

U.S. Department of Labor
Unemployment Insurance
Claimant Satisfaction Study
September 1998

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U. S. Department of Labor*

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Study Objectives and Background

This report presents information from a national survey of individuals who filed claims for unemployment compensation in 1996 and 1997. The study examines their satisfaction with the Unemployment Insurance systems' services, procedures and staff. Results are based on interviews with more than 3,000 claimants from 16 states.

Objectives

The National Unemployment Insurance Claimant Satisfaction Study was designed to accomplish four objectives established by the U.S. Department of Labor:

- 1) Develop appropriate measures of customer service and customer satisfaction for the joint Federal-State Unemployment Insurance system.
- 2) Provide national baseline measures of customer satisfaction results that states could use to assess the results of their own customer satisfaction studies.
- 3) Support the federal role in national program development, oversight of state efforts, and technical assistance for the states.
- 4) Recommend best practices in survey design, sample selection, survey procedures, and analysis of customer satisfaction that federal and state partners could use to improve their own survey efforts.¹

A study that adequately provides both information to support federal policy development and to establish baseline measures for national comparison will inevitably address many issues. This paper provides a comprehensive review of claimant satisfaction at each step of the unemployment insurance process. A narrative of study findings begins with Chapter One in the Detailed Findings section that shortly follows.

Background

The remainder of this section offers some basic background information on the Unemployment Insurance system and the impetus for measuring claimant satisfaction. Readers who are already familiar with these topics may choose to turn directly to Chapter One.

The Social Security Act of 1935 and the Federal Unemployment Tax Act established the Unemployment Insurance system. The system provides temporary income support to compensate eligible workers for lost wages during periods of involuntary unemployment. It is funded almost entirely by State and Federal taxes on employers. In 1996,

¹ This objective is thoroughly addressed in Appendix E of this report.

more than 20 million workers filed claims for benefits and 6.2 million employers paid payroll taxes. The system paid 23 billion dollars in benefits and collected 23 billion dollars in State taxes.

The Unemployment Insurance system operates as a Federal-State partnership. States are responsible for establishing and maintaining self-contained programs subject to federal guidelines.

To qualify for benefits, a worker must demonstrate previous attachment to the labor force. This is typically determined by reviewing claimant's earnings in covered employment during a one-year base period. States vary considerably in the amount of benefits paid, the amount of earnings and employment required for an individual to qualify for benefits, the weekly benefit amount, and duration of benefits paid.

Workers must also demonstrate continuing eligibility on a weekly basis, primarily by showing that they are able and available to work, actively looking for work, have not refused any offers of work, and have not returned to work. They certify that they meet these conditions by filing continued claims forms, usually every one or two weeks. Traditionally, both initial claims and continued claims were filed through office visits. This has changed dramatically in recent years, as many states now offer the option of filing by telephone.

In addition to the requirement that recipients actively continue to seek work, many states attempt to strengthen claimants' connection to work by:

- Requiring claimants to register with the State Employment Service agency to use their job search assistance services.
- Establishing close working relationships between unemployment agencies and JTPA dislocated worker programs.
- Initiating the Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services System through which states identify claimants who are likely to exhaust their benefits. Once identified, claimants are referred to reemployment services such as job search assistance or skill training.

At the time this study was planned, there was a highly visible, government-wide emphasis on reconfiguring federal programs to be more “customer-focused.” This entailed measurement of customer satisfaction and the use of this information to revise standards and services to more effectively meet customer needs. The work of Vice-President Gore’s National Performance Review (NPR) was translated into a call for action in Executive Order 12862 “Setting Customer Service Standards.” The order instructed all government agencies to:

- Establish standards for customer service “equal to the best in business.”
- “Survey customers to determine the kind of quality of services they want and their level of satisfaction with existing services.”
- “Post service standards and measure results against them.”

The National Unemployment Insurance Claimant Satisfaction Study is part of the Department of Labor’s contribution to this larger government initiative to make claimant information available when critical decisions are being considered.

Key Findings

The following summary provides highlights of project findings. A more thorough discussion is presented in the Detailed Findings section, beginning on page 8.

- **Satisfaction with the Unemployment Insurance system is very high, both for the system overall and its specific components.**
 - In a broad sample of claimants, including individuals who were determined not eligible for benefits, the mean rating of overall satisfaction is 4.0 on a 5-point scale; 42% of all claimants are extremely satisfied, while only 5% are extremely dissatisfied.
 - In addition, claimants were satisfied with the specific aspects of the unemployment insurance process and the staff who manage it.
- **Claimants are satisfied with the fairness of unemployment insurance procedures and their treatment by staff.**
 - Approximately six in ten respondents are extremely satisfied with the fairness of decisions and treatment. On both of these measures, mean satisfaction was at least 4.2 on a scale of 5.
- **Claimants offer a high level of support for key features of the Unemployment Insurance system.**
 - 69% agree that the requirement to regularly look for work is helpful, while nearly all (93%) think it is a good idea.
 - 80% feel that the laws, regulations, and policies determining eligibility for benefits are fair.
 - 75% concur that benefit amounts are fair and reasonable.
 - 62% say that they find better jobs because of the financial support provided by unemployment insurance benefits.
- **Claimants strongly reject the stereotype of the Unemployment Insurance system as bureaucratic, uncaring, and cumbersome.**
 - Claimants are highly satisfied with the performance of staff in the Unemployment Insurance system. On six measures of staff performance, including aspects of their attitude and behavior, average claimant satisfaction ranges from 4.0 to 4.3, and the overall satisfaction rating for all measures combined is 4.2 out of 5 points possible.
 - Most claimants feel the time required to complete various activities is appropriate. On seven measures of timeliness, from initial filing through benefit payments, including telephone and in-person contacts, 70 to 80% of claimants say the time involved was “about right.”

- Claimants are highly satisfied with the information they receive, including forms and booklets, and the promptness with which they can get questions answered. On five measures of satisfaction with information provided to them, average scores range from 4.2 to 4.3 on the 5-point scale.
- **Claimants are generally supportive of the increasing use of telephone contacts rather than office visits, although there are some notable areas in which they are less satisfied.**
 - Overall satisfaction is about the same whether claimants file continued claims in person, by mail, or by telephone.
 - The small number of claimants who rated automated voice response systems for filing claims are generally quite pleased. On three measures of ease of use, average satisfaction ranges from 4.1 to 4.5 on the 5-point scale.
 - However, these claimants are much less satisfied with their ability to get answers to questions through voice response systems. The average rating on this measure is 3.5, again, out of 5 points possible.
 - Claimants are also less satisfied with the appeals process if they have to participate in their hearing by phone. Those participating in an in-person hearing rate their satisfaction with the appeals process at 3.6 out of 5, as opposed to 3.1 for those whose hearing is done over the telephone.
- **Overall satisfaction with the Unemployment Insurance system varies little as a result of differences in demographic characteristics.**
 - There was only one difference we feel is worth noting: Older claimants are more satisfied than younger respondents. Average satisfaction scores vary from 3.8 among 18 to 24 year old claimants to 4.4 for those 65 years of age or older.
- **Variation in individual benefit levels does not appear to be linked to claimant satisfaction.**
 - The average satisfaction rating is 4.2 for both claimants with benefits that are higher than those of others in their state and for those whose benefits are lower.
- **However, factors related to claims history do significantly affect overall satisfaction.**
 - The outcome of eligibility determination makes a significant difference. On average, claimants who are determined eligible for benefits rate their overall satisfaction a 4.2 on the scale of 1 to 5, compared to 3.3 for claimants who were determined ineligible.

- Claimants who left their most recent job for lack of work are more satisfied (4.1) with the Unemployment Insurance system than those who quit or were fired (3.6 and 3.7, respectively). This is not surprising, since “reason for job separation” is one of the determining factors when eligibility is decided.
- It makes a substantial difference whether or not claimants have problems during their claim periods. Those who had no problems rated their satisfaction a 4.2, much higher than the average score of 3.1 among respondents who did have problems.
- **Satisfaction with the appeals process is well below the high ratings given to the overall system and most of its components.**
 - Overall satisfaction with the appeals process was 3.4 out of 5 possible points.
 - Claimants who won their appeal are far more satisfied with the process than those who lost. The average rating of winners is 4.1 compared with 2.4 for those who lost their appeal.
- **Finally, claimants express high levels of satisfaction even when they are not necessarily receiving more tangible benefits from the Unemployment Insurance system.**
 - 83% of the people referred to job training say their state was helpful with this referral; however, only 29% actually decided to enroll.
 - 33% say they received job search assistance; 88% feel it was helpful, but only 4% of those currently employed report that they were referred to their jobs by staff from the Unemployment Insurance system or its partner agencies. This may not be entirely surprising since much of the job search assistance provided is training on how to look for work rather than referrals to specific jobs.

Program Development

Since the majority of claimants are satisfied with most aspects of the Unemployment Insurance system, national program development efforts might be expected to concentrate on maintaining and enhancing the core features of the system. Beyond this, the survey results suggest where additional effort should be focused to improve claimant satisfaction. These are:

- Claimants who are found not eligible either initially or at appeal are far less satisfied with the program. In particular, they are far less likely to feel they have been treated fairly. A more thorough explanation of the process or more direct guidance to alternative service options may improve satisfaction.
- Claimants appear to be less satisfied when they feel the system is not able to step outside its normal routines to help them find

answers to questions and solve their unique needs. This is particularly true for the increasing use of telephone communication rather than office visits. Although the system serves millions, claimants see primarily their own claims. Assigning staff to help claimants navigate through the claims process, dealing with any unusual circumstances that arise could focus more assistance on those who are the least satisfied.

- Having to wait for service, an old issue, remains a concern. Most claimants find the time they spend in various activities in the Unemployment Insurance system to be about the right length. But those who have to wait too long or do not get enough time with staff are less satisfied. Reducing waits where possible, or perhaps making more productive use of wait time, would address another area of dissatisfaction.

Detailed Findings

The following section is a detailed presentation of results from the National Unemployment Insurance Claimant Satisfaction Study. Four chapters make up the body of this report:

- Chapter One presents a broad picture of claimants satisfaction with the Unemployment Insurance program as a whole;
- Chapter Two examines satisfaction with the core components of the program; and
- Chapter Three identifies factors that are related to higher or lower satisfaction levels.
- Chapter Four provides a summary of findings and conclusions based on all previous discussion.

These chapters present findings on current levels of claimant satisfaction; however, the study was also designed to provide information program administrators can use to develop their own systems for measuring customer satisfaction. There are several appendices included in this report designed to help with that process.

- Appendix A is the questionnaire;
- Appendix B offers detailed data tables to assist readers who want to review issues of personal interest in more depth;
- Appendix C discusses the characteristics of claimants who participated in the study;
- Appendix D provides a thorough discussion of the survey procedures used in the study and shares lessons learned for those who might want to conduct their own study; and
- Appendix E gives examples of gap analysis and strategy maps, tools to analyze satisfaction with various aspects of the system vis-à-vis the importance claimants place on them.

Chapter One: Overall Levels of Satisfaction

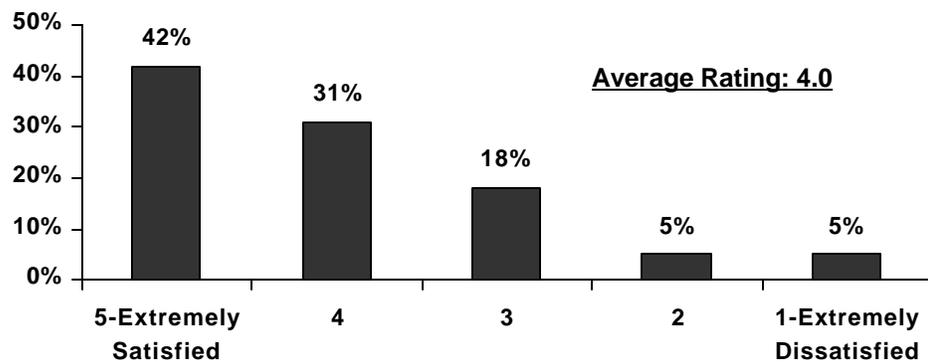
This chapter discusses claimants' overall satisfaction with the Unemployment Insurance system. Two measures are examined: (1) a single measure of overall satisfaction with the entire UI experience and (2) a set of measures that gauge satisfaction with key aspects of the claims process.

Overall Satisfaction

The broadest measure of satisfaction comes from a question asked at the end of the survey, after claimants assessed more specific aspects of their unemployment insurance experience. By then, the questionnaire had guided claimants through all their experiences—the initial and continued filing of claims, appeals procedures (if applicable), dealings with staff, job search assistance, and so forth. Respondents then were asked to rate their satisfaction with the Unemployment Insurance system as a whole.² This general assessment was based on a 5-point scale in which 5 equals extremely satisfied and 1 equals extremely dissatisfied.

Overall satisfaction with the Unemployment Insurance system appears quite high. As shown in Exhibit 1 below, their responses cluster strongly on the “satisfied” end of the 5-point scale. Forty-two percent of respondents are extremely satisfied, while only 5% are extremely dissatisfied. The average rating is 4.0 on a 5-point scale.

Exhibit 1: Overall Satisfaction with UI Experience



Question 35 in Appendix A

Overall satisfaction is considerably higher for those who were determined to be eligible for benefits than for those who were not eligible.³ This is not surprising because the experience of the two groups is not the same. Ineligible claimants may go through the

² Some services (i.e., job search assistance) not provided directly by UI staff may be viewed by claimants as part of their overall experience.

³ Eligibility, as used here, is self-reported by claimants. It may not be the same as the eligibility status listed in state records.

application process, receive some advice, and usually can take advantage of the state agency’s job search resources just like eligible claimants. But they do not receive most core services; in particular, they are not paid benefits. Because of these differences and the variations in satisfaction that result from them, many tables in this report show satisfaction levels separately for eligible and ineligible claimants.

Claimants who are eligible for benefits are more satisfied with the Unemployment Insurance system overall. The vast majority (79%) report their satisfaction in the two highest categories, and only 6% at the two most dissatisfied levels. Ineligible claimants are generally less enthused about their overall experience. Less than half (48%) say they are satisfied, and 24% are dissatisfied. The average satisfaction for eligible claimants is 4.2 out of 5 points possible, far higher than 3.3 for those who were not determined eligible.

