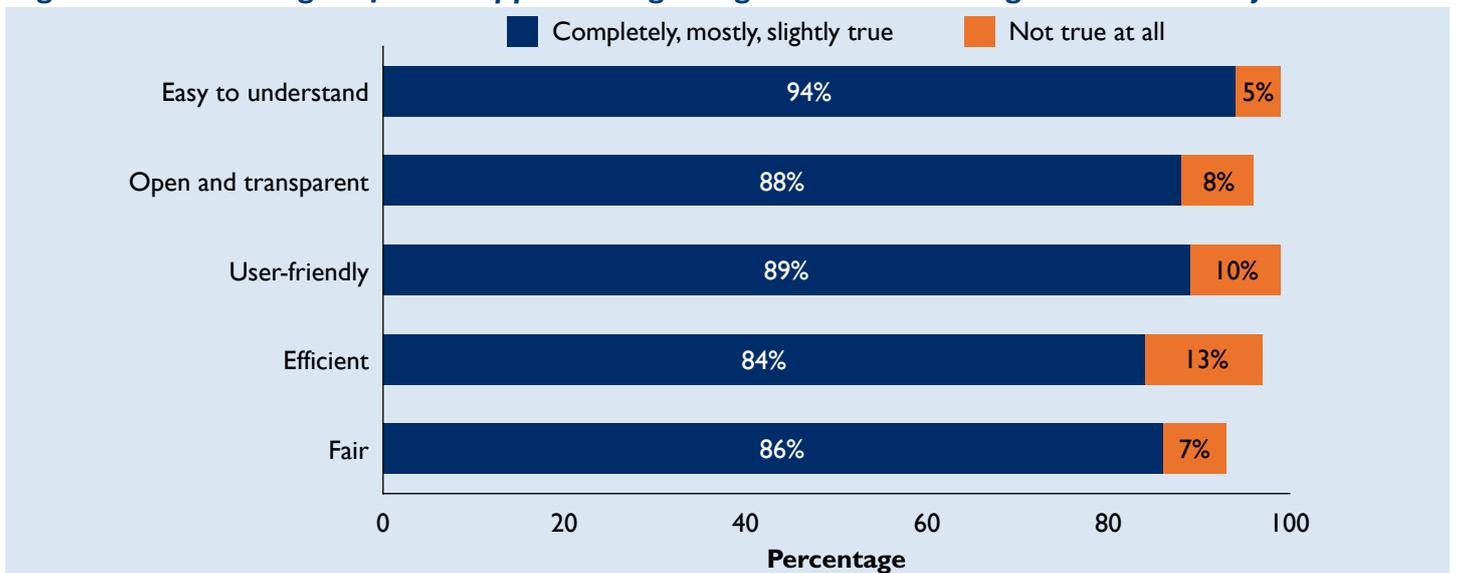
As shown in Figure 2, the majority of all Tier 1 applicants had a positive perception of the PBS in terms of its meeting individual objectives.

Overall, 94 per cent of respondents (n=1,564) said that they found the statement that the PBS application process was easy to understand completely, mostly or

slightly true. Similarly, 86 per cent agreed it was fair, 88 per cent agreed that it was open and transparent, 89 per cent said that it was user-friendly and 84 per cent said that it was efficient.

In-country applicants were also more likely than out-of-country to agree completely, mostly or slightly that the application process was easy to understand. Eighty-three per cent of in-country respondents (n=1,101) agreed with this, compared to 74 per cent of out-of-country respondents (n=463). Similarly, 73 per cent of in-country respondents agreed the process was open and transparent, compared to 61 per cent of out-of-country applicants.

Figure 2 Percentages of Tier 1 applicants agreeing the PBS is meeting its individual objectives



n=1,564.

A sizeable minority of 29 per cent (n=463) of out-of-country applicants said that they were dissatisfied with the process overall, with 13 per cent saying that they were very dissatisfied (see Figure 1). This could be linked to the issues related to seeking assistance, as discussed later in the section, or may be due to the applicant being refused and therefore having a negative impression of the immigration process. Application outcome appears to have a clear impact on satisfaction with the application process, with refused applicants being less likely than granted applicants to be satisfied with the process. Refused applicants were also less likely to see the PBS as meeting its objectives. The difference between granted and refused applicants was most pronounced for fairness, with only 45 per cent (n=274) of refused applicants seeing the system as fair, compared with 79 per cent (n=1,286) of granted applicants. It was, however, noteworthy that 54 per cent of applicants who were unsuccessful at initial decision were still very or fairly satisfied with the application process overall.

Comparison with the previous system

As well as assessing satisfaction with the PBS on its own merits, the questionnaire also compared the new system with previous systems. Seventy-seven per cent of applicants (n=1,564) had previously applied to enter the UK under another route. The most commonly used routes were study routes or student visas (51%, n=1,197), the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (25%) and work permits (23%).

Applicants were asked to compare their experience of the PBS with their experience of using the other systems on an earlier occasion. For each criterion, applicants were more than twice as likely to say that the PBS was better compared with the previous route used than they were to say that it was worse.

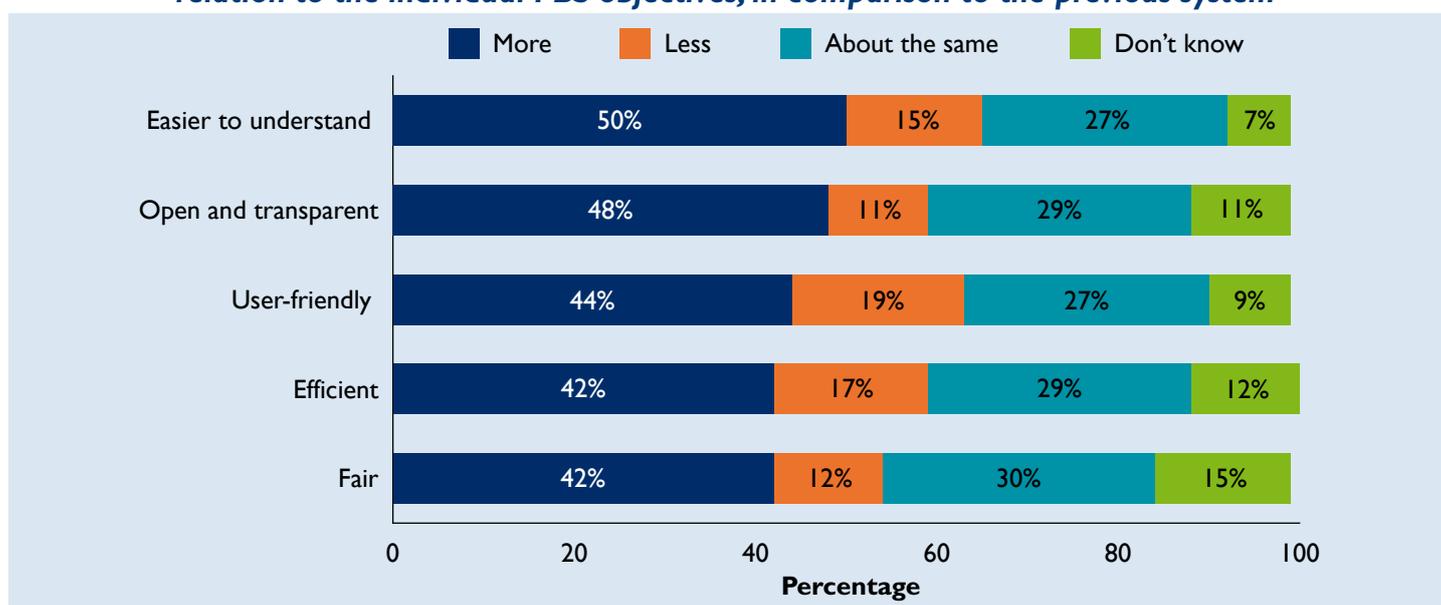
As Figure 3 shows, the majority of applicants who had previously applied by another route said that the PBS was easier to understand, more open and transparent, more user-friendly, more efficient and fairer.

There was no consensus as to whether the PBS was any faster than previous systems. Twenty-three per cent of applicants (n=1,197) said that the PBS was faster than the previous route they had used, while 36 per cent said that the PBS was slower and 30 per cent said that it was about the same. Out-of-country applicants were more likely than in-country applicants to say that the PBS was faster than previous routes. Forty-two per cent of out-of-country respondents (n=136) thought it was faster, compared to 20 per cent (n=1,060) of in-country respondents. This may be due to the fact that only out-of-country applicants had the option to submit online at this point.

Preparing and submitting the application

Awareness and understanding of the PBS prior to application was high. Ninety-six per cent of all applicants (n=1,564) used the UK Border Agency website to find out about the PBS before they applied and the vast majority (91%, n=1,564) said they understood the process well before beginning their application.

Figure 3 Percentage of Tier 1 applicants stating that the PBS is 'more', 'less' or 'about the same' in relation to the individual PBS objectives, in comparison to the previous system



n=1,197.

Although the introduction of the PBS was broadly considered to be a positive development, there was little evidence to suggest the introduction of the system in itself prompted applicants to choose to apply to the UK. Eighty-one per cent of applicants (n=1,564) said that the introduction of the PBS encouraged them to apply at least to some extent, but approximately the same proportion (84%) said they would have applied anyway had the PBS not been introduced.

The online Points-Based Calculator was well received and widely used by applicants, with 85 per cent (n=1,564) of applicants using the calculator before applying. Of those who had used the calculator, 98 per cent (n=1,324) completely, mostly or slightly agreed that they found it useful, with 63 per cent of those completely agreeing.

Eighty-one per cent of applicants (n=1,564) were clear about what **evidence** they needed to provide in support of their application but **out-of-country applicants were less clear** than in-country applicants (69%, n=301 compared to 84%, n=1,263 respectively).

While the majority of applicants found each piece of supporting evidence easy to provide, proof of funds and proof of previous earnings were problematic for some applicants. Sixteen per cent of respondents (n=1,564) found proof of funds difficult to provide, while 15 per cent found proof of previous earnings difficult to provide.

Out-of-country applicants were particularly likely to report problems, with 34 per cent (n=301) experiencing problems with providing proof of funds and 24 per cent with providing proof of previous earnings.

The **application form** itself was felt to be easy to locate and complete. Ninety-seven per cent of in-country applicants (n=1,263) used the UK Border Agency website to access the form but there was greater variation among out-of-country applicants (n=301). Nonetheless, twice as many applicants (68%) used the UK Border Agency website, compared to the dedicated website for out-of-country applicants, Visa4UK (31%).

Ninety per cent of all respondents (n=1,564) said it was very or fairly easy to access the application form. Eighty-six per cent of all applicants found the application form easy to complete. However, 62 per cent (n=1,564) said it took longer to complete than expected.

At the time of the survey only some out-of-country applicants had the option of submitting their application online: 24 per cent of out-of-country applicants (n=301) did this, while 72 per cent submitted on paper. All in-country applicants were required to submit their applications on paper. To assess the demand for an online option, both in-country applicants and out-of-country applicants who submitted their application on paper were asked whether they would have preferred to submit online. Overall, of those in-country applicants who submitted their form on paper, 66 per cent (n=1,252) said they would have preferred to submit an online application, while 33 per cent said they would still have submitted on paper even if offered the choice. The main reasons given were a reluctance to submit forms and supporting documents separately; a sense that online application was less secure or reliable than paper applications; and a view that it was easier to check and review responses on paper.

Guidance and assistance

Ninety-one per cent of respondents (n=1,564) used guidance notes when completing the application form. The most commonly used source of guidance was the Policy Guidance on the UK Border Agency website, used by 79 per cent of respondents. Out of all types of guidance notes used, 82 per cent of respondents (n=311) who had used the Immigration Rules found them very or fairly useful. Similarly, 90 per cent (n=568) found the Application Text Help Document very or fairly useful and 91 per cent (n=860) of those who had used the Information on the UK Border Agency web pages and 95 per cent (n=1,230) of those who had used the Policy Guidance on the UK Border Agency website found them very or fairly useful.

In addition to online guidance, applicants were asked whether they had sought any assistance in making their application from the UK Border Agency Customer Contact Centre, Immigration Enquiries Bureau or the Visa Application Centre.

Out-of-country applicants were almost twice as likely as in-country applicants to seek assistance (in person or by telephone) from one or more sources (see Table 1), but this contact was dominated by use of the Visa Application Centre. This could be linked to out-of-country applicants being less knowledgeable about the PBS process overall, than in-country applicants.

Table 1 Sources of assistance applicants sought in person or by telephone

Source of assistance	In-country (n=1,101)	Out-of-country (n=463)
Visa Application Centre	1%	58%
UK Border Agency Customer Contact Centre	24%	21%
UK Border Agency Immigration Enquiries Bureau	20%	19%
Did not seek assistance from any of these sources	64%	33%

The majority of applicants sought assistance from at least one source and 74 per cent (n=642) felt they received the help they needed, but 25 per cent felt they did not, with some citing that staff were unhelpful or did not appear to be fully informed about the process.

Thirty-six per cent (n=642) of respondents who sought assistance said it took them less than one day to receive assistance, with 81 per cent (n=642) receiving it within one to seven days. Thirteen per cent said it took a week or longer.²

Decision making

Sixty-six per cent of applicants (n=1,564) said it took longer than expected for a decision to be reached on their case,

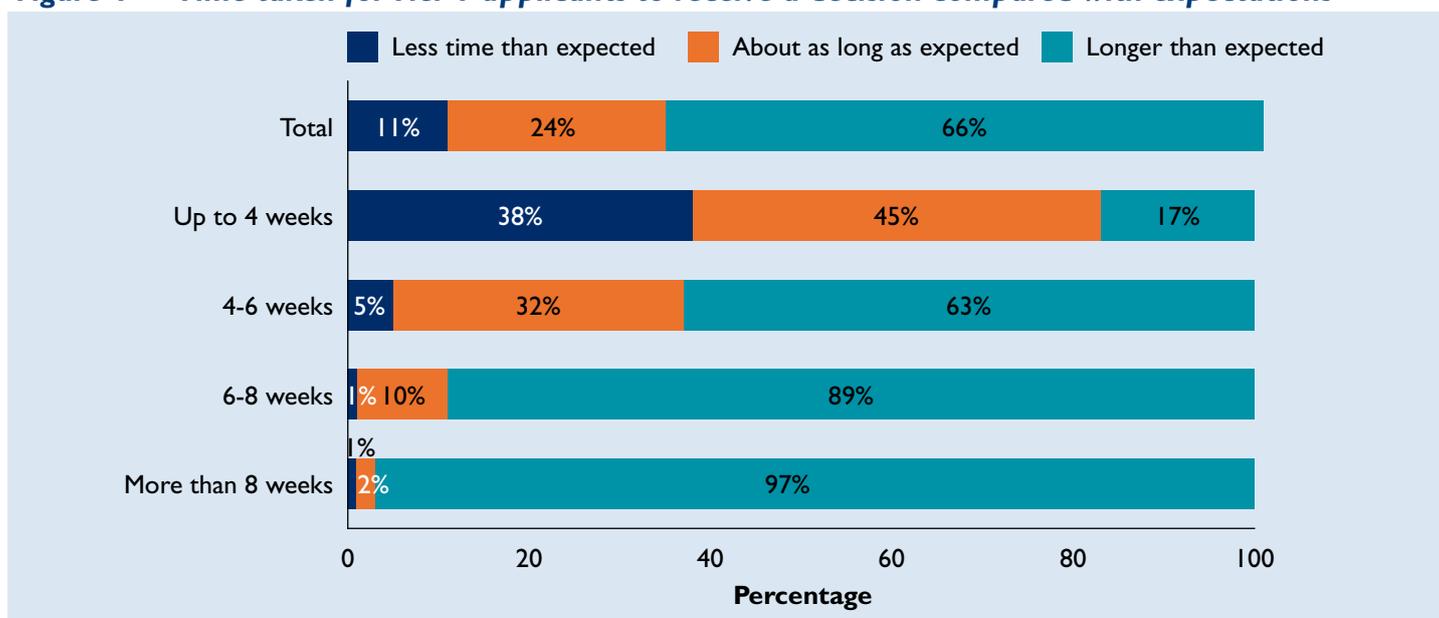
with 32 per cent saying it took a lot longer. Eleven per cent of applicants said that it took less time and 24 per cent said that the decision took about as long as they expected.

As Figure 4 shows, expectation was closely connected to the actual time taken: almost all applicants whose decision took eight weeks or more (n=363) said this was longer than expected, while the same was said by just 17 per cent of applicants (n=410) whose decision took four weeks or less. This suggests that applicants' expectations about how long their outcome will take are only being met among those who receive a decision within four weeks. As most decisions are not perceived as being reached within four weeks, there is a need to manage expectations.

Future intentions

Eighty-two per cent of applicants (n=1,564) said that their initial application was successful. Of these successful applicants, 85 per cent were in-country and 15 per cent were out-of-country (n=1,286). Of the 18 per cent of respondents whose initial application was unsuccessful, 62 per cent were in-country and 38 per cent were out-of-country (n=274). Fifty-one per cent of unsuccessful applicants (n=181) said that they were likely to reapply to come to the UK, with 36 per cent saying that they were very likely. Thirty per cent said that they had already reapplied. Eighty-nine per cent of respondents who said they would reapply said that they had reapplied, or would

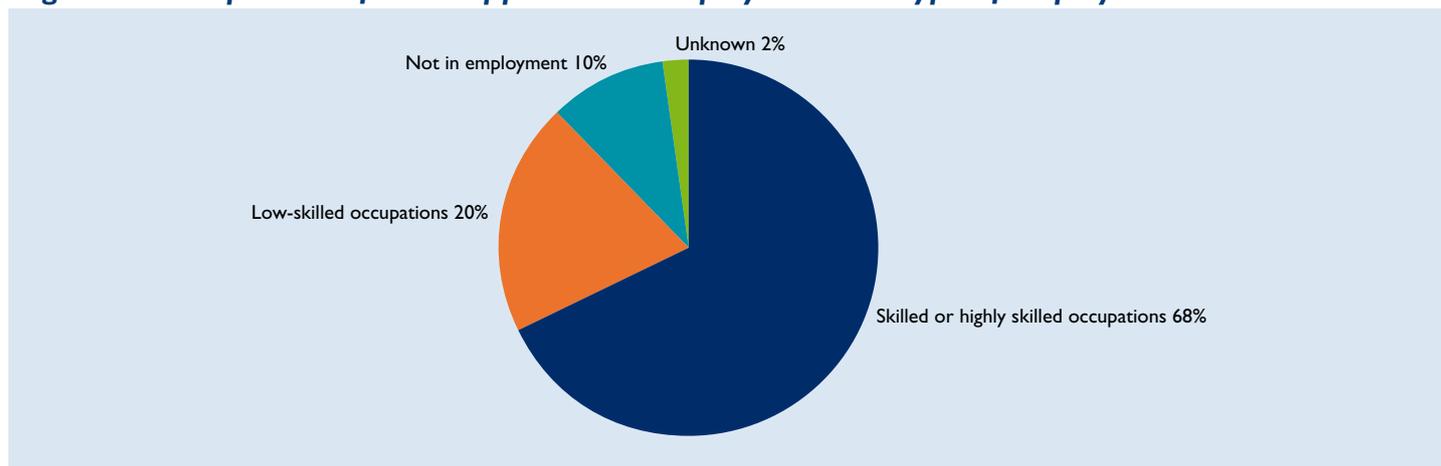
Figure 4 Time taken for Tier 1 applicants to receive a decision compared with expectations



Up to 4 weeks n=410; More than 4 weeks, up to 6 weeks n=486; More than 6 weeks, up to 8 weeks n=304; More than 8 weeks n=363.

² In subsequent applicant surveys this question was revised so that applicants were asked how many attempts by telephone it took them to receive assistance.

reapply, under Tier 1. The survey sample included applicants who were granted and refused at initial decision and

Figure 5 Proportion of Tier 1 applicants in employment and type of employment

n=1,286.

before the outcome of any appeal or administrative review. Some applicants who were refused at initial decision may therefore have already reapplied.

Occupational analysis

Tier 1 applicants are expected to be highly skilled individuals who are capable of obtaining skilled employment. As Figure 5 shows, the majority (68%, n=1,286) were in skilled or highly skilled employment. However, 20 per cent were in low-skilled employment and a further ten per cent were not in employment at all at the time of the survey.

Analysis of employment status by SOC (Standard Occupational Classification) found that 51 per cent (n=1,286) of Tier 1 respondents stated being employed as managers and senior officials or in professional occupations, whilst a further 15 per cent were employed in associate professional or technical occupations.³

4 Tier 2 (skilled) applicants

Key findings

- Overall satisfaction with the PBS application process was high – (more so for in-country applicants).
- A third of respondents thought that the PBS was an improvement on previous systems.

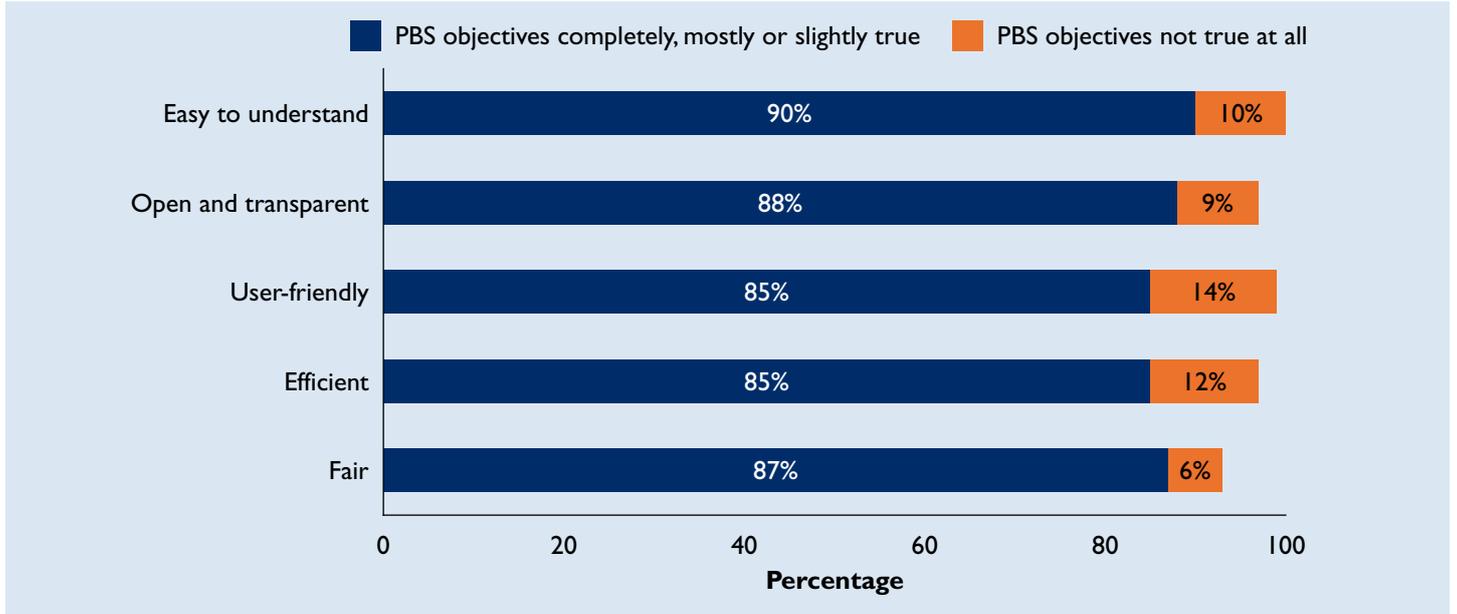
³ For further details, please refer to:
<http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/09/horr22c.pdf>

- In-country applicants were more likely than out-of-country applicants to see it as faster.
- The vast majority perceived the online PBS Calculator as very or fairly useful.
- The majority found it clear what supporting evidence they needed to provide and found it easy to obtain, although a minority reported difficulty in obtaining proof of funds, translated or UK equivalents of foreign qualifications and proof of maternity or adoption-related absence.
- Most respondents took more than one attempt to seek assistance but for a sizeable minority it took five or more attempts to receive assistance from the UK Border Agency Immigration Enquiries Bureau, a Visa Application Centre or local embassy.
- Most applicants received a successful decision and were notified of the outcome within four weeks (largely meeting expectations).
- A third of applicants stated that they had brought dependants with them to the UK.

Satisfaction

Excluding the outcome of their application, 81 per cent of Tier 2 applicants (n=1,105) were very or fairly satisfied with the PBS process overall and believed it was meeting its objectives. Figure 6 shows the percentages of respondents agreeing the PBS was meeting individual objectives and those disagreeing. Missing percentages account for those who did not know or did not answer.

Figure 6 Percentage of Tier 2 applicants agreeing the PBS is meeting its individual objectives



Easy to understand n=1,103; n=Efficient n=1,098; Open and transparent n=1,098; Fair n=1,094; User-friendly n=1,099.