Exhibit 2: Overall Satisfaction with UI Experience⁴
By Eligibility Status

	Eligible n = 2,413	Not Eligible n = 591	Total n = 3,004
Mean Rating	4.2	3.3	4.0
5 – Extremely Satisfied	47%	23%	42%
4	32	25	31
3	15	28	18
2	4	9	5
1 – Extremely Dissatisfied	2	14	5

Question 35 by Question 4 in Appendix A

Process Measures

Claimants were asked a series of questions about the fairness of the Unemployment Insurance process, the timeliness of services, and staff performance. Their overall satisfaction in these three areas is presented in the following section, while their detailed responses are discussed in Chapter Two of this report. As will be reviewed, their high levels of satisfaction with process measures are consistent with their high level of satisfaction overall.

Fairness of Treatment

Respondents were asked whether they felt satisfied that they were treated fairly when decisions were made about their UI benefits. In general, claimants are very satisfied with how fairly they were treated—61% are extremely satisfied (a rating of 5) and the mean rating is 4.2 for all claimants.

⁴ Percentages in tables throughout this report may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Perhaps not surprisingly, differences between eligible and ineligible claimants are striking when “fairness of treatment” is evaluated. Most eligible claimants (85%) are satisfied that staff members treat them fairly when benefits are determined (rating 4 or 5); only 7% were not satisfied (rating 1 or 2). By contrast, only 49% of ineligible claimants are satisfied that they are treated fairly when benefits were decided; 29% are dissatisfied.

Exhibit 3: Satisfaction with Fairness of Treatment
By Eligibility Status

	Eligible n = 2,394	Not Eligible n = 587	Total n = 2,981
Mean Rating	4.4	3.3	4.2
5 - Extremely Satisfied	68%	32%	61%
4	16	17	16
3	8	21	11
2	3	10	4
1 - Extremely Dissatisfied	5	20	7

Question 11e by Question 4 in Appendix A

The overall high level of satisfaction with the fairness of the system serves as a preview of a later finding that claimants accept many of the key rules and procedures they face during the unemployment insurance process.

Timeliness

Claimants were asked a seven-item question about their satisfaction with the length of time required to complete each step in the UI process. Responses to each item are discussed in Chapter Two. Here we look at claimants’ perceptions of how long things take as a whole.⁵

Results indicate that the system generally meets claimant expectations of timeliness. Most agree that the activities in the UI process require about the right length of time. Just over one-fifth (21%) judge the time to complete all seven activities as “about the right,” and more than half (57%) indicate at least five of the seven activities require about the right length of time.

Claimants who are eligible are much more likely to be satisfied with the timeliness of the process than those who are not eligible—24% of eligible claimants are satisfied on all seven measures, compared with only 10% of ineligible claimants. The differences between the two groups are not as extreme when we look at the percentage who are satisfied on at least five measures—61% of eligible claimants, compared with 42% of ineligible claimants.

⁵ This measure is a composite score of responses to a 7-item question about timeliness. Four responses were possible: (1) it took much too long, (2) it took too long, (3) it was about the right length of time, and (4) it was too short. Percentages shown are the combined percentages of respondents who said the time involved was “about right.”

Exhibit 4: Satisfaction with Timeliness of Service
Number of Measures Where Length of Time is “About Right”
By Eligibility Status

	Eligible n = 2,423	Not Eligible n = 594	Total n = 3,017
None	4%	9%	5%
One Measure	6	8	6
Two Measures	7	11	8
Three Measures	9	12	10
Four Measures	14	18	14
Five Measures	25	23	24
Six Measures	12	9	11
Seven Measures	24	10	21

Composite score of Question 27a through g

Staff Performance

Claimants were asked a 6-item question about their satisfaction with staff performance. Responses to each item are discussed in Chapter Two. Here we look at overall satisfaction with staff performance.⁶ Sixty-six percent of all respondents rate their satisfaction as a 4 or 5, with a mean of 4.2 on a 5-point scale.

Here too, there are significant differences depending on the outcome of the eligibility determination. Eligible claimants are much more likely to be satisfied with staff performance—42% rate their satisfaction at the highest level and their average rating is 4.3. In contrast, only 22% of ineligible claimants award staff performance with the highest mark, resulting in a considerably lower average score of 3.7.

Exhibit 5: Satisfaction with Staff Performance
By Eligibility Status

	Eligible n = 2,272	Not Eligible n = 552	Total n = 2,824
Mean Rating	4.3	3.7	4.2
5	42%	22%	38%
4 – 4.9	29	24	28
3 – 3.9	20	23	20
2 – 2.9	7	22	10
1 – 1.9	2	10	4

Composite score of Question 28a through f

⁶ This measure is a weighted composite score of responses to the 6-item question on staff performance. For each item, claimants were asked to rate their satisfaction on 5-point scale in which 5=extremely satisfied and 1=extremely dissatisfied.

Summary

This initial look at overall satisfaction indicates most claimants are happy with their unemployment insurance experience as a whole, the fairness of treatment shown to them, the efficiency of processes they go through, and the people they interact with. While this is certainly encouraging, it is important to maintain perspective and judge critically. In a system where millions walk through the door every year, or increasingly often, pick up the telephone, even a seemingly minimal proportion can represent a large number of dissatisfied customers.

Chapter Two: Satisfaction with Key Features of Unemployment Insurance

From the time they apply for unemployment compensation until they end their claim, ideally with a job, a typical claimant makes many stops. What happens at each stop colors their views of the Unemployment Insurance system: how fair it is, how easy it is to navigate, and how it changes their lives. As these opinions build, one upon another, claimants will be more or less satisfied with their overall experience. The previous chapter served as a preview, examining overall satisfaction on certain issues.

This chapter provides a more in-depth discussion about the specific elements of claimants' satisfaction upon which their total feeling of contentment (or dissent) is built. The discussion follows claimants through each stage of the unemployment insurance process, beginning with the initial filing of claims and proceeding through reemployment activities. It concludes with the claimants' assessment of the basic rules and procedures that define the Unemployment Insurance system.

Filing Initial Claims

Claimants' travels through the Unemployment Insurance system usually begin when they call or visit a state office to file a claim for benefits. Information gathered during this first contact may affect their eligibility, their options, and the procedures they will be asked to follow.

At the time claimants in this study were applying for unemployment compensation, most were required to visit their local office in-person to file initial claims. As a result, findings show a high proportion of in-person filing (86%). The remainder filed primarily by mail (6%) or telephone (7%). A handful of claimants were able to file by computer.⁷

The national pattern masks considerable state variation. Actually telephone filing of initial claims is common in very few states. Almost two-thirds (63%) of initial telephone filing occurred in California and Minnesota. Every state in the study, except Puerto Rico, had at least one claimant who said they filed by telephone.⁸ However, no state other than the two mentioned above had as many as one in ten claimants using this method.

Not surprisingly, filing initial claims by telephone takes much less time than filing in-person.⁹ On average, it took 11 minutes to file an initial claim by telephone and 61 minutes to file in-person. Almost all (93%) claimants filing initially by telephone completed their

⁷ Claimants in this study filed claims between December 1996 and November 1997.

⁸ Again, there are some small discrepancies between state records and claimants' responses. A few claimants give answers that appear at odds with the prevalent filing method in their state.

⁹ Figures reported here are claimant estimates of how long it took to file their claims.

transactions in 20 minutes or less. By comparison, 25% of claimants filing in-person spent more than an hour at the unemployment insurance office.

**Exhibit 6: Time Required for Filing Initial Claim
By Method of Filing**

	In-Person n = 2,559	Telephone n = 214	Total n = 2,773
Claimant Estimates			
5 minutes or less	7%	44%	10%
6 – 10 minutes	6	30	8
11 – 20 minutes	16	20	16
21 – 30 minutes	19	4	18
31 – 60 minutes	28	1	26
More than 60 minutes	25	1	23
Average time of the visit or call (minutes)	61	11	57
Average time until receiving assistance from staff (minutes)	26	8	24

Questions 2 and 3 by Question 1 in Appendix A

Of course, claimants who visit the office may do much more than simply file their claims. Especially as states continue to consolidate services in one-stop career centers, or other multiple service facilities, there may be many productive ways to spend waiting time, e.g., reviewing job listings, examining written materials, or completing forms. Such opportunities could be less available if there were a transition to less time-consuming telephone filing.

Although few claimants submitted their initial applications by telephone or computer, the majority (52%) feels that the opportunity to file initial claims by telephone is extremely important. This general sentiment prevails whether or not the claim was filed by telephone. However, those who filed by phone consider the opportunity far more important.

**Exhibit 7: Importance of Telephone Filing
By Method of Filing**

	In-Person or Mail Filers n = 2,702	Telephone Filers n = 218	Total n = 2,941
Mean Rating	3.9	4.4	3.9
5 – Extremely Important	50%	71%	52%
4	15	8	14
3	19	14	19
2	7	4	6
1 – Not at all Important	9	4	9

Question 10f by Question 1 in Appendix A

Note: May not total to 100% due to rounding.

The general support for filing claims by telephone speaks well for the movement to process more unemployment insurance issues electronically. At the same time, differences in opinion emerge repeatedly throughout this report between those who actually filed by telephone and those who did not. Claimants seem to accept the Unemployment Insurance system as they find it. If they file by phone, they understand the importance of a mechanism that is easier to use. However, if they file in-person or by mail, they seem to feel that “the telephone was not that important anyway.”

Provision of Information

A prominent feature of claimants’ early contact with the Unemployment Insurance system is the exchange of information. Claimants provide information about themselves when they complete an application. In return, they are informed of eligibility requirements, rights and responsibilities, and procedures for filing continuing claims. This information is provided through explanatory materials or presentations by unemployment insurance staff. We now discuss claimants’ satisfaction with the clarity, ease, and efficiency with which information is shared.

Application

Completing the application is the first step to provide the information on employment and earnings that is necessary to determine claimants’ eligibility for benefits. From the initial application onward, claimants are highly satisfied with the Unemployment Insurance system. Fifty-six percent are extremely satisfied with how easy the application and other forms are to understand and complete. Eight of ten claimants rate the forms a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale; and only 5% are dissatisfied with this part of the process. The average rating is 4.3.

Those who are eligible are more comfortable; they express an average satisfaction of 4.4 compared to 4.0 for ineligible claimants, but the difference between these groups is smaller here than for most issues evaluated.

Exhibit 8: Satisfaction with Application Form

All Respondents

	Extremely Satisfied			Extremely Dissatisfied		Mean
	5	4	3	2	1	
Ease of understanding and completing the application form	56%	25	14	3	2	4.3

Question 11a in Appendix A

Clarity of Materials

As part of the initial filing process, claimants are typically provided booklets and other materials to explain eligibility criteria, benefit calculations, services available, and their rights and responsibilities. These materials are available in local offices and by mail upon request.

Claimants were asked about their satisfaction with three types of explanatory materials:

- The instructional booklet,
- The explanation of benefits and services available, and
- The explanation of claimants’ rights and responsibilities.

Respondents are highly satisfied with the clarity of these materials. About 80% are very pleased, with a mean satisfaction of at least 4.2 across all three measures. On these criteria, ineligible claimants are again less satisfied. Their average ratings range from 3.8 to 4.0 compared with scores of 4.3 to 4.4 for eligible claimants.

Exhibit 9: Satisfaction with Clarity of Materials
All Respondents

	Extremely Satisfied			Extremely Dissatisfied		Mean
	5	4	3	2	1	
Clarity and ease of understanding of the information booklet	58%	24	13	3	2	4.3
Clarity of explanation of benefits and services	54%	24	15	4	3	4.2
Clarity of explanation of rights and responsibilities	55%	24	14	3	3	4.2

Questions 11 b, h, and i in Appendix A

Inquiry Resolution

Respondents are similarly satisfied with the promptness with which their questions are answered. Most (57%) are extremely satisfied, while only 4% are extremely dissatisfied. The mean rating is 4.2 on the 5-point scale. On this issue, claimants who were not found eligible are again less satisfied. Their overall satisfaction rating of 3.7 is well below the 4.4 level of eligible claimants.

Exhibit 10: Satisfaction with Inquiry Resolution
All Respondents

	Extremely Satisfied			Extremely Dissatisfied		Mean
	5	4	3	2	1	
Promptness with which questions were answered	57%	22	13	4	4	4.2

Question 11c in Appendix A

How should the persistent difference between eligible and non-eligible claimants be interpreted? Do ineligible claimants *really* find forms harder to complete or booklets significantly less clear? Perhaps. It may be that those who are less skilled at handling the system’s mechanics are less likely to be successful (i.e., eligible). But more likely, each claimant’s overall personal experience colors their view of all parts of the system. Readers should remember, throughout this report, that responses to individual questions reflect the claimants’ reaction both to the particular issue about which they are being asked and the broader context in which they encountered that issue.

Eligibility Determination

This chapter continues with a look at the claimants’ perception of the rules governing the critical eligibility decision. The vast majority (80%) of claimants feel the laws and policies for determining eligibility are fair. However, the level of agreement varies considerably depending on whether or not claimants are determined eligible for benefits. The majority of eligible claimants (85%) feel the laws and policies are fair; only 14% feel they are not fair. By contrast, almost half (45%) of the claimants who are not eligible for benefits assert that the laws and policies determining eligibility are not fair.

Exhibit 11: Fairness of Eligibility Laws and Policies
By Eligibility Status

Statement: The laws and policies deciding eligibility are fair	Eligible n = 2,354	Not Eligible n = 580	Total n = 2,934
Strongly Agree	44%	20%	40%
Somewhat Agree	41	34	40
Somewhat Disagree	8	19	10
Strongly Disagree	6	27	10

Question 40e in Appendix A

It may be worth noting that, even among those who are ineligible, only about one in four “strongly disagree” with the fairness of the policies that lead to the determination.

Benefit Payments

The core service of the Unemployment Insurance system is the provision of financial support until temporarily unemployed individuals can return to work. This support takes the form of weekly benefit payments. Our review of customers’ satisfaction with benefit payments covers three issues: the dollar amount of benefits, the period of time during which benefits may be paid, and the promptness of payment. Earlier sections of the report have already discussed claimants’ views on the procedures to determine who is considered eligible for benefits.