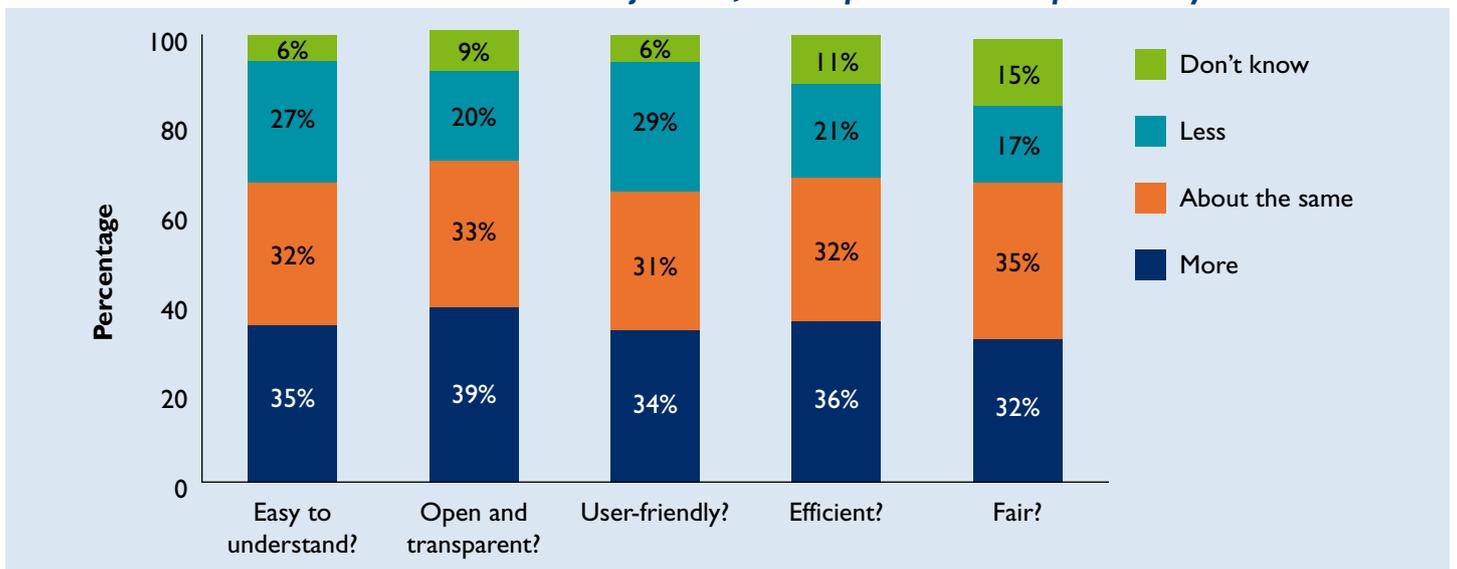
In-country respondents were significantly more likely than out-of-country respondents to say that they were very or fairly satisfied with the PBS process overall (86%, n=470, of in-country respondents agreed, compared to 76%, n=520, of out-of-country). Although the majority of both groups completely, mostly or slightly agreed that the PBS was meeting its individual objectives, out-of-country respondents were less likely to agree. However, the difference between the two groups only reached significance for easy to understand and open and transparent. Eighty-seven per cent (n=519) of out-of-country respondents agreed the PBS was easy to understand, compared with 92 per cent (n=469) of in-country respondents. The corresponding

figures for user-friendliness were 82 per cent (n=518) and 87 per cent (n=466) respectively.

Comparison with other routes and systems

Sixty-two per cent of Tier 2 respondents (n=1,095) had previously made an application to enter the UK under another route. Respondents were asked to compare the PBS to previous routes by considering the five main objectives of the PBS (easy to understand, open and transparent, user-friendly, efficient and fair). As Figure 7 shows, for each objective, about a third of respondents who had applied to come to the UK under other routes thought the PBS an improvement.

Figure 7 Percentage of Tier 2 applicants stating that the PBS is 'more', 'less' or 'about the same' in relation to the individual PBS objectives, in comparison to the previous system



Easy to understand n=669; n=Efficient n=664; Open and transparent n=665; Fair n=662; User-friendly n=666.

Tier 2 respondents were slightly more likely to say that the PBS was more open and transparent (39%, n=665) and more efficient (36%, n=664) compared to previous systems than for the other three objectives: easy to understand, user-friendly and fair.

Thirty-one per cent of respondents (n=675) said they thought that the PBS was faster than previous routes and 25 per cent thought it was slower. However, in-country respondents were significantly more likely to see the PBS as faster than the previous system (41%, n=358, compared to 26%, n=164, of out-of-country respondents) and significantly less likely to see it as slower (23%, n=358, compared to 40%, n=164).

Preparing and submitting the application

Sixty-seven per cent of respondents used the UK Border Agency website to obtain their application form and 81 per cent of respondents (n=1,118) found it very or fairly easy to find their way around the website. There was no significant difference for this finding between out-of-country and in-country applicants.

The online Points-Based Calculator was used by 81 per cent of respondents (n=1,233) and 90 per cent of respondents (n=976) who answered the question said it was very or fairly useful in helping prepare for their application.

Eighty-one per cent of respondents (n=1,133) found that overall, the application form was very or fairly easy to complete.

Seventy-eight per cent of respondents (n=1,188) stated that it was clear to them exactly what supporting evidence they had to provide as part of their application. Eighty-six per cent of in-country respondents (n=497) and 71 per cent of out-of-country respondents (n=562) said this was clear. Although the vast majority of respondents (both in-country and out-of-country) found each of the supporting documents very or fairly easy to obtain, some reported difficulty obtaining certain documents, particularly

translated or UK equivalents of qualifications (21%, n=463), proof of funds (15%, n=1,037) and proof of maternity or adoption-related absence (12%, n=109).

Guidance and assistance

The sources of guidance most used by Tier 2 respondents were the official policy guidance that could be downloaded from the UK Border Agency website (used by 63%, n=1,132) and the general background information on the UK Border Agency web pages (used by 47%, n=1,132). These two sources were also deemed to be the most useful. Ninety-one per cent (n=820) of respondents found the policy guidance on the UK Border Agency website very or fairly useful and 88 per cent (n=745) found the information on the UK Border Agency web pages to be very or fairly useful.

When applying, 26 per cent of respondents (n=1,127) sought assistance from the UK Border Agency Immigration Enquiries Bureau and 25 per cent sought assistance overseas from a Visa Application Centre or local embassy. The majority of respondents (85%, n=194 and 86%, n=169 respectively) said the assistance they received was very helpful or fairly helpful.

As can be seen in Table 2, the majority of respondents took more than one attempt to seek assistance with their application. Only a minority of respondents reported getting through to the UK Border Agency Immigration Enquiries Bureau in the UK or to their Visa Application Centre or local embassy by telephone in a single attempt (20%, n=255 and 38%, n=227 respectively). Of those respondents who sought assistance and stated how many attempts it took to get through, 36 per cent of those contacting the UK Border Agency Immigration Enquiries Bureau and 20 per cent of those contacting their Visa Application Centre or local embassy stated it took five or more attempts to get through by telephone.

Overall, while 61 per cent of respondents (n=505) received the assistance they needed from the source that they contacted, 39 per cent reported that they did not.⁴

Table 2 The number of attempts taken to get through to source of assistance by telephone

Source of assistance	One	Two	Three	Four	Five or more	n
UK Border Agency Immigration Enquiries Bureau (in the UK)	20%	20%	16%	8%	36%	255
Visa Application Centre (outside the UK)/local embassy	38%	17%	17%	8%	20%	227

⁴ Total does not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Decision making

Overall, 76 per cent of respondents (n=1,120) received an initial decision within four weeks of submitting their application. Out-of-country applicants were significantly more likely than in-country applicants to report having received a decision within four weeks (83%, n=526, compared to 69%, n=117). Expectations regarding the amount of time taken to receive an initial decision were met for the majority of respondents (63%, n=1,113). There was no significant difference between numbers of in-country and out-of-country applicants reporting successful and unsuccessful outcomes.

Eighty-four per cent of respondents (n=1,104) reported receiving a successful outcome on their initial decision. Of these successful cases, 43 per cent were in-country, 47 per cent were out-of-country and in ten per cent of cases the applicant's location was unclear (n=925). Of the 16 per cent of applicants who received an unsuccessful initial decision, 41 per cent were in-country, 48 per cent were out-of-country and for the remaining 11 per cent it was unclear where they were located (n=179). Thirty-four per cent (n=197) made an appeal or asked for an Administrative Review and 58 per cent of respondents (n=66) said their appeal or Administrative Review was successful.

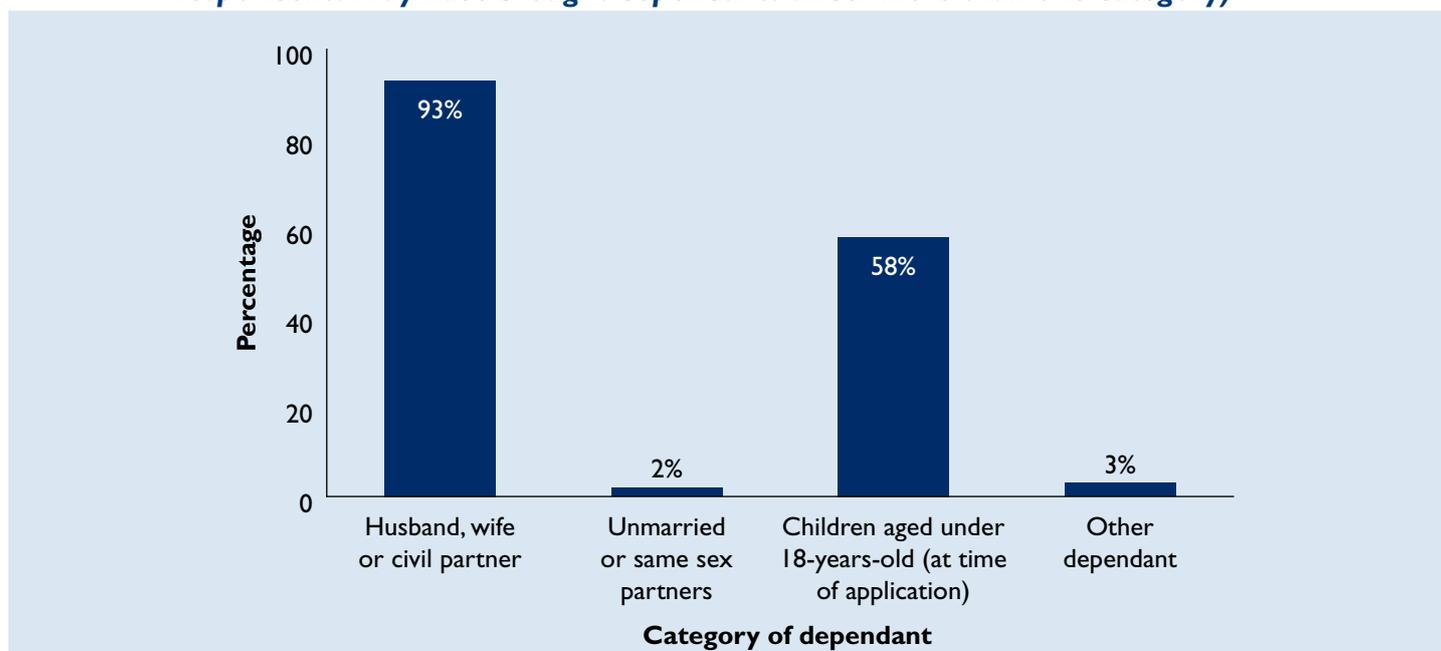
Dependants

The UK Border Agency was interested in learning about the dependants migrant workers bring with them to the UK. Therefore, Tier 2 applicants were asked about this. Thirty-four per cent of respondents (n=1,078) had brought dependants with them.

As Figure 8 shows, of the respondents who had brought dependants, 93 per cent (n=374) said they had brought a husband, wife or civil partner and 58 per cent (n=374) had brought children under the age of 18.⁵

Around a half of respondents (49%, n=347) said their dependants aged over 18 were not in paid work. Of those respondents who stated that their dependants aged over 18 were not in paid work and answered the question, 66 per cent (n=171) said their dependants did not intend to undertake paid work.