Fairness of Benefit Amounts

Most respondents (75%) feel the amount of benefits they receive is fair and reasonable. More than three out of four eligible claimants (78%) agree the amount is fair and reasonable; only 22% say they are not fair. Though still a majority, a smaller proportion (57%) of the ineligible claimants feel benefit levels are fair.

**Exhibit 12: Fairness of Benefit Amounts
By Eligibility Status**

	Eligible n = 2,391	Not Eligible n = 496	Total n = 2,887
Strongly Agree	43%	25%	39%
Somewhat Agree	36	32	35
Somewhat Disagree	10	16	11
Strongly Disagree	11	27	14

Question 40d in Appendix A

Duration of Benefits

While claimants are generally satisfied with benefit levels, they are less pleased with the number of weeks they can receive benefits—58% believe the duration is too short. This remains constant irrespective of whether or not claimants are working at the time of the interview, have exhausted their benefits, or have had problems with their claims.

Timeliness of Payments

Eligible claimants are generally satisfied with the timely arrival of their benefit checks. Nearly three in four (73%) were extremely satisfied, only 3% were extremely dissatisfied, and the average satisfaction score is 4.5 out of 5 possible.

Appeals

Either claimants or the employers against whom a claim is made can request an appeal to review the determination of eligibility. A quota sample was used to select 275 claimants who had an appeal or hearing (9% of the total sample interviews). Interviews with this group of respondents are the base for the analysis of satisfaction with the appeals process.

Before discussing claimants' satisfaction in this area, let us briefly describe some features of their experiences in the appeals process. Sixty-two percent of survey respondents involved in an appeal initiated the process themselves; their former employers filed the remaining 38%. As with other aspects of the Unemployment Insurance system, use of the telephone to conduct business is becoming common. Thirty-eight percent of appeal hearings were conducted by telephone. A lawyer, union representative or other advocate assisted more than

one in ten claimants (11%). Slightly more than half of those who go through the appeals process (54%) win, at least partially.

Exhibit 13: Characteristics of Appeals Experience
All Respondents with Appeals

Who Filed Appeal	
Appeal Filed by Claimant	62%
Filed by Employer	38
How Hearing Conducted	
Telephone	38%
In-Person at the UI office	62
Use of Lawyer or Representative	
Lawyer or Representative Present	11%
Lawyer or Representative NOT Present	89
Outcome of Appeal¹⁰	
Claimant Won the Appeal	52%
Claimant Partially Won the Appeal	2
Claimant Lost the Appeal	44
Appeal Not Yet Decided	2

Questions 13, 14, 15 and 16 in Appendix A

Claimants were asked to rate their satisfaction with aspects of the appeals system. These aspects included the process features (clarity of procedures, understandability of the written decision, and the time required to make a decision), staff performance (their knowledge, helpfulness, and fairness), and the overall appeals experience. For each of these areas, the portion of claimants in the two most satisfied categories hovers around six of ten, with 56% rating their *overall* satisfaction with the appeals process as 4 or 5. Average satisfaction ranges from 3.4 to 3.8, with the lowest scores given to the appeals process as a whole.

Claimants are slightly less satisfied with the appeals process than with the Unemployment Insurance system as a whole. The satisfaction levels here fall below the consistently high ratings claimants give other aspects of the system. However, readers should remember that more than six in ten of these individuals initiated the appeal, indicating they felt there was a problem with their claim; on top of this, almost half lost their appeals. With this many respondents potentially feeling aggrieved, a level of satisfaction averaging above the mid-point of the scale is perhaps higher than some would expect.

¹⁰ Claimants win 47% of the appeals they file themselves, presumably when the initial eligibility decision went against the claimant, denying benefits or providing fewer benefits than the claimant had hoped. When the employer files an appeal, most likely when the agency has already made a decision in the claimant's favor, 67% of the appeal decisions are in the claimant's favor.

Exhibit 14: Satisfaction with the Appeals Process
All Respondents with Appeals

	Extremely Satisfied			Extremely Dissatisfied			Mean
	5	4	3	2	1		
Clarity and ease of understanding the hearing/appeals procedures	42%	17	22	9	11	3.7	
Helpfulness of the hearing examiner during the process	41%	18	17	7	17	3.6	
Fairness of treatment during the hearing	48%	11	13	6	22	3.6	
Knowledge of the hearing examiner	50%	12	17	6	15	3.8	
Clarity and ease of understanding the written decision	48%	18	13	9	13	3.8	
Fairness of the decision	50%	8	10	5	28	3.5	
Length of time it took to reach a decision	40%	16	16	10	17	3.5	
Length of time it took to schedule an appeal	34%	22	19	12	13	3.5	
Overall satisfaction with the appeals process	33%	23	14	11	19	3.4	

Questions 17a through i in Appendix A

Not surprisingly, satisfaction with the appeals process is closely linked to whether or not the claimant prevailed. Those who win are very satisfied with both the overall appeals process and the fairness of the decision. Among those who say they were at least partial winners, 77% are satisfied (4 or 5) with the process, and fully 90% feel the decision was fair. Those who do not win were far less satisfied. Only one-quarter are satisfied with the overall appeals process, and only 14% are very satisfied with the fairness of the decision.

Exhibit 15: Overall Satisfaction with the Appeals Process
By Outcome of Appeal

	Extremely Satisfied			Extremely Dissatisfied			Mean
	5	4	3	2	1		
Won or Partially Won	53%	25	11	7	5	4.1	
Did Not Win	9%	16	18	17	41	2.4	

Question 17i by Question 16 in Appendix A

Exhibit 16: Satisfaction with the Fairness of the Appeals Decision
By Outcome of Appeal

	Extremely Satisfied			Extremely Dissatisfied			Mean
	5	4	3	2	1		
Won Appeal or Partially Won	78%	12	4	2	4	4.6	
Did Not Win	10%	4	16	8	62	1.9	

Question 17f by Question 16 in Appendix A

The larger differences on the fairness question suggest an issue that will be discussed more fully later; to wit, claimant satisfaction is affected more dramatically when the situation becomes personal. Though it may be difficult to prove, this is one of several sets of data from this study that *suggest* claimants are reasonably satisfied with procedures that apply equally to everyone, in this case the appeals process. But when it comes to a particular decision affecting a single individual's situation—in this case, the fairness of the appeals decision on one person's claim—then claimants become more critical and the effects on their satisfaction seem greater.

Appeals and the Overall Level of Satisfaction

Going through the appeals process also affects claimants' *overall* satisfaction with the unemployment insurance experience. Among claimants who had no appeal, 74% rated their overall experience with the UI system as very satisfactory (4 or 5), compared with 57% of those who went through the appeals process and 36% of those who lost an appeal. Overall satisfaction among claimants who win their appeals (4.1 on average) is similar to the 4.0 satisfaction rating of among those who never had an appeal. But claimants who lose their appeals have significantly lower satisfaction (2.9) with their UI experience as a whole.

**Exhibit 17: Overall Satisfaction with UI Experience
By Appeals Experience**

	Extremely Satisfied			Extremely Dissatisfied		Mean
	5	4	3	2	1	
Appeal Experience*						
Claimant Had an Appeal	30%	27	22	9	11	3.6
No Appeal or Hearing	43%	31	17	4	4	4.0
Who Filed Appeal*						
Claimant Filed the Appeal	28%	25	24	10	13	3.5
Employer Filed the Appeal	33%	30	20	9	9	3.7
Outcome of Appeal*						
Won Appeal or Partially Won	44%	28	22	5	1	4.1
Did Not Win	16%	20	23	17	24	2.9

* *t*-tests show significant differences between means at the 95% confidence level.

Question 35 by Questions 12, 13 and 16 in Appendix A

Note: May not total to 100% due to rounding.

Benefit Levels

Once determined eligible for unemployment compensation, claimants begin to receive benefit payments. Benefit levels vary by state and within states, by factors such as prior and current earnings.

Claimants in this study received median weekly benefit payments of \$197. Median weekly benefit levels varied considerably by state with the lowest being \$97 in Puerto Rico and the highest being \$306 in Hawaii. Individual claimants' benefits varied greatly as well, from a low of \$25 dollars to a high of \$374 each week.

Benefit payments are the central service provided by the program. When claimants are asked how important key features of the Unemployment Insurance system are to them, one of the attributes rated the most important is that checks show up when promised. Eighty-four percent of all claimants say that timely checks are extremely important. And, indeed there is high satisfaction with checks arriving when promised, 4.5 out of 5 on average.

Exhibit 18: Timely Arrival of Benefit Payments
Importance vs. Satisfaction

	Importance All Respondents n = 3,004	Satisfaction Eligible Claimants n = 2,361
Mean Rating	4.8	4.5
5 – Extremely Important/Extremely Satisfied	84%	73%
4	10	15
3	5	6
2	1	2
1 – Not at all Important/Extremely Dissatisfied	0	3

Questions 10d and 11d in Appendix A

Filing Continued Claims

In most states, recipients of unemployment compensation are required to file a continued claim every week or every two weeks as a condition of receiving benefits. Through this process they certify that they are able and available to work, and that they are actively seeking employment. They also provide information on any current earnings. The information may be submitted in-person at the UI office, by mail, over the telephone, or through their former employer.

Exhibit 19: Method of Filing Continued Claims
Eligible Claimants Only

Telephone	47%
Mail	36
In-person	14
Employer files the claim	2

Question 23 in Appendix A

The substantial use of telephone filing demonstrates a transition in the organization of unemployment benefit systems that was occurring at the time of the study. Remember that, at the start of the study, states were considered “telephone-filing states” if at least 5% of new initial claims or 10% of continuing claims were filed by telephone. At that time, a low threshold was required if we were to find an adequate number of states with claimants filing via telephone.

Satisfaction by Type of Filing Method

In general, claimants are highly satisfied with the Unemployment Insurance system, irrespective of the method they use for continued claims filing. It does not appear that changing the filing approach substantially diminishes satisfaction, an encouraging finding given the trend that has seen many states moving from in-person to telephone filing methods.

**Exhibit 20: Overall Satisfaction with UI Experience
By Method of Filing Continued Claims**

	Extremely Satisfied			Extremely Dissatisfied		Mean
	5	4	3	2	1	
In-Person	46%	29	18	5	3	4.1
Mail	49%	29	14	4	3	4.2
Telephone	45%	35	15	3	2	4.2

Questions 35 by Question 23 in Appendix A

On-Going Claimant Contact with the UI System

In addition to filing continued claims, two-thirds of eligible claimants visit local unemployment insurance offices for other reasons. Almost as many call the office.

**Exhibit 21: On-Going Claimant Contact with the UI System
Eligible Claimants with Continued Claims**

	In-Person Visits	Telephone Calls
Percent with at least one contact	65%	57%
Number of Contacts		
Average contacts per claimant	3.2	4.1
Median contacts per claimant	2.0	1.0
Length of Visit (Claimant Estimates)		
Average time spent on visit (minutes)	50	NA
Median time spent on visit (minutes)	30	NA
Average time until seen by staff (minutes)	23	NA
Median time until seen by staff (minutes)	10	NA

Questions 18, 20, 21 and 22 by Question 23 in Appendix A

NA = Not Applicable

Most of the in-person contacts are made for the purpose of reemployment assistance: seeking job training, looking up job postings, or getting job search assistance. These are the most common reasons for telephone contacts as well, but a greater portion of telephone contacts are to seek information about a claim: checking on the status of benefits, tracking a late check and the like. It is clear that when claimants are asked about their satisfaction with local office contacts, they are reacting to more than just routine contacts to file continued claims.

**Exhibit 22: Reasons for Contacting the UI Office
In Addition to Filing Continued Claims**

Reason for Contact*	In-Person Visits	Telephone Calls
Get information on job postings	25%	14%
Get assistance looking for work	17	11
Report results from job search efforts	17	10
Check on the status of benefits	15	21
Get help arranging for job training	9	6
Open or reopen a claim	6	9
Arrange an appeals hearing	3	4
Update name or address	1	2
Employment review	2	0
Find out why check was late	1	9
Get training on resume writing/using computers	1	0
Inform agency claimant had a job	**	8
Get tax information	0	2
Miscellaneous	3	4

*Based on total calls or visits. Multiple responses accepted.

**Less than 0.5% mention.

Satisfaction with Automated Voice Response

Forty-five percent of eligible claimants who called their state’s unemployment insurance office encountered an automated voice response system on at least one occasion. In general, these claimants were quite satisfied with the automated voice response system. They were especially pleased with the ease and speed with which they filed continued claims. More than eight out of ten claimants rate their satisfaction with continued claims filing using automated telephone systems in the two highest categories (4 and 5).¹¹

Claimants are substantially less satisfied with their ability to get answers to questions through a voice response system. One quarter of the respondents rate their satisfaction in the two lowest categories

¹¹ The questions about automated response systems were asked only of a group of claimants who used the telephone often—filing continued claims by telephone, calling for other reasons as well, and encountering an automated voice response system on at least one of those calls.

(1 and 2). This is another area where satisfaction is at least slightly lower when claimants step outside the Unemployment Insurance system routines, and seek assistance unique to their claim.

**Exhibit 23: Satisfaction with Automated Voice Response
Among Frequent Telephone Users**

	Extremely Satisfied			Extremely Dissatisfied		Mean
	5	4	3	2	1	
Ease of use/initial claim	47%	31	13	2	6	4.1
Ease of use/continued claims	69%	17	8	3	3	4.5
Time to file continued claims	60%	22	9	5	4	4.3
Ease for general inquiries	35%	20	20	11	13	3.5

Question 26a through d in Appendix A

Note: Figures based on 460 frequent telephone users (see Footnote 11 on previous page).

Staff Performance

Staff of UI offices are the personification of the system. In an era of greater automation, many claimants interact with this system through telephone or computer. There are ever fewer staff for them to see, but those staff make the system human. Claimants are generally satisfied with the information and service they receive by telephone, through written materials, or by computer. However, direct human contact may be needed to solve non-routine problems and to put forth a caring face on the Unemployment Insurance program.