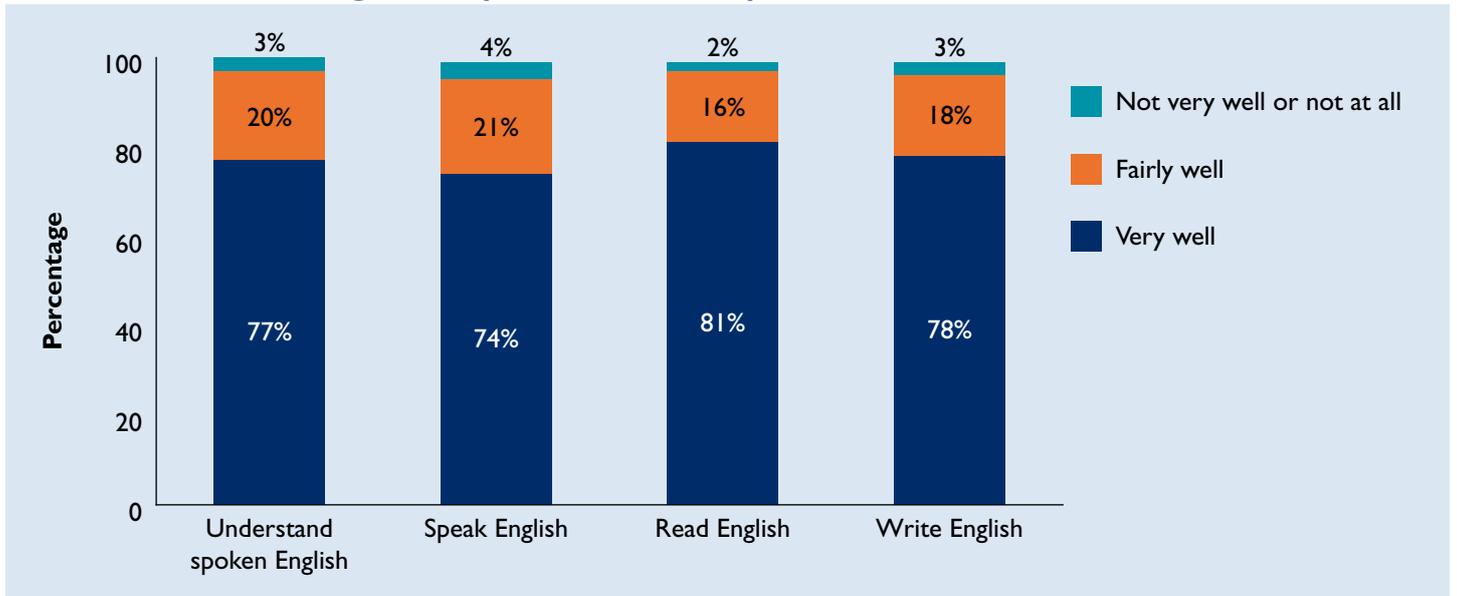
Figure 8 Percentage of each type of dependant brought to the UK by main respondents (N.B. respondents may have brought dependants under more than one category)



n=374.

⁵ Percentages exceed 100 per cent as this question allowed multiple answers.

Figure 9 Percentage of respondents stating how well their dependant(s) understand, speak, read and write English compared to a native speaker



Understand spoken English n=346; Read English n=345; Speak English n=345; Write English n=344.

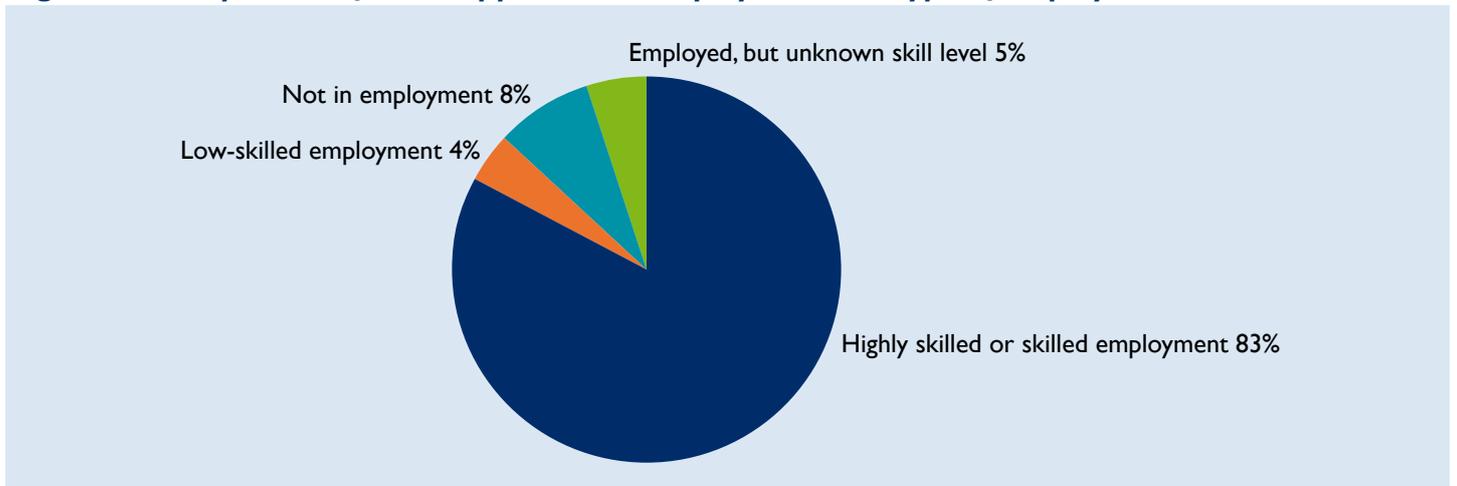
As Figure 9 shows, the vast majority of respondents reported that their dependants compared favourably to native English speakers with regards to their English-language ability.

Twenty-four per cent (n=715) of those respondents who had not brought dependants with them to the UK said that they intended to do so in future.

Employment

Tier 2 is intended for skilled migrants who have a job offer at the time of their application. As Figure 10 shows, of those respondents who were in the UK at the time of the survey and who provided their employment status (n=895), 83 per cent were in highly skilled or skilled employment, four per cent were in low-skilled employment and a further five per cent were employed, but their skill level was unknown. An additional eight per cent also stated they were unemployed at the time of the survey, but the reasons for being unemployed are not known.

Figure 10 Proportion of Tier 2 applicants in employment and type of employment



n=895.

Analysis of employment status by SOC found that of those respondents who provided their employment details, 56 per cent (n=779) were in professional occupations and 14 per cent were in manager and senior official roles. A further 23 per cent were in associate professional and technical occupations.

Future intentions

Sixty-four per cent of respondents (n=1,073) said they were very or fairly likely to apply to extend leave to remain in the UK. When asked under which PBS tier they would reapply, 75 per cent (n=1,041) of those who answered stated they would do so under Tier 2 again. Eleven per cent (n=1,041) said that they would apply to switch into Tier 1 as highly skilled migrants, and nine per cent said they did not know. Numbers aware of other ways to extend their leave, or considering them, were very low.

Sixty-two per cent of respondents (n=1,039) said that they thought they were very or fairly likely to apply for permanent residence if eligible.

Fifty-one per cent of respondents (n=1,039) said that they thought they were very or fairly likely to apply for UK citizenship if eligible.

Eighty-six per cent of those eligible to reapply had already reapplied or said that they were likely to do so (n=148).

5 Tier 5 (temporary workers and youth mobility) applicants

Key findings

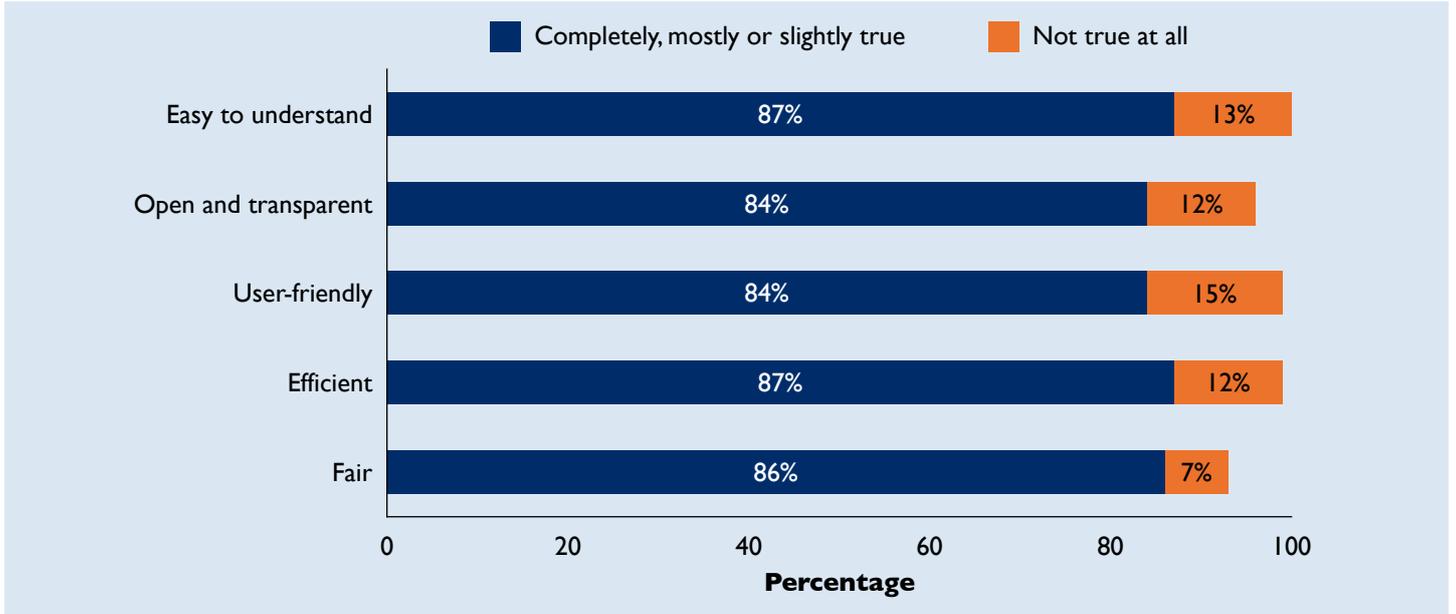
- Satisfaction with the PBS application process for Tier 5 was generally high.
- There was favourable comparison with pre-PBS routes but no consensus on whether the PBS is any faster.
- Timing expectations on application outcome were largely being met,
- The majority of respondents said the application form was easy to complete and found the PBS Calculator useful,
- Most applicants said it was clear what supporting evidence was needed and found it easy to obtain,
- The greatest proportion of respondents (42%) who sought assistance got through by telephone in a single attempt.
- Most applicants received a decision within four weeks, largely meeting expectations.
- The majority of unsuccessful applicants stated that they were likely to reapply (or already had).

Satisfaction

Overall, 79 per cent of Tier 5 respondents (n=788) were very or fairly satisfied with the PBS application process, excluding the outcome of their application. However, 21 per cent were very or fairly dissatisfied with the PBS application process overall.

Tier 5 respondents generally agreed that the PBS process was meeting its objectives. As Figure 11 shows, 87 per cent of respondents (n=785) completely, mostly or slightly agreed with the statement that the application process was easy to understand. The same percentage (n=781) agreed it was efficient. Eighty-six per cent (n=774) agreed it was fair and 84 per cent (n=778) agreed the process was both open and transparent (n=778) and user-friendly (n=777). Missing percentages in the chart relate to those who did not know or did not answer.

Figure 11 Percentage of Tier 5 applicants agreeing the PBS is meeting its individual objectives



Easy to understand n=785; n=Efficient n=781; Open and transparent n=778; Fair n=774; User-friendly n=777.