The quality of staff and the service they provide are a common focus of state efforts to measure unemployment insurance customer satisfaction. Thus, this study's questionnaire included a set of questions on this issue. These issues include the staff's concern for claimants, their abilities, and their fairness.

Claimants are very satisfied with UI staff. On every measure of staff performance, average claimant satisfaction is at or above their overall satisfaction level for unemployment insurance as a whole: 4.0 on a scale going to 5.

There were considerable differences depending on whether or not claimants were eligible for benefits. Whether talking about the staff's concern, assistance, efficiency, knowledge, fairness or courtesy, the eligible claimants typically gave ratings well above 4.0 on the 5-point scale of satisfaction. Claimants who were not eligible for benefits typically gave ratings no higher than 4.0 and mostly below that level.

**Exhibit 24: Satisfaction with Staff Performance
By Eligibility Status**

	Eligible	Not Eligible	Total
Concern shown by staff for claimant's situation	4.1	3.4	4.0
Help provided to complete filing process	4.4	3.8	4.3
Staff efficiency in doing their jobs	4.3	3.8	4.2
Staff knowledge of laws and policies	4.4	3.8	4.3
Staff fairness	4.5	3.7	4.3
Respect and courtesy shown by staff	4.4	4.0	4.3

Question 28a through f in Appendix A

Note: Figures above are mean ratings based on a 5-point scale in which 5 equals extremely satisfied and 1 equals extremely dissatisfied.

Both groups give their lowest ratings of staff performance when asked about the concern unemployment insurance personnel show for a claimant's unique situation. Claimants find staff to be efficient, knowledgeable and fair, but they are slightly less happy with their ability to apply this skill to each claimant's unique needs.

Timeliness of Service

The popular stereotype of the Unemployment Insurance system has been one of a time-consuming process: long waits, in long lines, for very little service. Claimants interviewed in this study do not confirm this stereotype.

Respondents were asked a number of questions about the timeliness of services in the UI system. These questions covered initial filing, eligibility determination, telephone calls, office visits, and payments. Each of these is discussed separately below.

Eligibility Determination

Claimants are generally satisfied with the length of time it takes to be informed of the results of eligibility determinations; 76% judge it about the right length of time. However, there is a sense of urgency among people who are recently unemployed, with one of every five indicating the determination process that triggers their benefits takes too long or much too long. Two in five (39%) of those who thought the wait was too long told interviewers they had problems with their claims.

Telephone Calls

When claimants call the unemployment office, most (81%) find the call to last about the right length of time. They are satisfied with the time they have to wait until they get through to a staff person, the time it takes to get to someone who can help them, and the total time spent on the telephone. A potential problem can be seen in the fact that almost a quarter of claimants who call the office feel they have to wait too long or much too long before they get to a staff person who can help them.

Exhibit 25: Duration of Typical Telephone Call
Respondents Who Called the Office

	Time Until Staff Spoke with You n = 1,918	Time to Get to Staff Who Could Help n = 2,840	Total Time of Typical Call n = 1,981
Much Too Long	5%	5%	3%
Too Long	17	19	11
About Right	75	72	81
Too Short	3	3	5

Questions 27e, g and f in Appendix A

Office Visits

Typically, when they visit the office, claimants wait ten minutes to be seen by staff members and spend 30 minutes in the office altogether. However, there is considerable variation and longer waits do happen. While 54% of claimants spend a half-hour or less at the office, 18% report that they spend more than an hour. Claimants in three states in the study report average waits of roughly one half-hour to an hour just to receive in-person assistance. In five states, claimants report visits lasting more than 50 minutes on average.

Exhibit 26: Duration of In-Person Visits
Respondents Who Visited the Office

Claimant Estimates	Time Waiting for Staff Member n = 1,837	Total Time Spent in Office n = 1,938
5 minutes or less	35%	6%
6 - 10 minutes	16	7
11 - 20 minutes	21	18
21 - 30 minutes	11	23
31 - 45 minutes	5	9
46 - 60 minutes	6	19
More than 60 minutes	6	18

Questions 21 and 20 in Appendix A

Despite occasional long waits, claimants are generally quite satisfied with the length of time spent in office visits:

- 71% say the length of time they have to wait to be seen by a staff person is about the right length.
- 83% feel the time staff members spend with them is reasonable.
- 73% feel the total length of an office visit is about right.
- Only 5% of claimants visiting the office find the wait to speak to a person much too long.

Although the typical claimant finds the time they spent in the office to be reasonable, there are sizable groups who are less satisfied. Approximately a quarter find both the wait and the total time at the office to be too long (although very few find it much too long). By contrast, 13% of the claimants do not feel they get enough time with staff.

Exhibit 27: Assessment of Time Spent in a Typical Visit
All Respondents

	Time Waiting n = 2,598	Time with Staff n = 2,902	Total Time n = 2,609
Much Too Long	5%	1%	5%
Too Long	21	4	19
About Right	71	83	73
Too Short	3	13	3

Questions 27c, b and d in Appendix A

Work-Related Assistance

Although its primary service to most claimants is the provision of benefits, the Unemployment Insurance system ultimately expects claimants to return to work. A variety of services are available in the workforce development system to assist them with this transition. Not all the services are offered directly by the staff. But through the state agency as a whole, and through partner agencies, claimants can obtain access to job search assistance, job training, and listings of job opportunities.

Job Search Assistance

It has always been a goal of the Unemployment Insurance system to get claimants back to work and the system is increasingly emphasizing the need to assist claimants during this process. This section looks at three aspects of that assistance:

- Preparation and search for work
- Referral to job training
- The requirement that claimants actively seek work while receiving benefits

One-third of claimants (33%) receive help to look for a job or to prepare them to look for a job while they were receiving benefits. Among respondents who were provided job search assistance, 88% find it at least somewhat helpful, and half of those who had no problems with their claims rate the assistance very helpful.

Exhibit 28: Helpfulness of Job Search Assistance¹²
By Problem with Claim

	No Claim Problem n = 863	Claim Problem n = 138	Total n = 1,001
Very Helpful	50%	28%	47%
Somewhat Helpful	40	46	41
Not Too Helpful	7	15	8
Not At All Helpful	3	10	4

Question 30 by Question 6 in Appendix A

Two-thirds (66%) of claimants were working for pay at the time of the interview. Of these, 60% found jobs before exhausting their unemployment insurance benefits.

Even though many claimants are working and find the state agency’s support helpful in the reemployment process, only 4% of employed claimants were referred to their current jobs by the state agency. They truly appreciate the assistance, but very few got their current jobs as a result of that assistance. This may not be entirely surprising since much of the job search assistance provided is training on how to look for work rather than referrals to specific jobs.

¹² The survey question asks claimants about help they received with both the preparation to look for work and the actual job search.

Referrals to Job Training

One-sixth (16%) of all claimants reported that their unemployment insurance office referred them to a job training program. Almost one-third of those referred (29%) actually enrolled in such a program based on that referral.

The vast majority (83%) of respondents who were referred to job training found the assistance helpful. Almost half (49%) of those who had no problems with their claims rated the assistance very helpful.

Exhibit 29: Helpfulness of State Agency with Job Training Referrals
By Problem with Claim

	No Claim Problem n = 404	Claim Problem n = 59	Total n = 463
Very Helpful	49%	32%	47%
Somewhat Helpful	37	32	36
Not Too Helpful	6	22	8
Not At All Helpful	7	14	8

Question 32 in Appendix A

Again, the levels of satisfaction do not appear to be tied directly to concrete results. Eighty percent of those referred to job training agree that the referral was helpful, even though less than a third of them actually made it into training.

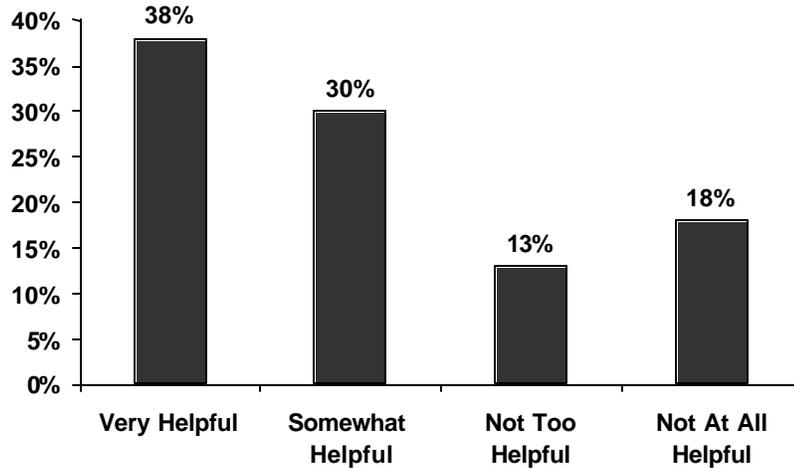
Helpfulness of Job Search Requirement

An apparently onerous requirement on the receipt of unemployment compensation is that most claimants must continue to look for work while receiving benefits. Despite the apparent constraints that this requirement places on claimants, most seem to support it. Almost all respondents (93%) feel that the requirement that they look for work while receiving benefits is a good idea.

Two-thirds (69%) feel that the job search requirement is helpful in increasing their chances of finding a good job. This is true whether or not claimants had problems with their claims or were working at the time of the interview. This rose to 84% if the UI office helped with their job search.

Exhibit 30: Helpfulness of Job Search Requirement in Finding Jobs

All Respondents



Question 34 in Appendix A

Summary

The review of satisfaction presented here began with the initial filing of a claim for unemployment compensation. It then moved step-by-step through the claims process, culminating in the assistance claimants received as they sought their next job.

At every stage in the process, most claimants were highly satisfied and found the staff, procedures and requirements helpful. This should be the dominant and lasting finding of this chapter, and indeed the entire study. Most customers are satisfied with the Unemployment Insurance system.

Claimants tend to be even more satisfied with individual features of the system than they are with their experience overall. Perhaps each person finds a problem somewhere to erode their overall satisfaction slightly.

There are times when claimants are substantially less enthusiastic about the workings of the program. Most prominently, individuals are far less satisfied when they fail to receive the benefits they expect, either as a result of an initial determination or a later appeal. However, there are many individuals who are satisfied with procedures, rules and staff, even when they are not eligible for benefits.

To a lesser degree, claimants find themselves less satisfied when they require the system to provide them with assistance outside its normal routines; for example, when they want staff to spend more in-person time to provide assistance, when they try to get a question answered by telephone, or when they need staff to be concerned with the unique circumstances of their claim.

Program administrators seeking ways to improve satisfaction with the Unemployment Insurance program can perhaps start by mollifying ineligible claimants, and by finding ways to better serve them and others who express higher levels of dissatisfaction. The next chapter looks in more detail at some of the issues that have begun to arise in this chapter; issues about factors that are associated with differing levels of satisfaction. This more detailed examination may help policy makers identify levers for future program improvement.

Chapter Three: Correlates of Satisfaction

This chapter examines factors that influence the relative satisfaction of claimants. Most of the individuals interviewed in this study were quite satisfied with their experiences in the Unemployment Insurance system, so this analysis focuses on those who are most satisfied and those who are least satisfied. The objective of the analysis is to identify those aspects of the system that provide leverage points where Unemployment Insurance administrators can concentrate their efforts to increase satisfaction even further.

The primary focus of the chapter is to examine whether any of the following three factors are related to claimants' overall satisfaction with the system:

- The individual characteristics and the earnings history claimants bring with them when they file a claim.
- Characteristics of individual claims, some that have been touched upon earlier such as eligibility and the presence of problems, as well as others such as benefit level.
- Satisfaction with individual components of the Unemployment Insurance system.

The discussion of these factors may, at times, lead to a search for areas of dissatisfaction. However, discussions of lower satisfaction should not preclude or overshadow the broader finding that the overall level of approval remains high for the Unemployment Insurance system as a whole.

Demographic Factors and Overall Satisfaction

As shown in Exhibit 31 on the following page, there are few large differences in overall satisfaction with the Unemployment Insurance system among groups with different characteristics. Only age emerges as a significant demographic factor, with older claimants more satisfied than younger ones.¹³

This finding has two important implications. First, on the basis of satisfaction alone, no groups seem to feel they are being treated less favorably than others. Second, differences in satisfaction appear to be related more to what happens to claimants once they apply than who they are when they come to the program.

¹³ There are statistically significant differences between groups on the race/ethnicity and base period earnings variables, but the actual differences are quite small.

**Exhibit 31: Overall Satisfaction with UI Experience
By Age, Gender, Race, and Base Period Earnings**

Characteristic	Eligible n = 2,413	Not Eligible n = 591	Total n = 3,004
Age*			
18 to 24	3.9	3.4	3.8
25 to 34	4.1	3.3	3.9
35 to 44	4.1	3.3	4.0
45 to 54	4.2	3.4	4.1
55 to 64	4.5	3.3	4.3
65 or older	4.5	3.9	4.4
Gender			
Male	4.1	3.3	4.0
Female	4.2	3.4	4.0
Race/Ethnicity*			
White	4.2	3.4	4.0
African-American	4.1	3.3	3.9
Hispanic	4.1	3.1	3.9
Asian/Pacific Islander	4.2	3.7	4.1
Native American/Alaskan	4.2	3.0	3.9
Other/Combined	4.2	3.0	3.9
Base Period Earnings*			
None	Not applicable	3.3	3.3
Less than \$5,000	4.2	3.5	3.9
\$5,000 to \$9,999	4.2	3.3	4.0
\$10,000 to \$19,999	4.2	3.2	4.0
\$20,000 to \$34,999	4.1	3.4	4.0
\$35,000 or more	4.1	3.3	4.0

Question 35 in Appendix A

**t-tests show significant differences between means at the 95% confidence level. The differences are significant for the total population on all three variables, and for the eligible population on age and race/ethnicity.*

***Other includes respondents from Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, and Other/combined ethnic backgrounds.*

Means based on a 5-point scale in which 5 equals extremely satisfied and 1 equals extremely dissatisfied.

Characteristics of Individual Claims and Overall Satisfaction

Several aspects of claims and work history are strongly related to overall satisfaction. As noted earlier, claimants are more satisfied with their overall unemployment insurance experience when they are eligible for benefits, and when they moved smoothly through their claim with no problems. In addition, they are more satisfied if they were separated from their last job due to layoffs.¹⁴

As noted in Chapter One, eligible claimants rate their overall satisfaction almost a full rating point higher than claimants who were determined ineligible for benefits (4.2 vs. 3.3). The difference is even a bit larger (1.1 rating points) when comparing claimants who did not have problems during their claim periods with those who did (4.2 vs. 3.1).

**Exhibit 32: Overall Satisfaction with UI Experience
By Characteristics of Individual Claims**

	Mean Rating
All Respondents	4.0
Eligibility*	
Not Eligible	3.3
Eligible	4.2
Problems with Claim*	
Problems During Claim	3.1
No Problem During Claim	4.2
Reason for Job Separation*	
Quit Last Job	3.6
Fired from Last Job	3.7
Left Job for Lack of Work	4.1

Questions 35, 4 and 7 in Appendix A. Separation reason is from state data.

**Differences are significant at the 95% confidence level.*

Means are based on a 5-point scale in which 5 equals extremely satisfied and 1 equals extremely dissatisfied.

It should be noted that, for these factors, even the least satisfied groups of claimants rate their overall satisfaction above the mid-point of 3.0 on the 5-point scale.

These issues—changing the way eligibility is determined or explained to the claimant, dealing effectively with problems claimants identify during their claim—are slightly more amenable to policy intervention than factors such as personal characteristics.. However, the policy

¹⁴ A claimant's answers on these three factors is related, but they also provide somewhat different pictures of how to identify claimants who are likely to be dissatisfied.

fixes, especially to change the eligibility determination process, may not be practical to address in the short run.

Since the presence or absence of problems is a key factor associated with claimant satisfaction, it is probably worthwhile to say more about claimants' level of satisfaction and type of problems they encounter.

Overall Satisfaction and Problems During the Claim Period

Claimants who had no problems are highly satisfied with the UI system overall; almost half (47%) are extremely satisfied, and only 2% are extremely dissatisfied. Claimants who felt they experienced a problem are markedly less pleased with their overall unemployment insurance experience. On a proportional basis, fewer than half as many (18%) were extremely satisfied, and almost ten times as many (19%) were extremely dissatisfied.

**Exhibit 33: Overall Satisfaction with UI Experience
By Problems with Claims**

	No Problem n = 2,481	Problem n = 523	Total n = 3,004
Mean Rating	4.2	3.1	4.0
5 - Extremely Satisfied	47%	18%	42%
4	32	23	31
3	15	28	18
2	4	12	5
1 - Extremely Dissatisfied	2	19	5

Questions 35 by Question 7 in Appendix A

Note: May not total 100% due to rounding.

These feelings are consistent with anecdotal information obtained as part of the survey design phase, during claimant focus groups and in e-mail messages received from claimants. In general practice, it seems that most claimants are satisfied with the system. But those who are displeased tend to be extremely so. Therefore, one individual with a problem can demand far more time and effort than do several problem-free customers.

Approximately one in six claimants (17%) had at least one problem during the claim period. About half of those problems are rooted in disputes or confusion over eligibility. However, there is a considerable proportion of complaints unrelated to eligibility. Among individuals who say they had problems:

- 34% of problems focus on eligibility issues only
- 16% concern both eligibility and other issues
- 49% pertain to issues other than eligibility

Although the number of claimants citing some type of concern over their claim is comparatively small, the range of individual problems is quite large. The nature and prevalence of different kinds of difficulties is shown below, beginning with those noted most frequently.

Exhibit 34: Problems with Claims
All Respondents with Problems

Employer said the claimant did not meet non-monetary requirements*	27%
Employer said the claimant had insufficient earnings for eligibility*	19
Claimants were not paid the amount of benefits they thought they were owed	16
The staff did not listen to the claimants' side of the story	12
The process was unfair	10
It took too long to get the first check	8
Wages were not on the computer when the claim was filed*	7
Other checks arrived late	6
The process was demeaning	5
Written information was hard to understand	4
Lines at the office were too long	4
The agency sought to recover money after benefits were paid	3
Took too long to get through when calling on the telephone	2
Had to travel too far to get to office	2
Claimant had trouble filling out forms correctly	2
Required claimants to go to workshops that were not wanted	1
Could not find telephone number	1
Office told claimant he/she was eligible then decided he/she was not*	1

Question 7 in Appendix A

Figures based on 511 respondents who mentioned a problem of some sort. 106, or 21%, of the problems were miscellaneous issues that did not fit in the categories used here.

**These items are related to eligibility. Percentages on these items will not correspond exactly to the percent with eligibility problems listed previously, since claimants were able to offer multiple problems.*

Overall Satisfaction and Benefit Levels

The signature service claimants receive from the Unemployment Insurance system is the receipt of benefit payments. It would not be surprising then if claimant's satisfaction with the program were closely tied to the amount of benefits they receive each week. In general, however, it is not. Satisfaction levels remain largely the same no matter the level of benefits paid to the claimant each week. This section examines benefit levels using three indicators of benefit levels.

The first measure of benefit levels is an indicator of the relative generosity of state benefit levels that was used when selecting states for the study. This indicator segregated states into groups based upon two factors. The first factor was scope of coverage of the UI system, i.e., the percentage of all unemployed persons who were covered by unemployment insurance. The second factor in the indicator of generosity was the wage replacement ratio, i.e., the level of benefits relative to the average wage in the state. Because this indicator captured two aspects of benefit level, its relation to overall satisfaction is presented here.

Remember that this measure is less an indicator of actual benefits than of differences in the broad environment set by unemployment insurance rules. Being in a “high benefit level” state does not necessarily affect an individual’s benefits.

As shown in Exhibit 35, there is virtually no difference in satisfaction between claimants from each group of states. Across the board, the majority are satisfied with their overall experience and average scores are favorable at 4.0.

Exhibit 35: Overall Satisfaction with UI Experience
Benefit Measure 1: Indicator of State Benefit Levels

	High Benefit Level n = 939	Mid Benefit Level n = 1,124	Low Benefit Level n = 941	Total n = 3,004
Mean Rating	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
5 – Extremely Satisfied	42%	40%	44%	42%
4	32	32	28	31
3	16	18	19	18
2	5	6	4	5
1 – Extremely Dissatisfied	5	5	5	5

Question 35 in Appendix A

The second indicator of benefit level is the weekly benefit amount each claimant receives. As noted in an earlier section, weekly compensation for eligible claimants interviewed for this study ranged from \$25 through \$374 per week. The differences in what claimants receive from the system, in terms of cash value, vary enough that they could be expected to affect satisfaction. However, as shown in the table below, overall satisfaction scores remain constant regardless of the benefit amount that claimants receive.

Exhibit 36: Overall Satisfaction with UI Experience
By Benefit Measure 2: Actual Weekly Benefit Amount Paid to Eligible Claimants

	Extremely Satisfied			Extremely Dissatisfied		Mean
	5	4	3	2	1	
Less than \$100	51%	28	15	4	3	4.2
\$100 to \$149	47%	32	16	2	4	4.2
\$150 to \$199	47%	32	14	4	2	4.2
\$200 to \$249	46%	31	16	4	3	4.1
\$250 or more	45%	34	15	4	2	4.2

Question 35 in Appendix A

In addition, claimants' views of how fair the system is regarding benefit decisions do not appear linked to the level of benefits they receive.

Exhibit 37: Satisfaction with Fairness of Benefit Decisions
By Benefit Measure 2: Actual Weekly Benefit Amount Paid to Eligible Claimants

	Extremely Satisfied			Extremely Dissatisfied		
	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
Less than \$100	67%	16	9	2	5	4.4
\$100 to \$149	67%	16	8	3	6	4.4
\$150 to \$199	70%	14	8	4	4	4.4
\$200 to \$249	68%	18	7	2	5	4.4
\$250 or more	68%	17	9	3	3	4.4

Question 11e in Appendix A

The third measure of benefit levels that was examined is the claimant's relative benefit level compared to others in the same state. Since states vary considerably in the level of benefits they pay, the benefit level may be an indicator of other state-associated factors. In order to control for state-to-state differences, a third indicator was created. Claimants within each state were divided into a low benefit group and a high benefit group. The low benefit group includes all eligible claimants who receive benefits that are *less than* two-thirds of the maximum paid to any claimant in their state. Similarly, the high benefit level group includes eligible claimants who receive benefits of *more than* two-thirds of the maximum paid in their state.

The lower and higher benefit groups are almost identical in their overall attitudes toward their UI experiences. In addition, with this third indicator, there is no difference between satisfaction with the fairness of benefit decisions by the claimant's benefit level.

Exhibit 38: Overall Satisfaction with UI Experience
By Benefit Measure 3: Relative Benefit Level
Eligible Claimants Only

	Lower Benefits n = 883	Higher Benefits n = 1,518	Total Eligible n = 2,413
Mean Rating	4.2	4.2	4.2
5 – Extremely Satisfied	47%	46%	47%
4	32	32	32
3	15	15	15
2	3	4	4
1 – Extremely Dissatisfied	3	2	2

Question 35 in Appendix A

Because benefit payments are so central to the Unemployment Insurance program, we have spent considerable time examining the relationship of benefits levels to satisfaction outcomes. In summary, across all three indicators, there are no differences in satisfaction with the unemployment insurance experience as a whole or in the perceived fairness of decisions made about benefits.

Benefit Payment Status

Those receiving benefit payments at the time of the interview were somewhat more satisfied with the system overall than were claimants who were not receiving payments.¹⁵ Those not receiving payments include those who were either determined not eligible, had found jobs, or had exhausted their benefits.

Exhibit 39: Overall Satisfaction with UI Experience
 Eligible Claimants Currently Receiving Benefits Vs. Those Not Receiving Benefits

	Currently Receiving n = 1,354	Not Currently Receiving n = 1,008	Total n = 2,413
Mean Rating	4.2	4.1	4.2
5 – Extremely Satisfied	49%	44%	47%
4	33	31	32
3	13	18	15
2	3	5	4
1 – Extremely Dissatisfied	2	3	2

Question 35 in Appendix A

Satisfaction with Specific Components of the UI System

Most of the discussion thus far has focused primarily on overall levels of satisfaction. But, in reality, claimants do not experience the Unemployment Insurance system as a single whole. They receive a variety of services, from various individuals at different points in time. Sixteen specific aspects of the system were evaluated by respondents and are shown in Exhibit 40. These issues cover the entire scope of the claims process.

¹⁵ The interview did not ask directly whether claimants were currently receiving benefits, but payment status was calculated by combining different pieces of information in the database. Claimants were designated as “currently receiving benefits” if they said they were eligible (Q4), said they had already received a check (Q5), had a benefit amount in state administrative records, and said they have not yet exhausted their benefits (Q38).

Exhibit 40: Satisfaction with Specific Aspects of the UI Experience
All Respondents

	Mean Rating	% Extremely Satisfied
Process-Related Aspects		
Benefit checks arrived when promised*	4.5	73%
The opportunity to file continued claims by telephone	4.5	74
Forms are easy to understand and complete	4.3	56
The opportunity to file initial claims by telephone**	4.3	68
Clarity and ease of understanding information booklet	4.3	58
Clarity of explanation of rights and responsibilities	4.2	55
Promptness with which questions were answered	4.2	57
Fairness of decisions about benefits	4.2	61
Explanation of benefits/services claimant could receive	4.2	54
Ability to meet with staff person if claimant wanted	4.1	54
Staff-Related Aspects		
Help from staff when completing the filing process	4.3	58%
Staff's knowledge of laws and policies	4.3	56
Fairness shown by staff to claimant	4.3	62
Respect and courtesy shown by staff to claimant	4.3	62
Efficiency with which staff did their jobs	4.2	54
Concern staff showed for claimant's situation	4.0	48

*Includes eligible claimants only.

**At the time of the survey, this option was available to claimants in Arizona, California, Kansas, and Oregon only.

Process-related aspects are evaluated in Questions 11a through j in Appendix A.

Staff-related aspects are evaluated in Questions 28a through f in Appendix A.

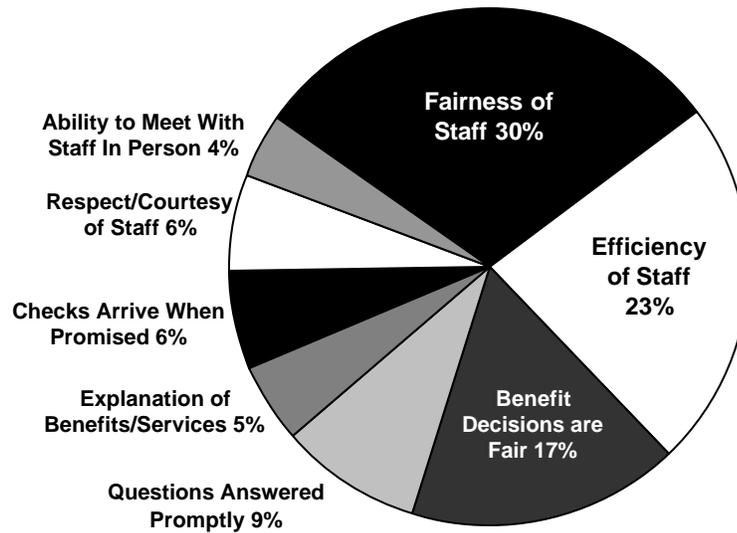
Means are based on a 5-point scale in which 5 equals extremely satisfied and 1 equals extremely dissatisfied.

Claimants are generally satisfied with both process and staff-related aspects of the UI system. Average ratings on all 16 attributes are favorable, ranging from 4.0 to 4.5 on the 5-point scale.

As a group, these items account for much of the variation in claimants' overall satisfaction with the Unemployment Insurance program. A regression analysis was performed to assess the relationship between happiness with individual aspects of the program and overall satisfaction. As shown in the pie chart on the next page, eight attributes¹⁶ emerge from the regression model to explain 58% of the total variance in overall satisfaction.

¹⁶ Three attributes were removed due to multicollinearity: *Concern for claimant's situation*, *Help to complete the filing process*, and *Staff's knowledge of laws and policies*. This is not to say that these items are not important to a claimant's overall satisfaction. As individual variables, these items have a higher correlation with overall satisfaction than some of the items that remain in the model presented in the chart.