Comparison with other routes and systems

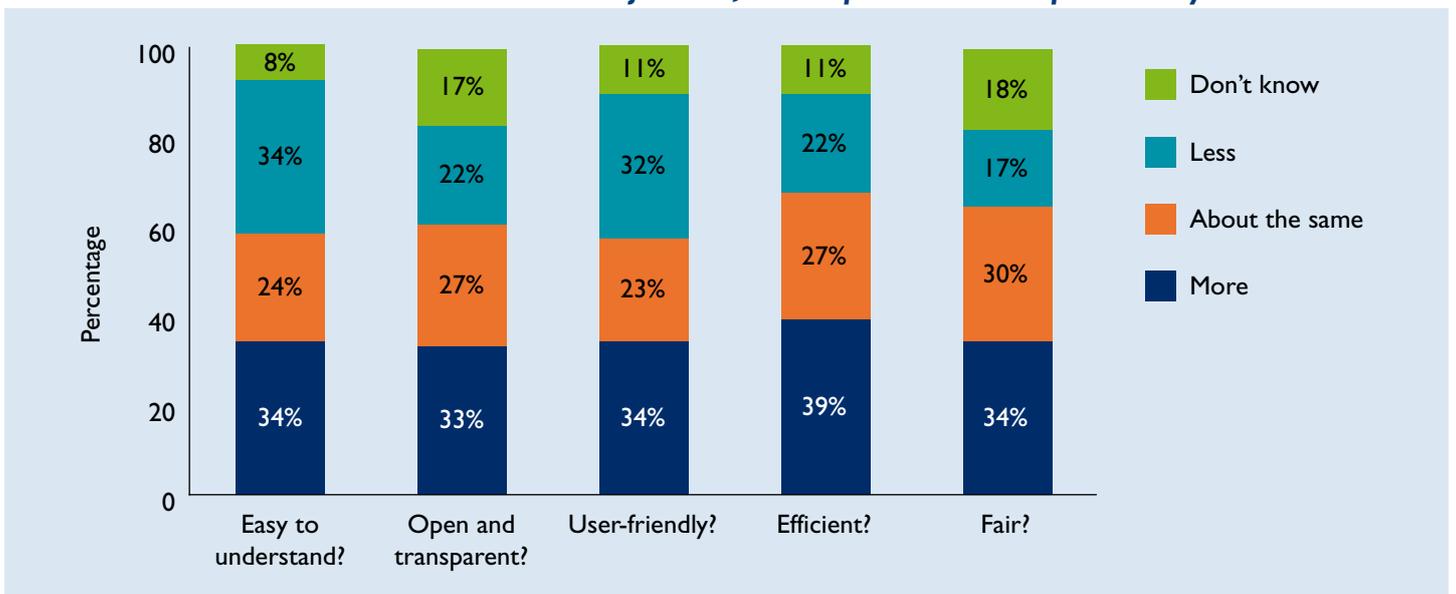
Twenty-five per cent of respondents (n=784) had previously applied to enter the UK under another route and, as Figure 12 shows, the majority of respondents thought the PBS was an improvement.

While respondents were more likely to say that the PBS was an improvement, respondents were unsure whether the PBS was easier to understand. As Figure 12 shows, 34 per cent of respondents (n=189) thought the PBS was easier to understand compared to previous systems and

the same percentage stated it was less easy. Views on the system’s user-friendliness were also evenly split with 34 per cent believing the PBS was more user-friendly and 32 per cent less (n=186).

Meanwhile, there was no consensus as to whether the PBS was any faster than previous systems, with 30 per cent of applicants who answered the question (n=190) reporting that the PBS application process was faster, 28 per cent stating it was slower and 25 per cent finding it about the same.

Figure 12 Percentage of Tier 5 applicants stating that the PBS is ‘more’, ‘less’ or ‘about the same’ in relation to the individual PBS objectives, in comparison to the previous system



Easy to understand n=189; Efficient n=186; Open and transparent n=186; Fair n=186; User-friendly n=186.

Preparing and submitting the application

Almost two-thirds of respondents (65%, n=825) obtained their application form from the UK Visa Services website (Visa4UK) and 79 per cent of respondents (n=820) reported the application form as being very or fairly easy to complete.

Seventy-two per cent of respondents (n=915) used the online PBS Calculator before submitting their application to work out the number of points they were likely to be awarded. Eighty-one per cent of respondents who answered the question (n=642) found the calculator very or fairly useful in helping them prepare for their application.

Seventy-one per cent of respondents (n=865) stated that it was clear to them exactly what supporting evidence they had to provide as part of their application. The majority of respondents found each of the supporting documents very or fairly easy to obtain. However, some respondents reported difficulty with obtaining certain documents, particularly translated or UK equivalents of qualifications (21%, n=233) and proof of funds (19%, n=715).

Guidance and assistance

The most widely used source of guidance used by Tier 5 respondents was the information on the UK Border Agency web pages (used by 48%, n=827), followed by the policy guidance on the UK Border Agency website (used by 41%, n=827). These sources were also found to be the most useful with 88 per cent (n=489) reporting that the policy guidance on the UK Border Agency website was useful and 85 per cent (n=517) in relation to the information on the web pages.

Of those respondents who sought assistance during the application process, 89 per cent (n=419) did so overseas by contacting a Visa Application Centre or local embassy. Twenty-five per cent sought assistance from the UK Border Agency Immigration Enquiries Bureau.

As Table 3 shows, the greatest proportion of respondents seeking assistance with their application from the UK Border Agency Immigration Enquiries Bureau in the UK or overseas from their Visa Application Centre or local embassy reported getting through by telephone in a single attempt (34%, n=79 and 42%, n=261 respectively). Sixteen per cent of respondents who sought assistance from either source said it took more than five attempts to get through.

Sixty-one per cent (n=420) of respondents stated having received the assistance they needed from the source that they contacted; 39 per cent did not.

Decision making

Eighty-four per cent of all respondents (n=804) received an initial decision within four weeks of submitting their application form and 89 per cent (n=796) said it was easy to understand the explanation given to them on the outcome.

Timing expectations for application outcomes were largely met, with 67 per cent (n=796) of respondents stating that their decision took less than, or about as long as, expected. The remaining 33 per cent of respondents said that their decision took longer than expected.

Ninety per cent of respondents (n=788) had received a successful outcome from their initial application.⁶ Of the ten per cent of applicants who were unsuccessful, 26 per cent stated that they had reapplied (n=74) and 55 per cent said they were likely to reapply. Seventy-eight per cent of respondents who answered the question (n=59) said they would reapply under Tier 5. Twenty-three per cent of respondents who were unsuccessful in their initial outcome (n=87) said they had appealed or asked for an Administrative Review.

Table 3 The number of attempts taken to get through to source of assistance by telephone

Source of assistance	One	Two	Three	Four	Five or more	n
UK Border Agency Immigration Enquiries Bureau (in the UK)	34%	20%	23%	6%	16%	79
Visa Application Centre (outside the UK)/local embassy	42%	22%	13%	7%	16%	261

⁶ Please note all applicants included in the Tier 5 survey had applied from out-of-country. In-country applicants had not been included as there was an insufficient number of applications made in-country at the time of the survey.

Employment

The Tier 5 category allows non-EEA migrants to work in the UK in temporary positions such as volunteers for a charity, religious workers, or under a youth mobility scheme. Tier 5 migrants are not required to be in the high-skilled/skilled employment expected for Tier 1 and Tier 2 migrants. However, it is interesting to note that a small proportion (20%, n=347) of Tier 5 respondents, who were in the UK at the time of the survey and who provided their employment status, were actually in highly skilled or skilled jobs. A further 18 per cent were in low-skilled employment, whilst 60 per cent were (as expected) not in paid employment. This large percentage is explained by the large number of Tier 5 sub-categories that cover unpaid positions, such as religious and voluntary occupations.

Analysis of employment status by SOC found that of those respondents who provided details of their paid employment, the largest proportions of respondents were in personal service occupations (37%, n=134) and professional occupations (34%, n=134).

6 The views of sponsors and representatives

Key findings

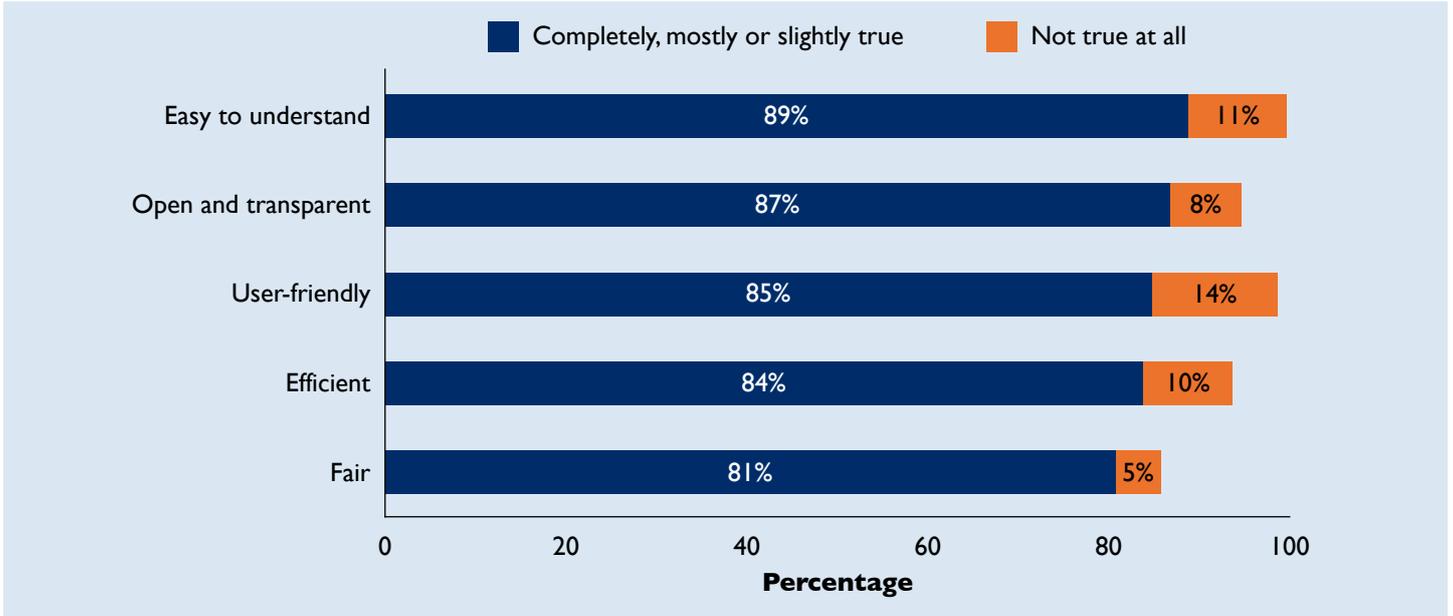
- Overall satisfaction with the PBS sponsorship system amongst sponsors and representatives was high.
- The PBS was seen as more open and transparent and efficient and compared favourably with pre-PBS routes.
- The sponsorship management system was deemed easy to use and the majority had not had to employ extra staff to meet PBS duties.
- The application form was regarded as being easy to complete and it was clear what supporting evidence was required.
- Timing expectations for decisions were largely met – the majority were informed within four weeks and said it took less time or as long as expected.

Satisfaction

Overall satisfaction was high for Tier 2 and 5 sponsors and representatives. Eighty-six per cent (n=1,521) of sponsor respondents were very or fairly satisfied with the PBS sponsorship system and 85 per cent of representatives (n=210) were satisfied. Only 14 per cent of sponsor respondents and 15 per cent of representatives were dissatisfied.

Sponsors were also asked for their views as to whether the PBS sponsorship system was meeting its individual objectives. While they agreed the system was meeting all of its objectives, as Figure 13 shows, sponsors were slightly more likely to say that the PBS sponsorship system was easy to understand (89%, n=1,521) than fair (81%, n=1,514).

Figure 13 Percentage of sponsors agreeing the PBS sponsorship system is meeting its objectives



Easy to understand n=1,521; n=Efficient n=1,514; Open and transparent n=1,516; Fair n=1,514; User-friendly n=1,518.

Comparison with previous routes

Of the 1,138 sponsors that had previously employed migrants in the UK under pre-Points-Based-System processes, many considered the PBS to be performing better in terms of meeting individual objectives. As Figure 14 shows, the greatest proportion of sponsor respondents stated that the PBS was more open and transparent (40%) and more efficient (42%).