Exhibit 41: Contribution of Specific Aspects of the UI Experience to Overall Claimant Satisfaction
All Respondents



It is interesting to note that the regression analysis is consistent with a theme that has been emerging throughout this paper. The individual circumstances of a claimant's experience—as evidenced in items such as getting a check on time, decisions about an individual claimant's benefits, and the respect and courtesy with which they are treated—is more closely linked to overall satisfaction than is the organizations and procedures of the system.

This issue is examined further by looking at the views of those who are most unhappy with their experience with the Unemployment Insurance system. As a group, these claimants stand out in a study where almost everyone says they are satisfied with most features of the system. Looking at this question from the perspective of claimants who are highly dissatisfied overall reveals some differences in the way satisfaction with individual aspects of the system interacts with overall satisfaction. Exhibit 42 lists the average satisfaction scores among those who feel dissatisfied with their overall unemployment insurance experience (292 respondents). These individuals are clearly those who are least satisfied with all specific aspects of the system as well. Their dissatisfaction stands out all the more among the large number of satisfied claimants.

**Exhibit 42: Satisfaction with Specific Aspects of the UI Experience
Among Those Who Are Dissatisfied With the UI System Overall**

Question Text	Mean Rating
Concern staff showed for claimant's situation	2.2
How fairly claimant was treated when decisions were made about benefits	2.4
Fairness shown by staff	2.5
Efficiency with which staff did their jobs	2.7
Promptness with which claimants' questions were answered	2.8
Staff's knowledge of laws and policies	2.9
Help from staff when completing the filing process	2.9
Ability to meet with staff person if claimant wanted	2.9
Respect and courtesy shown by staff	3.0
Clarity of explanation of rights and responsibility	3.1
Explanation of benefits and services claimant could receive	3.2
Benefit checks arrived when promised*	3.4
The opportunity to file initial claims by telephone**	3.5
Clarity and ease of understanding information booklet	3.6
Forms are easy to understand and complete	3.6
The opportunity to file continued claims by telephone	3.7

*Includes eligible claimants only.

**At the time of the survey, this option was available to claimants in Arizona, California, Kansas, and Oregon only.

Questions related to staff performance have been shaded.

Figures shown above are average satisfaction scores based on a 5-point scale in which 5 equals extremely satisfied and 1 equals extremely dissatisfied.

The items at the top of the list, those with the lowest satisfaction ratings, appear to address issues that are particular to each individual's claim. Many of these entail staff intervention in the form of face-to-face contact. The higher-rated items tend to be issues that apply equally to all claimants, such as written materials, forms, and filing methods. These seem to trouble the dissatisfied client less.

Summary

Many factors that logically might be linked to satisfaction are not. Among demographic characteristics of claimants, only age has a substantial association with satisfaction; older claimants are more satisfied. Further, the level of benefits claimants receive are not associated with a claimant's level of satisfaction.

Issues that appear to impact satisfaction are the eligibility determination. In general, claimants who cite problems with their claim are less satisfied whether those problems are related to their eligibility determination or not.

It is certainly unreasonable to expect that all claimants will walk away satisfied with the Unemployment Insurance system. But findings in this chapter suggest that there is room and hope for improvement if

the system is able to focus on the those factors that most affect satisfaction and address claimants' deepest concerns. This may require that the system takes an occasional, and perhaps impractical, step away from standard procedures, and gives the neediest claimants more personal attention.

Chapter Four: Summary and Conclusions

The material presented in this report accomplished the four goals set by the U.S. Department of Labor for the National Unemployment Insurance Claimant Satisfaction Survey.

The first goal of the project was to develop appropriate measures of customer service and customer satisfaction for the joint Federal-State Unemployment Insurance system. This was accomplished in the claimant satisfaction survey presented in Appendix A, which was developed through extensive review of state materials, review by National and Regional Office staff of the Department of Labor, and widespread public review and comment.

The second goal of the project was to provide national baseline measures of customer satisfaction that States could use to assess the results of their own customer satisfaction studies. Numerical results have been presented for each of the baseline measures.

The third goal of the project was to support the Federal role in national program development, oversight of State efforts, and technical assistance for the States. This is accomplished in the remainder of this chapter.

The fourth goal of the project was to recommend best practices in survey design, sample selection, survey procedures, and analysis of customer satisfaction that Federal and State partners can use to improve their own survey efforts. This is accomplished in the material presented in Appendix E.

Summary

The central finding of the survey is that claimants are very satisfied with the Unemployment Insurance system overall and its specific components. In particular:

- Claimants offer a high level of support for key features of the Unemployment Insurance system, including the requirement to regularly look for work, the level of benefit payments, and the fairness of the laws, regulations, and policies determining eligibility for benefits.
- Claimants are highly satisfied with the performance of staff in the Unemployment Insurance system.
- Most claimants feel the time required to complete various activities is about right.
- Claimants are highly satisfied with the information they receive, including forms and booklets, and the promptness with which they can get questions answered.
- Overall satisfaction with the Unemployment Insurance system varies little as a result of differences in demographic characteristics.

- Variation in individual benefit levels does not appear to be linked to claimant satisfaction.

Satisfaction is not entirely unmixed, however, and factors related to claims history significantly affect overall satisfaction.

- Not surprisingly, the outcome of eligibility determination makes a significant difference. Claimants who are determined eligible for benefits are much more satisfied than those who were determined ineligible.
- Claimants who had problems during their claim periods are much less satisfied than those who had no problems.
- Satisfaction with the appeals process is well below the high ratings given to the overall system and most of its components.
- Claimants are also less satisfied with the appeals process if they have to participate in their hearing by phone rather than in-person.
- The small number of claimants who rated automated voice response systems for filing claims are generally quite pleased, although they are much less satisfied with their ability to get answers to questions through voice response systems.

Conclusions: National Program Development

Since the majority of claimants are satisfied with most aspects of the Unemployment Insurance system, national program development efforts might be expected to concentrate on maintaining and enhancing the core features of the program. Beyond this, the survey results suggest where additional effort should be focused to improve claimant satisfaction.

Overall satisfaction varies depending on individual experiences, such as whether or not claimants:

- Can maneuver through eligibility requirements,
- Encounter problems with their claim,
- Attempt to get answers to problems over the telephone, or
- Have individual concerns that are not easily addressed through standard procedures.

These are all factors that can be addressed within the system. Factors that lie fundamentally outside the system are not strongly related to differences in satisfaction. The Unemployment Insurance system, as currently constituted, produces high satisfaction levels for claimants differing in gender, race, ethnicity, and prior earnings.

The characteristics that claimants bring to the system have less impact on their satisfaction than what happens to them after they apply. Unemployment Insurance policy cannot change gender or race, but it can ensure that claimants are given a clear explanation of why

they were determined ineligible, and it can provide readily available mechanisms to address claimant questions and complaints.

Overall satisfaction with the unemployment insurance experience is not uniform across all types of claimants or across those who experience the program in different ways. A review of the sources of dissatisfaction suggests where planning efforts to improve the system might be concentrated:

- Claimants who are found not eligible, either initially or at appeal, are far less satisfied with the program. In particular, those who are not eligible are far less likely to feel they have been treated fairly. It may be worthwhile to examine whether a large, heavily burdened system such as this gives each claimant full and fair consideration. Even where the system has made every reasonable effort to be fair, it can explore whether claimants will be better able to understand that fairness if the process is explained to them more fully or if they are guided more clearly to alternative service options.
- Claimants are most likely to be dissatisfied with the system if they experience problems with their claims. An examination of problems suggests two primary sources of dissatisfaction. The first concerns eligibility, discussed above, but the second class of concerns is a perceived inability to deal with claimants as individuals in a system that often relies on routine practices to efficiently serve claimants. Indeed, the Unemployment Insurance system serves millions, but claimants see primarily their own claims. They appear to be less satisfied when they feel the system is not able to step outside its normal routines to help them find answers to questions and solve their unique needs.
- Concerns over the ability of the Unemployment Insurance system to solve non-routine claimant problems may be highlighted by the trend toward more use of telephone and even computer communication throughout the system. The survey results offer generally encouraging news for those managing this transition. Claimant satisfaction varies very little whether routine tasks, such as filing weekly claim certifications, are done by telephone or some other means. But this does not mean that telephone is the most appropriate form of communication in all circumstances. Claimants appear less satisfied with phone contact when it involves less routine interactions such as answering claimant questions or holding appeal hearings.
- The increasing use of interactive voice response for telephone contacts within the Unemployment Insurance system has the potential to reduce the time and travel burden on claimants. It also may decrease labor, staff travel time, and other costs of operating the program. The system could consider converting some of the cost savings into staff who could help claimants navigate through the claims process, dealing with any unusual

circumstances that arise. This would focus more assistance on those who are the least satisfied.

- Having to wait for service, an old issue, remains a concern. Most claimants find the time they spend in various activities in the Unemployment Insurance system to be about the right length. But those who have to wait too long or do not get enough time with staff are less satisfied. Reducing waits where possible, or perhaps making more productive use of wait time, would address another area of dissatisfaction.

In closing, the cloth of the Unemployment Insurance system appears largely whole when examined in light of claimants' satisfaction. That is not to say that there are not places where the cloth is frayed around the edges. Inevitably, time will be spent examining problems and pondering how those areas can be repaired. This is as it should be. The search for improved quality should not end. But in that search, it should be remembered that we are talking about an Unemployment Insurance system that, on the basis of satisfaction measures, is not in need of major tailoring. Concentrating too heavily on the problem areas may fail to maintain the quality of the core fabric.

Appendix A: UI Claimant Satisfaction Survey

A. May I please speak with (NAME FROM SAMPLE)?

Yes

No (ARRANGE TIME FOR CALL BACK)

Hello, my name is _____ and I'm calling from Bardsley & Neidhart, an independent and confidential research organization. I'm calling on behalf of the U. S. Department of Labor to ask you to help us with a survey of people who have filed claims for unemployment insurance benefits in the past year. I would like to ask you a few questions about how satisfied you are with the services you have received from (STATE AGENCY NAME). The interview will take approximately 15 minutes, and everything you tell me will be held strictly confidential and is for research purposes only. Your unemployment insurance benefits will not be affected in any way by your answers.

B. First, I would like to confirm that you filed an initial claim for unemployment insurance benefits on (DATE FROM SAMPLE DATABASE), is this correct?

Yes (SKIP TO Q1)

No

C. When did you file an initial claim for unemployment insurance benefits?

Matches within 30 days

Does not match within 30 days (INFORM RESPONDENT THAT WE WILL CHECK OUR INFORMATION AND PERHAPS CALL BACK – THANK AND TERMINATE)

Never applied (THANK AND TERMINATE)

1. When you initially filed for unemployment insurance benefits on (DATE FROM SAMPLE DATABASE), how did you first file your claim? Was it ...? (READ LIST)

By coming to the office in-person

By mail (SKIP TO Q4)

By telephone

By computer (SKIP TO Q4)

2. How long did you spend at the unemployment insurance office or on the phone when you filed your claim?

3. **(SKIP TO Q4 IF Q1 NOT FILED IN PERSON)**
How long did you wait before you were helped by a staff member?

4. Were you eligible for unemployment benefits?
Yes
No **(SKIP TO Q6)**

5. Have you received any benefits checks yet?
Yes
No

6. Did you have any problems or issues with your claim?
Yes
No

7. Please describe for me the problems or issues you had with your claim.
(PROBE AND CLARIFY)

8. When you applied for unemployment insurance benefits in **(DATE FROM SAMPLE DATABASE)**, did you have a definite time to return to work at the job you had just left?
Yes
No

9. Had you ever filed a claim for unemployment insurance before **(DATE FROM SAMPLE DATABASE)**?
Yes
No

10. Now I would like to ask you about issues that are sometimes important to people who apply for unemployment insurance benefits. I will list a few issues and ask you to tell me how important they are to you using a five point scale where 1 is not at all important and 5 is extremely important. Remember, I am not asking how satisfied you are; I only want to know how important each of these issues are to you in dealing with the Unemployment Insurance system. How important to you is it that: **(ROTATE LIST)**

Not at all Important				Extremely Important	DK/ REF	
1	2	3	4	5	9	a. Forms are easy to understand and complete
1	2	3	4	5	9	b. Your rights and responsibilities are clearly explained
1	2	3	4	5	9	c. Any questions you have are answered promptly
1	2	3	4	5	9	d. Your benefit checks arriving when promised
1	2	3	4	5	9	e. You are able to meet with staff in person if you want to
1	2	3	4	5	9	f. You have an opportunity to file your <u>initial claim</u> by telephone
1	2	3	4	5	9	g. You have an opportunity to file <u>weekly claims</u> by telephone
1	2	3	4	5	9	h. You are treated fairly when decisions are made about your unemployment insurance benefits
1	2	3	4	5	9	i. Staff are courteous
1	2	3	4	5	9	j. Staff are knowledgeable about laws and policies
1	2	3	4	5	9	k. You receive help finding a job
1	2	3	4	5	9	l. You receive job training
1	2	3	4	5	9	m. The amount of benefits you receive are fair and reasonable

11. Now I would like to know how satisfied you are with the unemployment insurance office in the following areas. Using a five point scale where 1 is extremely dissatisfied and 5 is extremely satisfied, how satisfied are you with... **(ROTATE LIST)**

Extremely Dissatisfied					Extremely Satisfied	DK/ REF	
1	2	3	4	5	9		a. How easy the forms were to understand and complete
1	2	3	4	5	9		b. The clarity of the explanation of your rights and responsibilities
1	2	3	4	5	9		c. The promptness with which your questions were answered
1	2	3	4	5	9		d. Your benefit checks arriving when promised
1	2	3	4	5	9		e. How fairly you were treated when decisions were made about your unemployment insurance benefits
1	2	3	4	5	9		f. (If applicable in State) The opportunity to file <u>initial</u> claims by telephone
1	2	3	4	5	9		g. (If applicable in State) The opportunity to file <u>weekly</u> claims by telephone
1	2	3	4	5	9		h. Clarity and ease of understanding the information booklet
1	2	3	4	5	9		i. Explanation of the benefits and services you could receive
1	2	3	4	5	9		j. The ability to meet with staff in person if you wanted to.