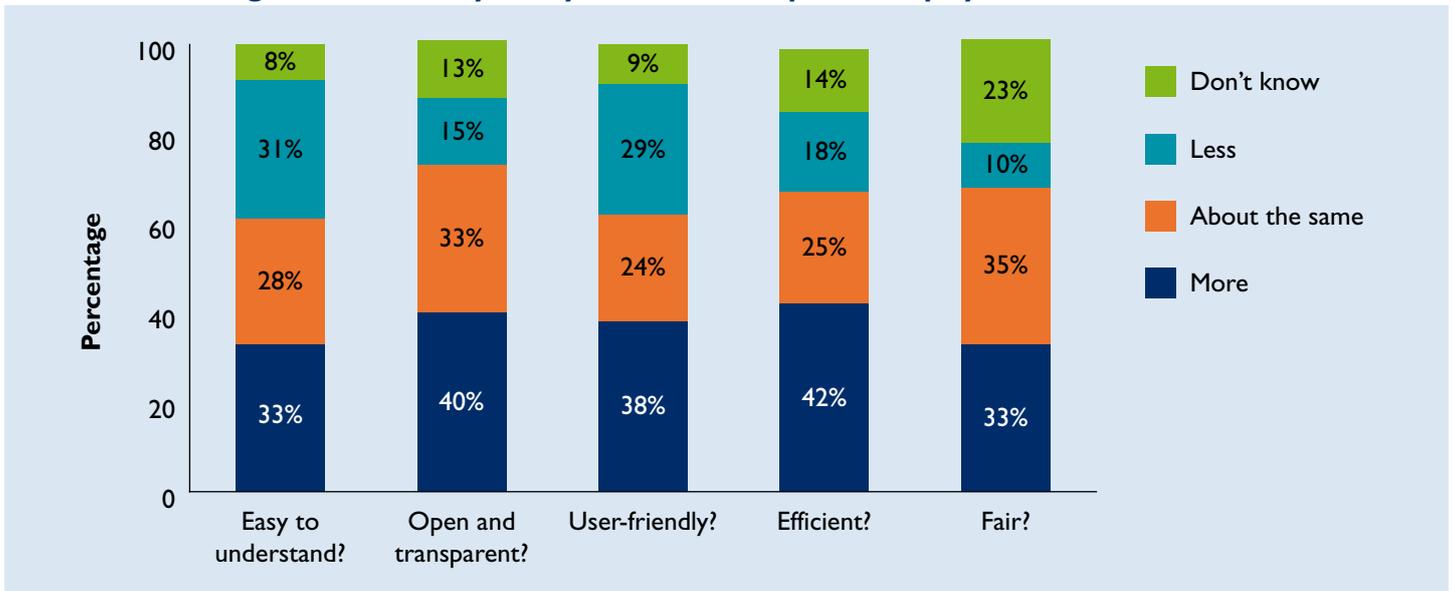
Eighty-four per cent of sponsor respondents (n=973) found the Sponsorship Management System easy to use

overall and the vast majority of sponsor respondents (93%, n=973) said they had not needed to employ any additional staff members in their organisations in order to meet sponsorship duties under the PBS.

Pre-application process

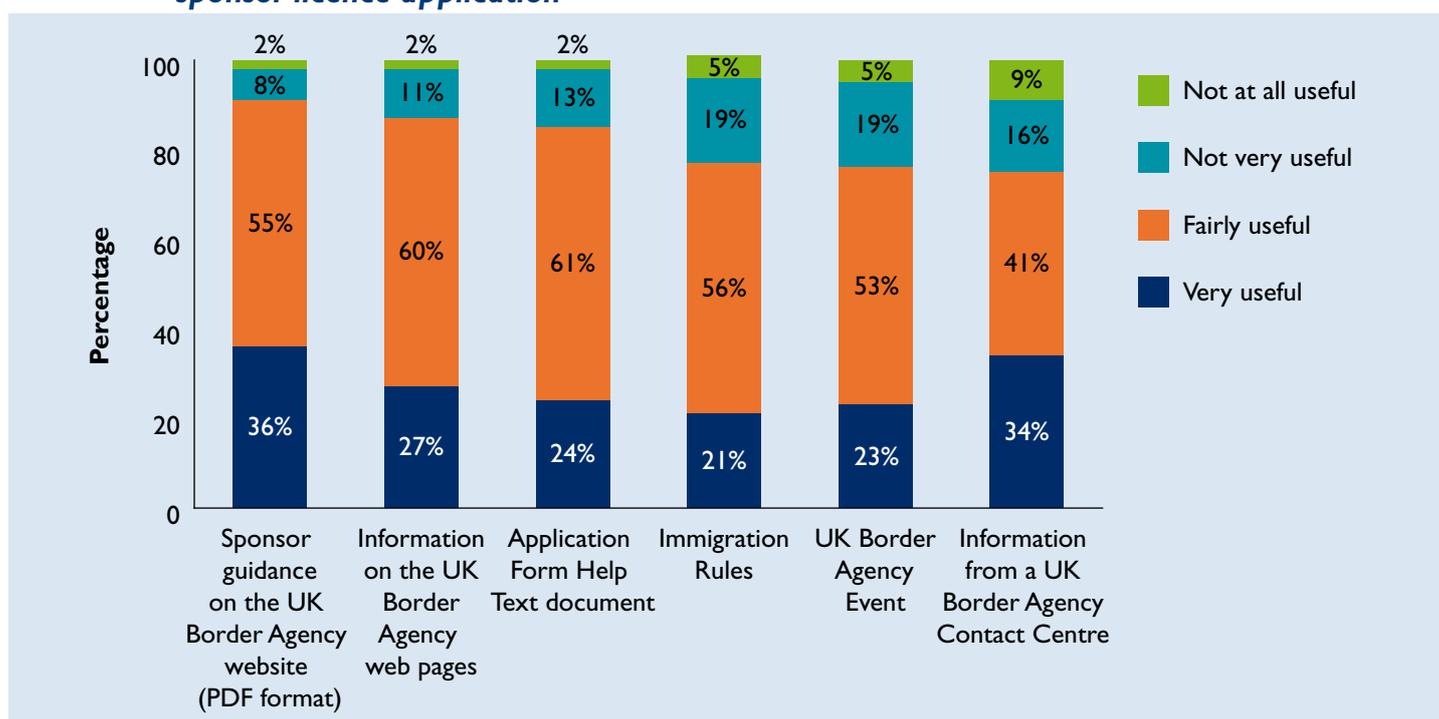
Eighty-five per cent of sponsor respondents (n=1,572) said it was clear to them exactly what supporting evidence they needed to provide as part of their sponsor licence application. Numbers reporting problems with individual types of evidence were very low.

Figure 14 Compared to your experiences of bringing migrants to the UK under pre-PBS arrangements, would you say that the PBS sponsorship system is more or less ...



Easy to understand n=1,137; n=Efficient n=1,132; Open and transparent n=1,135; Fair n=1,132; User-friendly n=1,132

Figure 15 Sponsor perceptions of usefulness of UK Border Agency guidance sources in assisting with sponsor licence application



Sponsor guidance on the UK Border Agency website n=1,525; Information on the UK Border Agency web pages n=1,467; Application Form Help Text document n=1,194; Immigration Rules n=1,081; UK Border Agency Event n=527; Information from a UK Border Agency Contact Centre n=1,130.

Eighty-two per cent of sponsor respondents (n=1,648) said it was very or fairly easy to find the Sponsor Licence Application Form on the UK Border Agency website and 75 per cent of respondents found the application form overall very or fairly easy to complete.

Guidance and assistance

Sponsors referred to several sources of UK Border Agency guidance when making their sponsor licence applications. As shown by Figure 15, the sponsor guidance on the UK Border Agency website (PDF format) was reported to be the most useful, with 91 per cent of respondents (n=1,525) agreeing the guidance source was very or fairly useful.

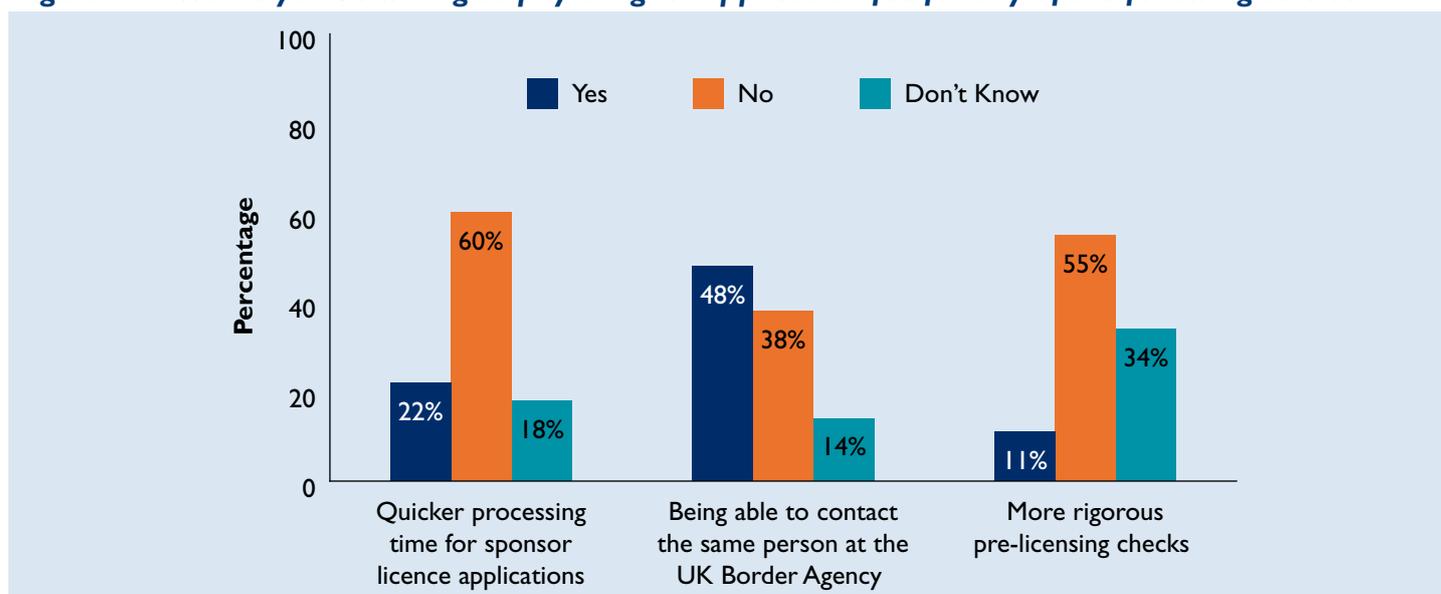
Timing expectations for decisions were largely met, with 61 per cent of sponsor respondents (n=1,552) reporting it taking less time or about as long as expected to receive an outcome. The greatest proportion of respondents (49%, n=1,552) reported receiving a decision from the UK Border Agency on their sponsor licence application within four weeks.

After receiving a successful outcome, 63 per cent of sponsor respondents (n=1,552) had brought migrant workers to the UK since becoming a sponsor and 68 per cent (n=964) reported assigning between one and five Certificates of Sponsorship.

Fifty-eight per cent of respondents (n=1,514) sponsored migrants under Tier 2 sub-categories and 29 per cent of respondents (n=1,492) sponsored migrants under Tier 5 sub-categories. The greatest proportion (84%, n=418) of sponsors who brought migrants to the UK under Tier 5 reported that the migrant workers stayed in the UK for up to a year.

Fees

Many sponsors indicated that they would be willing to pay a higher application fee to improve the level of service they received. As Figure 16 shows, the greatest proportion of respondents (48%, n=1,560) said that they would pay more for being able to contact the same person at the UK Border Agency about their sponsor licence and duty queries.

Figure 16 Would you be willing to pay a higher application fee for any of the following services?

Quicker processing time for sponsor licence applications n=1,565; Being able to contact the same person at the UK Border Agency n=1,560; More rigorous pre-licensing checks n=1,555.

Resident Labour Market Test

Sixty-five per cent of sponsor respondents (n=632) said they had not identified any suitable settled workers using a Resident Labour Market Test and therefore still needed to employ migrant workers. Similarly, 74 per cent of respondents (n=636) said they had not identified a suitable settled worker through advertising in Jobcentre Plus.

English-language ability

In terms of ensuring that migrants have a sufficient level of English to perform their role in the UK, 47 per cent of sponsor respondents (n=225) stated that they required evidence of English-speaking ability when a migrant applied for a job with them (independent of any evidence required for their visa). Thirty-two per cent said they used the points migrant workers were awarded for English language as part of the PBS application process as a guide and 30 per cent said they preferred to employ migrants from English-speaking countries.

7 The views of UK Border Agency staff

Staff working for the UK Border Agency were also asked how they found the new system more than two years after the roll-out of the PBS in February 2008. There were 1,870 responses from across the UK Border Agency. The online survey was conducted between 26 April and 7 May 2010.

Limitations of findings from the survey of staff

Some findings from the staff responses are reported below, but please note the methodology for this aspect of the evaluation differed to that undertaken for applicants and sponsors. The staff survey relied on managers cascading the survey down to their staff and time being given for staff to complete the survey; therefore staff responses will be affected by their availability, eagerness to participate and local management attitudes towards participation. Furthermore, not all respondents would have had the same level of involvement in the PBS or the same level of training and may have worked on the PBS processes and policy for varying lengths of time.

Whilst the findings may not be fully representative of all staff, they do provide insight into the aspects of the process that worked well and those that worked less well during the PBS roll-out from the staff perspective. The number of respondents for each question is reported below.

Key findings

- There was a high level of understanding of PBS objectives, but staff were less likely than applicants or sponsors to think the PBS was meeting those objectives.
- Guidance and IT systems were generally perceived as useful and easy to use, although there were some 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 did not.
- A majority of staff also perceived the UK border to be less secure since the introduction of the PBS, with this view most strongly held by Border Force staff.

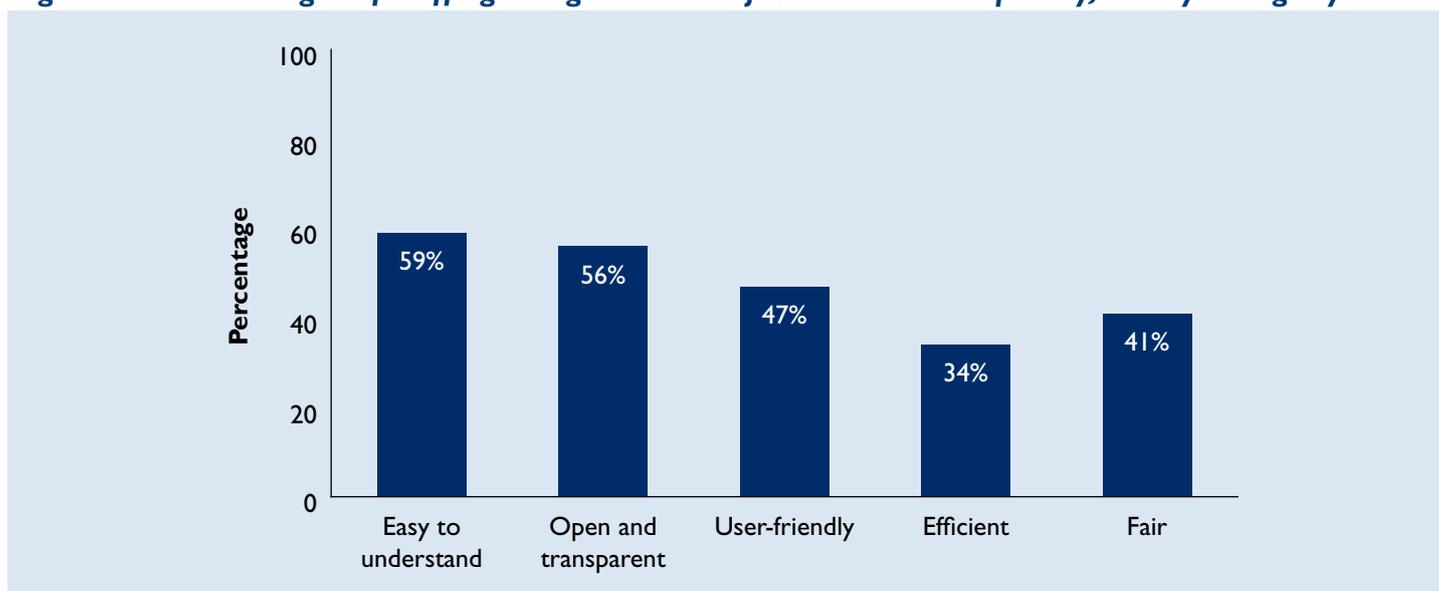
Some analysis has been carried out to explore differences in perceptions between different groups of staff – some of whom were more positive about the PBS than others at the time of the survey.

As Figure 18 shows, staff employed in Border Force were considerably less positive about the PBS meeting its objectives than staff in other work areas. These differences can be seen across each of the five objectives, but the difference in views is greatest for perceptions of the system being fair, where Border Force respondents (23%, n=752) were significantly less likely to agree that the PBS was completely, mostly or slightly meeting this objective compared to other staff (58%, n=745), and efficient, where Border Force respondents (18%, n=752) were significantly less likely to agree that the PBS was completely, mostly or slightly meeting this objective compared to other staff (49%, n=745).

Objectives

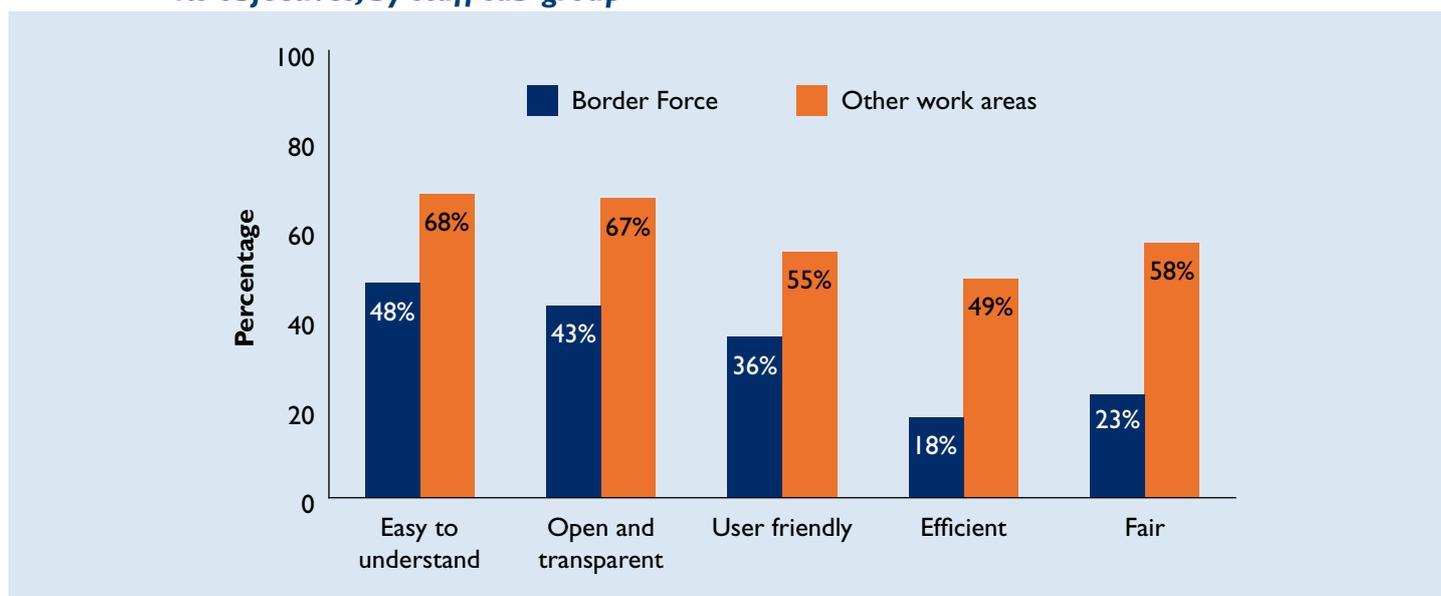
Eighty-eight per cent of all staff respondents (n=1,866) said that they understood the overall objectives of the PBS, either to a great, some or limited extent. However, as Figure 17 shows, for three out of the five indicators only a minority of respondents agreed that the PBS was meeting them. While the majority of staff agreed that the PBS was easy to understand and open and transparent, staff were less likely to think it was user-friendly, efficient and fair.

Figure 17 Percentages of staff agreeing the PBS objectives were completely, mostly or slightly true



n=1,686.

Figure 18 Percentage of respondents who agreed the PBS was completely, mostly or slightly meeting its objectives, by staff sub-group



Border force n=752; Other work areas n=745.

Training

Only 36 per cent of respondents (n=1,376) said they were provided with specific training on PBS policy and processes. This is likely to be because different staff groups will receive training according to how closely they work with PBS policy or processes on a day-to-day basis. For example, caseworkers dealing with visas and applications for extensions tend to receive comprehensive training, whilst other staff, without direct responsibility for the operation of the PBS, such as those in Border Force, Intelligence and Enforcement, receive considerably less. This is reflected in findings that 64 per cent of Overseas Entry Clearance staff who responded to the survey (n=110) and 67 per cent of Migrant Caseworking (n=197) said they had received training at the time of the survey, compared to only 18 per cent of Intelligence (n=90) and 23 per cent of Border Force (n=734) staff.

Those staff who had received training were significantly more likely to agree that the PBS was meeting its objectives (see Table 4), suggesting a strong link between training and positive attitudes to the PBS. Training was important irrespective of work area, for example Border Force staff who stated they had received training (71%, n=171) were significantly more likely to regard the PBS as easy to understand than those who had not (41%, n=563), and Migrant Caseworking staff who stated they had received training (79%, n=132) were significantly more likely to say the PBS was easy to understand compared to those who had not receive training (55%, n=65).

Whilst some staff may not have been thought to require the same type and extent of training in the PBS as other groups of staff, these findings suggest that further training might also be beneficial for staff, such as Border Force, who are not directly responsible for administering the new system. In general, where staff say they were given training and access to IT, and say they received sufficient communication, then perceptions are positive.

When training was received, it was largely deemed useful. However, some types of training were more useful than others. The percentages agreeing that particular types of training were very or fairly useful can be seen in Table 5.

Guidance

The Immigration Rules and Operational Policy Instructions were the sources of guidance used most frequently by staff to obtain information on PBS processes to help them to do their job (used by 57%, n=1,192 and 40% of respondents respectively).

The Applicant Policy Guidance on the UK Border Agency website and the Immigration Rules were seen as the most useful sources of guidance, by 70 per cent (n=616) and 72 per cent (n=773) respectively.

Table 4 Percentage of staff split by work area and training status and who stated that PBS objectives were true

	Staff work area	Objectives					Total
		Easy to understand	Open and transparent	Easy to use	Efficient	Fair	
Received training	Border Force	71%	64%	54%	23%*	33%	n=171
	Migrant Caseworking Team	79%	88%	74%	66%	71%	n=132
	All other staff	81%	80%	60%	60%	72%	n=192
	Total (all staff)	77%	77%	62%	49%	58%	n=495
Did not receive training	Border Force	41%	37%	31%	16%*	20%	n=563
	Migrant Caseworking team	55%	54%	42%	40%	54%	n=65
	All other staff	52%	47%	41%	31%	37%	n=253
	Total (all staff)	45%	41%	35%	22%	27%	n=881

* Please note, in this instance Border Force staff who had received training were not significantly more likely to agree that the PBS was meeting the objective of efficiency. All other findings in the table are statistically significant.

Table 5 Percentages agreeing that training was very or fairly useful

Type of training	%	n
Mentoring	88	249
Internal classroom-based training	82	397
'Train the trainer' – training from an area PBS 'champion'	81	84
External classroom-based training	69	156
Updated user-guides	66	352
Electronic updates	63	386
e-learning	42	246

Table 6 Percentages of respondents who thought each system was very or fairly easy to use

IT system	%	n
CRS (Casework system for out-of-country visa applications)	92	756
Warnings Index	90	663
UK Border Agency website	82	1,004
CID (Case Information Database – PBS sponsorship system and in-country casework)	82	840
Sponsor Register (Lists those sponsors licensed under Tiers 2, 4 and 5)	82	504
CAS checker (The system which allows authorised officials to check the details sponsors enter on application forms)	80	362
PNC (Police National Computer) database	79	366
Adept	78	158
MetaStorm (Sponsorship application and maintenance system)	43	174

IT systems

As Table 6 shows, most IT systems were viewed as being easy to use in day-to-day work by staff. The exception was MetaStorm – this is a bespoke sponsorship application and maintenance system that UK Border Agency caseworkers use for considering applications that are submitted by sponsors.

Staff views on resources

At the time of the survey, 41 per cent of respondents (n=1,145) reported that they felt their team did not have sufficient numbers of staff to conduct the required PBS processes fully. Only 24 per cent felt that they did have sufficient resources, with the rest replying they did not know.

Seventy-eight per cent of respondents (n=1,264) didn't think they had been informed of forthcoming changes to the PBS with enough time to allow them to prepare. Border Force respondents were significantly less likely than others to agree they had had sufficient time to prepare: 14 per cent (n=673) of Border Force staff who responded to the survey agreed, compared with 31 per cent (n=591) of staff in other work areas.