12. At any time after you first filed your claim for unemployment insurance benefits did you have a hearing or appeal about the amount of unemployment insurance benefits you were entitled to receive, or whether you were eligible for unemployment insurance benefits at all?

Yes

No **(SKIP TO Q18)**

13. **(IF RESPONDENT HAD APPEALS AT MORE THAN ONE LEVEL, WE'RE ASKING FOR THEIR VIEWS ON THE COMBINED EXPERIENCE)** Did you file the appeal or was it your past employer who appealed the decision?

Claimant

Employer

14. Was the hearing conducted by telephone or in person?

By telephone

In person

15. Did you have an attorney, union spokesperson or other professional representative help you with the appeal?

Yes

No

16. Was the appeal decided in your favor?

Yes

Partially

No

No decision made yet

17. Now, thinking about your experiences in the hearing and during the appeals process, please tell me how satisfied you were with each of the following. Again using a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being extremely dissatisfied and 5 being extremely satisfied, how satisfied were you with ...?

(ROTATE LIST)

Extremely Dissatisfied					Extremely Satisfied	DK/ REF	
1	2	3	4	5	9		
							a. The clarity and ease of understanding the hearing/appeals procedures
							b. The helpfulness of the hearing examiner during the appeal or hearing process
							c. How fairly you were treated during the hearing
							d. The knowledge of the hearing examiner
							e. The clarity and ease of understanding the written decision (The reasoning for the hearing examiner's decision)
							f. The fairness of the decision
							g. The length of time it took to reach a decision about the appeal after your hearing
							h. The length of time it took to schedule the appeal hearing
							i. The overall appeals process (ALWAYS LAST)

18. Since you first filed your claim, how many times have you visited the unemployment insurance office?

_____ times **(IF 0 TIMES, SKIP TO Q22)**

19. For which, if any, of the following reasons did you visit the office? To ...?
(READ LIST, CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)
- Report the results of your job search efforts
 - Check on the status of your benefits
 - Arrange for an appeals hearing
 - Get help in arranging job training
 - Look at job postings
 - Get assistance looking for work
 - File weekly claims **(DO NOT READ TO THOSE NOT ELIGIBLE FROM Q4)**
 - Other **(SPECIFY)** _____
20. How long did you typically spend at the unemployment insurance office on these visits?
_____ minutes
21. After arriving at the office, how long did you usually wait before you were helped by a staff member?
_____ minutes
- Don't usually see staff person
22. Since you first filed your claim, how many times have you called the unemployment insurance office?
_____ times **(IF 0 TIMES, SKIP TO Q27)**
23. **(SKIP TO Q24 IF NOT ELIGIBLE IN Q4)**
- Typically in your state, unemployment insurance recipients are expected to submit (form) every (#) weeks in order to receive benefits. When you file this certification, how did you usually file your (form)? Was it ...?
(READ LIST)
- By coming to the office in person
 - By mail
 - By telephone

24. Other than to file claims, are there other reasons you might have contacted the unemployment insurance office by telephone? Did you call the office for any of the following reasons? To ...?
(READ LIST, CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

Report the results of your job search efforts

Check on the status of your benefits

Arrange for an appeals hearing

Get help in arranging job training

Get information on job postings

Get assistance looking for work

Get tax information

To change name/address information

To open/reopen a claim

Find out why my check was late/didn't arrive

Inform them that I got a job

Other **(SPECIFY)** _____

No

25. During any of the times you called the office for reasons other than filing a claim, was the phone ever answered by an automated telephone system?

Yes

No **(SKIP TO Q27)**

26. Thinking about your experiences with the automated telephone system, please tell me how satisfied you were with each of the following. Again using a five point scale where 1 is extremely dissatisfied and 5 is extremely satisfied, how satisfied were you with ...? (**ROTATE LIST**)

Extremely Dissatisfied					Extremely Satisfied	DK/ REF	
1	2	3	4	5	9		
							a. The automated telephone system's ease of use to file <u>initial</u> claims (SKIP IF DID NOT FILE INITIAL CLAIM BY PHONE)
							b. The automated telephone system's ease of use to file <u>weekly</u> claims (SKIP IF DID NOT FILE WEEKLY CLAIMS BY PHONE)
							c. The time it took to file your weekly claim using the automated telephone system (SKIP IF DID NOT FILE WEEKLY CLAIMS BY PHONE)
							d. The automated telephone system's ease of use for general questions and inquiries (SKIP IF Q24 IS NO)

27. I am going to mention several activities that are often part of unemployment insurance. Think about the time the different activities typically took. Please tell me whether each was "too short," "about the right length of time," "too long," or "much too long." (**ROTATE LIST**)

Much too long	Too long	About the right length of time	Too Short	DK/ REF	
1	2	3	4	9	
					a. The time it took to let you know if you were eligible for benefits
					b. The time staff spent with you
					c. The time you had to wait before you were able to speak with staff when you visited the office (SKIP FOR THOSE WITHOUT VISITS)
					d. The total time you spent during a typical office visit (SKIP FOR THOSE WITHOUT VISITS)
					e. The time you had to wait before you were able to speak with staff when you called the office (SKIP FOR THOSE WITH NO CALL OR AUTO CALL ONLY)

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 9 | f. The total time you spent during a typical telephone call (SKIP FOR THOSE WITH NO CALL) |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 9 | g. The length of time it took you to get through to a staff person who could help you when you called or visited the local office |

28. Next I want to ask your opinion of the service you received from staff members at the unemployment insurance office. Again using a five point scale where 1 is extremely dissatisfied and 5 is extremely satisfied, how satisfied were you with the ... **(ROTATE LIST)**

- | Extremely
Dissatisfied | | | | | Extremely
Satisfied | |
|---------------------------|---|---|---|---|------------------------|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9 | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9 | a. Concern the staff members showed for your situation |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9 | b. Help from staff members to complete the filing process |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9 | c. Efficiency with which staff members do their jobs |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9 | d. Staff's knowledge of laws and policies |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9 | e. Fairness shown to you |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9 | f. Respect and courtesy staff members showed you |

29. While you were receiving unemployment insurance benefits, did the Unemployment Office help you look for a job or prepare you to look for a job?

Yes

No **(SKIP TO Q31)**

30. Would you say the unemployment system was very helpful, somewhat helpful, not too helpful or not at all helpful in helping you look for a job or preparing you to look for a job?

Very helpful

Somewhat helpful

Not too helpful

Not at all helpful

31. Did the unemployment insurance office refer you to a job training program?

(IF REFERRED BUT DID NOT ATTEND, ENTER 'YES')

Yes

No **(SKIP TO Q34)**

32. How helpful was the **(STATE AGENCY)** with the referral to job training? Would you say they were very helpful, somewhat helpful, not too helpful or not at all helpful?

Very helpful

Somewhat helpful

Not too helpful

Not at all helpful

33. Did you enroll in a job training program based on this referral?

Yes

No

34. As a condition of receiving unemployment insurance benefits in this state, all claimants in this state are required to regularly look for work. Would you say this requirement was very helpful, somewhat helpful, not too helpful or not at all helpful in increasing your chances of finding a good job?

Very helpful

Somewhat helpful

Not too helpful

Not at all helpful

35. Overall, considering everything, how would you rate your satisfaction with your experiences with the Unemployment Insurance system, on a five point scale where 1 is extremely dissatisfied and 5 is extremely satisfied?

Extremely					Extremely	DK/
Dissatisfied					Satisfied	REF
1	2	3	4	5		9

36. Are you currently working for pay?

Yes

No **(SKIP TO Q38)**

37. Did the **(STATE AGENCY)** refer you to this job?

Yes

No

38. Have your unemployment benefits run out?

Yes

No (**SKIP TO Q40**)

39. Did you find a job before your unemployment benefits ran out?

Yes

No

40. We're almost through, I just have a few more questions to get your general impressions about unemployment insurance. I'm going to read you a few statements. As I read each one, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with each. The first one is ...
(ROTATE LIST)

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Don't know Refused	
1	2	3	4	9	a. You are better off than if there had not been an unemployment insurance program
1	2	3	4	9	b. People find a job sooner when they receive unemployment insurance benefits than if they could not receive benefits
1	2	3	4	9	c. People can find a better job when they receive benefits than if they did not receive benefits
1	2	3	4	9	d. The amount of benefits you received were fair and reasonable
1	2	3	4	9	e. The laws, regulations, and policies for deciding who is eligible to receive benefits are fair
1	2	3	4	9	f. The requirement that you look for work while receiving benefits is a good idea
1	2	3	4	9	g. The number of weeks you can receive benefits is too short

VERIFY PHONE NUMBER NOW. END TIME _____

Those are all the questions I have. Thank you very much for your time.

Appendix B: Data Tables

Appendix B is divided into three sections. The first section includes data gathered from the survey instrument. Each table is marked with a corresponding question number for easy referencing with the questionnaire in Appendix A. The second section contains data provided by state UI offices from their claimant databases. The third section identifies points of caution when interpreting the numbers found in these tables.

Data was processed using the SPSS for Windows statistical software package. A table is included for each question asked in the study, with data presented for both the total sample and subsets of the sample (by eligibility, base period earnings, gender, etc.). Each column of data includes results as a percentage, as well as the actual number of responses.

The reader is asked to keep the following in mind when using these tables:

- For all questions, “Don’t know/Refused” responses have been omitted from the tables.
- Percentages may not total to 100% due to rounding.
- Multiple responses were allowed for Question 7, 19, and 24. Therefore, percentages will total to more than 100%.
- For some questions, basic and complex skip patterns were employed, allowing only targeted subsets of claimants to answer certain questions. Skip patterns are identified in the questionnaire found in Appendix A.
- Other notes of caution when interpreting data are included in Section 3 of this Appendix.

Appendix B, Section 3

Data Item Quality

This section alerts readers to those data elements that should be interpreted with caution. Appendix B, as a whole, contains many data elements gathered from state records and claimant responses to a questionnaire. Inevitably in a large survey, some questions provide better data than others will. Wording for some questions is clear to respondents; some are less clear. Some questions ask about obvious features of a system such as Unemployment Insurance; others will seek information on subtler distinctions more easily recognized by program staff than by claimants.

This study was the first systematic attempt to gather national data on the full range of experiences encountered by unemployment insurance claimants. As a first attempt, it may be necessary to interpret data items with more caution than had the questions been well-tested in prior studies.

The number of survey items that had problems is relatively small. However, this appendix presents many results with no narrative to help readers interpret the information. It seems fair to alert readers to any items for which special care should be exercised when interpreting the findings.

There are two types of concerns discussed below. First, the data provided from state unemployment insurance records does not always match the information provided by claimants. Second, some questions were harder for claimants to understand than others.

Differences Between State Records and Survey Responses

All items in Section 1 of this appendix are based on responses to survey questions rather than information from state records. The only exceptions are demographic and claims information used to break out responses by different groups. Items from state records included as banner points are:

- Age
- Race/ethnicity
- Base period earnings
- Gender
- Separation reason
- Benefit level for claimants who said they were eligible

Three items were available from both state sources and claimant responses. These items provided information about whether or not the claimant was eligible for benefits, had an appeal, and their method of filing initial and continued claims. The information in Section 1 of this appendix, and throughout the report, relies on claimants'

responses for these items. All else being equal, state data would normally be considered more accurate, but all else was not equal.

The choice to use the information provided by claimants was made for three reasons:

- 1) There was a chance for information to change between the time the state data was recorded and the interview conducted. Claimants were selected for the study based on their filing of a claim. Some claimants were not at the end of their claim when state data was recorded. And the elapsed time between when data was captured from state records and when the interview took place was sometimes greater than six months. In the lengthy interim, claimants' status could change. For example, a claimant originally determined eligible could now be ineligible as a result of a subsequent appeal decision, a disqualification, or returning to work. Thus, the claimant's recollection provided the most recent information available.
- 2) The three items were often "screeners" for other items. For example, some questions were asked only of claimants who had gone through an appeal hearing. If an interviewer were to ask these questions of an individual who said they had never had an appeal, no matter what state records said, they would risk having the claimant hang up over the disagreement. The study would then lose all information normally captured during the remainder of the questionnaire.
- 3) There were insufficient resources for either researchers or state staff to resolve disputes between claimant recollections and state records, and then re-interview the claimant where necessary. Callbacks that were attempted failed to provide sufficient information to clear up the discrepancy.

There are two implications of the decisions just discussed:

- 1) There is not always agreement between official records and claimants' recollection of whether they were eligible, whether they had an appeal, or whether they filed claims by telephone, mail, or an office visit. Fortunately, most analysis in this report appears relatively robust, regardless of whether state records or claimant responses are used.
- 2) A state study, with more direct access to unemployment insurance records, might be advised to sample claimants for interview as they ended their claim. The records would be relatively recent and could be used to prompt claimants whose recollection was weak. This approach could help states avoid some of the data conflicts experienced in this study.

Issues with Individual Questions

Not all survey questions were equally easy for claimants to answer. We note some items that claimants appear to have found more difficult. Most of these items can still be used for analysis, but you should assume that the information may not be representative of the entire UI population. The table below lists the questions of concern and discusses the nature of the problem. It also provides an assessment of the risk you will assume if you consider the item to be totally accurate. Exact wording of questions can be found in Appendix A.