Comparison with pre-PBS routes

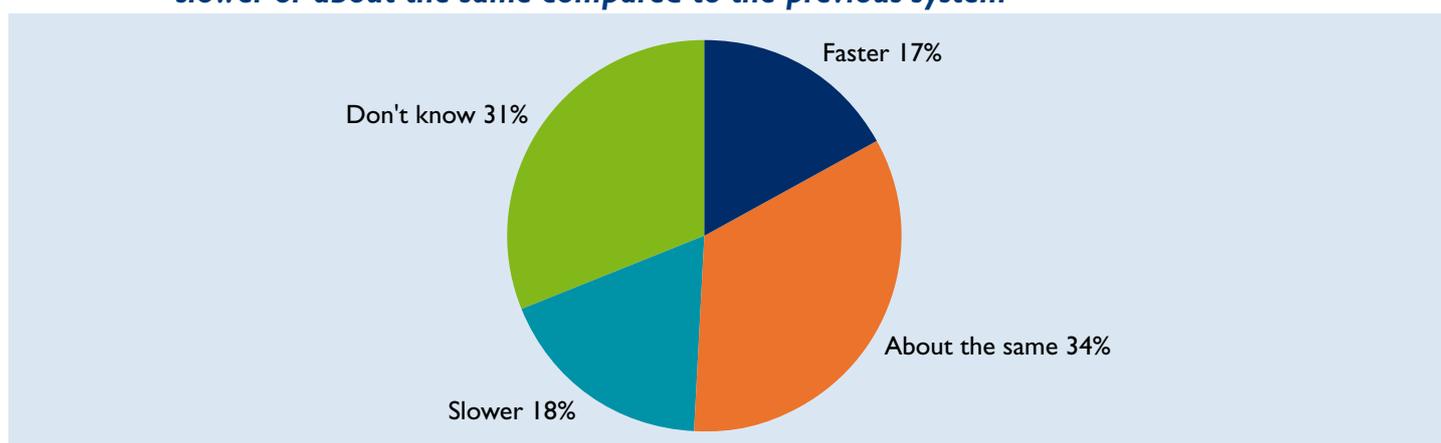
Eighty-six per cent of respondents (n=1,143) had worked in the UK Border Agency prior to the introduction of the PBS.

As seen in Figure 19, 34 per cent of these respondents (n=954) reported that it appeared slower to process cases under the PBS than under the previous system, whilst 18 per cent thought it was about the same and 17 per cent thought that it was faster and one-third were not sure. These mixed findings may be a result of staff working in different parts of the PBS process and having worked with the PBS for different lengths of time; for example, staff responding from the Migrant Caseworking team (30%, n=185) were significantly more likely to see the PBS as faster than the previous system, compared to staff from Border Force (11%, n=517) and staff from all other areas (19%, n=252). However, Border Force (39%, n=517) were significantly more likely to say they did not know if the PBS was faster, slower or about the same compared to staff from the Migrant Caseworking team (8%, n=185).

Border security

Just over half the staff (53%) who responded to the survey commented that the border appeared to be less secure since the introduction of the PBS (n=1,132). Border Force staff who responded to the survey were significantly more likely to perceive the border as less secure (71%, n=552), compared to staff in other work areas (35%, n=580). This suggests that further consideration of Border Force perceptions may be beneficial to help address their concerns with the PBS.

Figure 19 Percentage of all respondents stating that processing cases under the PBS was faster, slower or about the same compared to the previous system



n=954.

Appendix

Technical Note

Introduction

The UK Border Agency surveyed users of the Points-Based System (PBS) in order to understand how the new processes were being received and to ensure they were working effectively. The surveys were carried out between January 2009 and May 2010. The first of these, a pilot project which surveyed Tier 1 applicants, was carried out by BMRB Ltd and was important in terms of establishing the most appropriate methodology for the remaining surveys. The results from this pilot survey were published in November 2009 and are available at <http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/horr22c.pdf>. There were then four subsequent surveys – covering Tier 2 applicants, Tier 5 applicants, Tier 2 and 5 sponsors, and UK Border Agency staff involved in the PBS. These were conducted in house by the Analysis, Research and Knowledge Management unit of the UK Border Agency (ARK).

Methodology

Survey methodologies were chosen in order to gather the best quantitative evidence on the key PBS objectives surrounding the implementation of the PBS from the perspective of users and staff. In the initial Tier 1 pilot, both online and postal questionnaires were trialled. The subsequent surveys were carried out online because migrants are highly mobile and in these PBS categories tend to be better skilled and more adept at using the internet. Email addresses proved to be more stable than postal addresses for this group, and moreover, this provided a cost- and resource-efficient way to conduct a large-scale survey internally. In each case (excluding the Tier 1 survey), the Survey Monkey program was used.

The questionnaire for each survey was developed with input from policy and operational colleagues from across the UK Border Agency. As part of the piloting process, cognitive testing was also carried out on the Tier 1 survey.

All quantitative data in the subsequent surveys were analysed in house, using Excel and SPSS. Unless otherwise stated, differences reported between groups are statistically significant at a 95 per cent confidence level.

The sampling procedures for each survey are set out below.

Tier 1 Applicant Survey

- The sampling frame included all Tier 1 in-country applicants and out-of-country applicants that had received an initial decision (either granted or refused) from the start of the PBS (February 2008) to October 2008.
- In-country and out-of-country applicants were sampled separately using UK Border Agency management data. Within each in-country and out-of-country breakdown, Indian applicants were sampled separately to those from other countries, as were granted and refused applicants.
- Representative samples of 3,000 in-country applicants and 1,500 out-of-country applicants were selected from the sampling frame. The sample only included those who received a case outcome during the above time frame. (The exception to this is non-Indian out-of-country applicants who only had an overseas address – they were excluded from the sample on the basis of cost issues.)
- The survey was conducted between February and April 2009, one year after Tier 1 rolled out.
- Of the 4,500 questionnaires sent out:
 - 443 were ineligible for analysis;
 - 46 were returned blank;
 - 2,447 did not respond; and
 - 1,564 were completed (a response rate of 39%, excluding ineligible responses and blanks).
- The data were weighted to correct for skews in the sample selection (for example, refused applicants were given a greater probability of selection in the in-country design).⁷
- Tier 1 findings are presented in the report using weighted data so it is representative of the initial population of applicants from which the sample was drawn. It is not weighted to the Tier 1 population as a whole given the differentiated way in which the PBS was initially rolled out whereby certain nationalities were brought on stream before others.
- Of the 1,564 responses, 1,101 (70%) had made their application in-country and 463 (30%) had made it out-of-country. There was an important difference in the weighted profile of the in-country and out-of-country groups:

⁷ These considerations were subsequently taken into account in the sample design of the Tier 2 and 5 applicant surveys, hence weightings were only applied in the Tier 1 survey.

	In-country	Out-of-country*
Granted	87%	64%
Refused	13%	35%

* One per cent of out-of-country applicants did not state their outcome.

- This has a bearing on the interpretation of the findings, because the out-of-country sample emerged as more negative in places but this is often because the group contained a larger proportion of refused applicants (who, perhaps unsurprisingly, tended to be more negative in their responses).
- The methodology included both a web and a postal survey. All in-country applicants were sent a postal questionnaire and given the web-link to the survey to fill it in online if preferred. Out-of-country applicants were sent postal surveys (with the link to the web survey, if preferred) where postal addresses were held, and were emailed the web survey link where only email addresses were available.

Tier 2 Applicant Survey

- The sampling frame for the PBS Tier 2 Applicant Survey included all Tier 2 in-country and out-of-country applicants with an initial case outcome (i.e. granted or refused) between April and September 2009 inclusive, using management information.
- Only those applicants who had provided an email address were eligible to participate as the methodology for the Tier 2 Applicant Survey involved an online survey only (as this had been deemed the most resource- and cost-effective method as part of the Tier 1 pilot survey).
- An invitation to complete the online survey was sent to a representative sample of 3,211 Tier 2 applicants who had provided an email address, including: in-country and out-of-country applicants; applicants who had been granted and refused; and applicants from the different Tier 2 subcategories.⁸ Of these, there were:
 - 290 email bounce-backs and opt-outs;
 - 1,454 non-responses; and
 - 1,467 completed questionnaires.
- The final response rate (excluding bounce-backs and opt-outs) was 50 per cent (1,467 responses).

⁸ Note: the sample was representative of Tier 2 applicants who had supplied an email address with their application, rather than Tier 2 applicants *per se*.

- The survey was conducted between February and March 2010, approximately 16 months after Tier 2 roll-out.
- Five-hundred-and-thirty-six respondents (37%) had made their application from within the UK (in-country) and 606 respondents (41%) had made their application from overseas (out-of-country). The location was not given for 325 respondents (22%).

Tier 5 Applicant Survey

- The sampling frame for the PBS Tier 5 Applicant Survey included all PBS applicants that had applied for a PBS Tier 5 visa between April and September 2009 and had received an initial case outcome (granted or refused).
- In-country Tier 5 applicants were not included, as there were insufficient numbers in the data from which to sample.
- The online survey invitation was sent to a representative sample of 2,747 Tier 5 out-of-country applicants. Of these there were:
 - 188 email bounce-backs and opt-outs;
 - 1,505 non-responses; and
 - 1,054 completed questionnaires.
- The final response rate (excluding bounce-backs and opt-outs) was 41 per cent (1,054 responses).
- The survey was conducted between February and March 2010, approximately 16 months after Tier 5 roll-out.

Tier 2 and 5 Sponsor Survey

- The PBS Sponsor Survey sampled Tier 2 and 5 sponsors that had been granted a sponsor licence between the start of the PBS sponsorship system in February 2008 and November 2009.
- Random probability sampling was used to ensure coverage of sponsors under both tiers and all subcategories.⁹

⁹ The sampling data were taken from UK Border Agency Management Information (MI) drawn from the Sponsor Caseworking System. The MI used contains the details of the sponsor organisation at the time that they originally applied for their sponsor licence. Therefore, if the sponsor was contacted for the survey several months after receiving their licence, there was a risk that the named personnel may not be employed at the sponsor organisation anymore. This may have had an (unquantified) impact on the number of individuals that had sufficient experience to complete the survey.

- The final sample included sponsors under all Tier 2 and 5 subcategories. Sponsors that were only licensed under Tier 4 were not included in the survey, as Tier 4 was not fully implemented at the time of the survey. However, some Tier 4 sponsors that were also licensed under Tier 2 and/or 5 were included in the sample on this basis.
- The survey was sent to a representative sample of 5,930 sponsors under Tier 2 and 5. Of these there were:
 - 420 email bounce-backs and opt-outs;
 - 3,298 non-responses; and
 - 2,212 respondents.
- The final response rate (excluding bounce-backs and opt-outs) was 40 per cent (2,212 responses).
- The survey was conducted between February and March 2010, approximately two years after sponsorship roll-out began.
- Respondents with suspended sponsor licences were excluded from the analysis.
- As part of the PBS Sponsor Survey, ARK also contacted 2,151 PBS representatives¹⁰ in order to evaluate whether or not representatives experienced PBS processes differently from PBS sponsors. The final response rate (excluding bounce-backs and opt outs) for the PBS Representatives Survey was 26 per cent (499 responses). Due to this low response rate, the findings have not been reported except where sufficient sample allows the reporting of notable findings for this group.
- Please note that not all staff respondents would have had the same level of involvement in the PBS or the same level of training and may have worked on the PBS processes and policy for varying lengths of time.
- The survey was conducted between April and May 2010, approximately one year after the PBS was fully rolled out.
- It is not possible to determine how many staff the survey was sent to owing to the cascade method used, so it is not possible to calculate the response rate.¹¹ The survey yielded 1,870 responses from across the UK Border Agency. A breakdown of responses by area of work is given below.

Respondents by area of work

Border Force	752
Migrant Caseworking Team	200
Overseas Entry Clearance	110
Intelligence	93
Operational Policy	16
PBS Programme	51
Immigration Policy	12
Sponsor Licensing Unit	36
Sponsor Management Unit	15
Visiting Officer Team	14
UK Border Agency Customer Contact Centre	44
Immigration Enquiry Bureau	28
Public Enquiry Office	15
Presenting Officers Unit	8
Detection	103
Did not state area of work	373
Total	1,870

Staff Survey

- The method for the staff survey differed to the applicant and sponsor surveys as it relied on managers cascading the survey to staff and allowing time to complete the survey. Emails were sent out to managers to circulate to staff inviting them to complete the survey online. As a result, not all staff may have had opportunity to complete the survey and the findings may not be representative of all staff.

¹⁰ A representative is an individual qualified to give immigration advice/ services under the Immigration and Asylum Act, 1999. They are usually solicitors, barristers or legal executives. Representatives may assist PBS sponsors in applying for a sponsor licence or in meeting their sponsorship duties once licensed and may also assist individual PBS applicants in applying for a PBS visa. Representatives were identified by ARK researchers from the Tier 2 and 5 applicant and sponsor sampling data.

- Further detailed analysis was undertaken in SPSS to compare different staff groups (where sample sizes were large enough). Findings are therefore presented in the report comparing Border Force staff, the Migrant Caseworking Team, Intelligence and Overseas Entry Clearance staff. Findings for the other staff groups have not been reported because the bases were too small.
- The data were not weighted as the population for weighting back to was unknown.

¹¹ A cascade method was used in the absence of a definitive list of staff working on the PBS.