Question	Discussion	Risk
Q4. Were you eligible for unemployment benefits?	Claimant responses do not always correspond to official records. (See discussion above.)	Low
Q.9 Have you ever filed a claim for unemployment insurance before?	63% of respondents answered yes. This proportion seems high. Claimants, in mid-claim, may interpret activities within this claim as being part of prior claims.	High
<p>Q18: Since you first filed your claim, how many times have you visited the unemployment insurance office?</p> <p>Q23: Typically in your state, unemployment insurance recipients are expected to submit a continued claim every week in order to receive benefits. When you file this certification, how did you usually file your continued claim? Was it by coming to the office in person, by mail, or by telephone?</p>	<p>If a respondent answers “no” to Question 18, then says they came to the office in-person for Q23, there is a discrepancy that is sometimes difficult to clarify with the respondent.</p> <p>Also, if a respondent was temporarily laid off or found a job before they had to fill out their weekly certification, Q23 would not apply to them. There was no “not applicable” code for this circumstance.</p>	Low
<p>Q23: Typically in your state, unemployment insurance recipients are expected to submit a continued claim every week in order to receive benefits. When you filed this certification, how did you usually file your continued claim? Was it by coming to the office in person, by mail, or by telephone?</p>	We did encounter a small number of claimants who said they filed claims by telephone when, in fact, that was not an accepted filing method in the state. It is recommended that single state studies not ask about filing methods that are not relevant in the state.	Low
<p>Q26: Thinking about your experiences with the automated telephone system, please tell me how satisfied you were with each of the following...</p>	This question was asked only of frequent telephone users—claimants who filed a claim by telephone, called the office for other reasons as well, and encountered a voice response system. It is recommended that future studies ask this question of all users of voice response.	Moderate
<p>Q34: As a condition of receiving unemployment insurance benefits in this state, all claimants are required to regularly look for work. Would you say this requirement was very helpful, somewhat helpful, not too helpful, or not at all helpful in increasing your chances of finding a good job?</p>	This question would not apply to respondents who were temporarily laid off from their jobs. We had no “not applicable” category for this item, and it was difficult to get an answer from the respondent when they felt that the question did not apply to them.	Low
<p>Q40a: You are better off than if there had not been an unemployment insurance program. Would you strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, strongly agree.</p>	<p>Respondents had a difficult time understanding this question as it seemed to contain a double negative. It was therefore hard for them to be sure of themselves when they answered.</p> <p>When used in analysis, seems to systematically capture issues not captured by other satisfaction indicators. Those replicating this study are encouraged to use this item, but to ask the question in a more direct manner.</p>	Moderate

Appendix C: Characteristics of Survey Respondents

The sample of interviewed claimants were diverse in both their personal characteristics and prior earnings:

- Slightly more than half of all claimants were male.
- About three-quarters were White (not Hispanic), with more than a quarter falling in other ethnic groups.
- The majority were between 25 and 55 years of age, with the greatest concentration around age 39.
- Base period earnings were relatively low with about one-half of claimants having earnings between \$5,000 and \$20,000, and only 15% greater than \$35,000.
- Slightly more than a third of claimants exhausted their benefits.¹⁷

In general, the characteristics of eligible and non-eligible claimants were similar except for the following differences:

- Males were more likely to be determined eligible than female applicants.
- Older claimants were more likely than younger ones to be eligible.
- Claimants with higher base period earnings were more likely to be eligible for unemployment compensation.

A table summarizing the demographic characteristics and claim history of survey respondents is included on the following page.

¹⁷ Some claimants were still receiving benefits at the time of the interview and may have exhausted benefits later.

Exhibit C-1: Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Characteristic	Eligible	Not Eligible	Total
Gender*			
Male	53%	47%	52%
Female	47	53	48
Race/Ethnicity			
White	74%	70%	73%
African-American	11	14	11
Hispanic	6	6	6
Other	9	10	9
Age*			
18 to 24	10%	14%	11%
25 to 34	25	27	25
35 to 44	29	27	29
45 to 54	22	21	22
55 to 64	12	8	11
65 or older	2	2	2
Median Age	39 years	38 years	39 years
Average Age	40 years	38 years	40 years
Base Period Earnings*			
None	NA	4%	1%
Less than \$5,000	9	22	12
\$5,000 to \$9,999	17	20	18
\$10,000 to \$19,999	31	25	30
\$20,000 to \$34,999	27	19	25
\$35,000 or more	16	10	15
Exhausted Benefits			
Yes	36%	NA	36%
No	64	NA	64

Demographic and claim history data provided by participating states.

**Significant differences exist between Eligible and Not Eligible claimants at the 95% confidence level.*

NA = Not Applicable

Note: May not total to 100% due to rounding.

Differential Response

Each of the 16 states in the study drew a random sample of 4,000 to 6,000 claimants. We assume that these random samples provide a good representation of the overall claimant population in a state. However, when only a portion of the population can be interviewed, it is unlikely that the characteristics of those interviewed will be identical to the entire universe of potential respondents. Differences in demographic characteristics and claimant history are important to identify and analyze, as they may affect satisfaction ratings. Therefore, we dedicate the following section to comparing the characteristics of interviewed claimants to the base state sample of which they are part.¹⁸

Before doing the comparisons we need to offer one clarification. Some data used in the table on the next page comes from a different source than the information presented elsewhere in the report. In other chapters, information on claimants' eligibility and appeals is drawn from responses to the questionnaire. This *self-reported* information is not available for claimants who did not participate in the study, so the table below relies on eligibility and appeals information from official state records. As discussed elsewhere in this paper, each set of data—state records and interview results—has different strengths and weaknesses.

Exhibit D-2 compares information on claimant characteristics from three sources:

- “Original State Data” is information based on the full sample of claimants submitted by the states;
- “Interviewed Sample” information comes only from claimants who completed a questionnaire; and
- “National Data” is information provided by the U.S. Department of Labor on selected characteristics of the entire national base of eligible claimants. The figures in the table represent an average of monthly data from the ETA 203 report on continued claims. The twelve months covered are the same months in which the study sample had filed initial claims.

¹⁸ Interviews were completed with essentially the same number of claimants in each state. For comparability, data from the overall state sample were weighted so each state would contribute an equal amount to the national averages.

Exhibit C-2: Characteristics of Survey Respondents
Comparison of State Data, Interviewed Sample, and National Data

Characteristic	Original State Data*	Interviewed Sample	National Data**
Gender			
Male	58%	52%	58%
Female	42	48	42
Race/Ethnicity			
White	63%	73%	64%
African-American	14	11	15
Hispanic	12	6	14
Asian/Pacific Islander	4	4	1
American Indian/Native	1	1	2
Other/combined	6	4	2
Eligibility			
Eligible	80%	85%	NA
Denied	18	14	NA
Pending	3	1	NA
Had Appeal			
Yes	7%	5%	NA
No	93	95	NA

*Data in this column and the next use the data from state records. This information may differ from information provided by claimants on whether they were eligible. Puerto Rico did not have information available on race/ethnicity, so the percentage of Hispanic individuals is probably too low in columns for both original state data and the interviewed sample.

Appeals data was not available for Hawaii, North Carolina, or Puerto Rico. This may mean that the information was not tracked, was not easily accessible, or was not an applicable item given state law.

** This data represents continuing claims data from the ETA203 report for the months during which claimants for the study filed initial claims.

NA = Data not provided by DOL

Information was available on two demographic categories, gender and race/ethnicity. On both demographic variables, the base state sample is much like the overall national average. But readers should remember that the national data, unlike the other two columns, is based only on eligible claimants.

There are notable demographic differences between survey respondents and the overall claimant population, especially for race/ethnicity. White (non-Hispanic) claimants were interviewed at a far higher rate than other claimant groups. However, in actuality, the White category is not as dominant as it at first appears. Puerto Rico, with presumably a large Hispanic population, was unable to provide information on the race/ethnicity of its claimants.

The demographic differences between the interviewed claimants and the overall claimant population are unlikely to affect the findings on satisfaction. Remember that neither gender nor race/ethnicity were associated with large differences in satisfaction levels.

Two background characteristics were strongly tied to satisfaction levels—eligibility and appeal status. However, the difference between the sample and the larger population on these two items is not large. Remember that there were predetermined quotas on these two variables. Ineligible claimants were capped at 20% of those interviewed and appellants at 9%.

The interviewed sample does appear to include slightly more eligible claimants than the state sample. Given this information, we would first suspect that the satisfaction levels reported in this report are a bit overstated, since eligible claimants are generally more satisfied.

But this over-estimation of satisfaction is small, if present at all. The differences in the proportion of eligibles in the survey and base sample are not large (85% vs. 80%). And, the self-reported ineligibility rate (20%) is identical to the state-reported ineligibility rate for the entire population. In addition, when looking at state-provided data, the interviewed population includes fewer appellants (5% vs. 7%). Since those who went through the appeals process were less likely to be satisfied, their over-representation tends to offset some differences based on eligibility alone.

Appendix D: Survey Design and Procedures

This appendix reviews the survey procedures used in this study and offers recommendations for others who may wish to conduct similar studies in the future. In doing so, it addresses a key objective set by the Department of Labor for this study, to:

“Recommend best practices in survey design, sample selection, survey procedures, and analysis of customer satisfaction that Federal and State partners could use to improve their own survey efforts.”

To some extent, this objective is addressed in the body of the report. By reviewing the findings and their implications, readers can judge where to productively focus future studies they may design.

The discussion that follows offers three sections that build upon those lessons.

- 1) A section entitled Implementing the Survey clarifies the steps that were taken in the design and implementation of this survey. In doing so, it highlights key steps in survey design and constraints that may be faced by future survey designers as they attempt to retrace those steps.
- 2) A second section, entitled Suggestions for Survey Designers and Administrators, shares practical recommendations on lessons that might be learned from this study.
- 3) This appendix concludes with a section entitled, Recommended Issues for Future Claimant Satisfaction Studies.

Implementing the Survey

The discussion that follows walks you through the key research activities upon which this study is built. It begins with the design of the survey instrument then proceeds through sampling activities, fielding the survey, and data issues. This discussion is intended to serve two purposes. It should help readers understand the framework upon which study results are built. It also lays out the practical steps required by a customer satisfaction survey.

Survey Instrument Design

In a customer satisfaction survey, it seemed appropriate to ground the survey design in information provided by the customers who would use its results. Thus, the design process began by collecting information from a broad range of potential users of the survey's eventual findings. The following steps were implemented to gather feedback from end-users:

- Unemployment Insurance administrators in all states were contacted and asked about their practices for acquiring customer satisfaction information.
- 28 states, out of the 52 contacted, indicated that they periodically collect information on customer satisfaction from unemployment insurance claimants. Copies of customer satisfaction surveys and related instruments were obtained from 19 of these states.¹⁹
- Administrators and staff of the national office of the Unemployment Insurance Service were asked to complete a form assessing their priorities regarding issues to be included in the study.
- The Unemployment Insurance Service also reviewed study priorities with representatives from its regional offices.
- Claimants in Florida and Massachusetts were assembled for focus groups where they discussed issues that affected their satisfaction with the Unemployment Insurance system.
- The proposed study design was posted on the Internet and the Unemployment Insurance community was invited to comment by e-mail, telephone, or letter.
- Notice of the study was published in the Federal Register (volume 62, #112, June 11, 1997, pages 31845-31846). The public comment period provided additional opportunity for widespread review.

This process provided a comprehensive overview of the expressed and demonstrated needs of the entire Unemployment Insurance system on issues of claimant satisfaction.

¹⁹ See the Bardsley & Neidhart report, *State Unemployment Insurance Customer Survey Materials*, submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor in August 1998.

In order to address the needs of this diverse audience, the survey instrument was designed to gather information on a broad range of issues. In order to address the concerns of many users, it was decided to cover a broad range of issues, rather than focusing on any single issue to the full depth possible. In addition, wherever possible, information regarding individual demographic characteristics, employment history, education, and UI benefit levels was obtained from state administrative record systems. This left more room in the questionnaire to focus on issues that could only be addressed by claimants.

Further, the Department of Labor requested that the study primarily focus on services and activities that were subject to policy control and not covered in other recent or current studies. The survey therefore addressed, in detail, issues regarding eligibility determination, appeals, claim filing, and aspects of the benefit payment process. Only a limited number of questions about reemployment services were included, as these services are not fully within the control of the unemployment insurance system and were already being examined by other survey efforts.

Sampling Approach

A two-stage sampling process was used to select the claimants who would be interviewed. In Stage 1, a stratified random sample of 16 states was selected. In Stage 2, a random sample of individual claimants was selected within each state.

State unemployment insurance programs are different on a number of environmental and operational characteristics. Two characteristics were selected as stratification variables in state sample selection:

- **The use of telephone to file continued Unemployment Insurance claims.** To control for ease of access to the system, states were divided into two groups based on the percent of claimants filing initial claims by telephone. States were considered telephone-filing states if at least 5% of new initial claims or 10% of continuing claims were filed by telephone.
- **The benefit level that could be expected by unemployed individuals.** To control for the relative value of unemployment compensation benefits, two measures of value were used to stratify states:
 - The first measure was the ratio of the insured unemployed to the total unemployed population. This was an indicator of the portion of unemployed individuals who had potential access to unemployment compensation.
 - The second measure was the wage replacement ratio—the average weekly unemployment insurance benefit amount divided by the average weekly wage for the state.

States scoring above the five-year national average on both measures were placed in the highest benefit level group. Those above the five-year average on only one index were in a middle group. States below the average on both were placed in a third group.

All fifty states, along with Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia, were assigned to one of six groups according to their status on the two dimensions. Within each of the six cells, up to four states were randomly selected for the study with a probability of selection proportional to size as calculated by the number of new initial claims for that state.

Recognizing that it might be difficult for some states to participate, replacement states were identified using similar methods. States were strongly encouraged to participate, but ultimately, participation was voluntary. Several rounds of recruitment were required to identify the final 16 states for the study. Nine states declined to participate. Eight of these states cited the unavailability of programming staff because of the demands of computer system modifications to cope with the Year 2000 problem. The states participating in the study are shown below.

**Exhibit D-1: States Participating in the Study
By Selection Criteria**

Benefit Level	Telephone Filing		Limited Telephone Filing	
	State	Region	State	Region
Highest Level	New Jersey	2	Hawaii	9
	Rhode Island	1	Minnesota	5
	Oregon	10		
Mid-Level	California	9	Illinois	5
	Connecticut	1	Kansas	7
	New York	2		
	North Carolina	4		
Lowest Level	Arizona	9	Indiana	5
	Virginia	3	Puerto Rico	2
	Texas	6		

Each state in the study followed standard procedures to select a sample of claimants who had filed new initial claims between December 1996 and November 1997. Each state then submitted a computer file identifying each claimant in the sample, and providing basic information on demographic characteristics of claimants and the status of each claim. Working with information from these files, an equal size sample of claimants to be interviewed was randomly selected from each state.

This sampling approach achieved the objective of including a group of claimants with sufficiently varied experiences to provide information on *all* key aspects of the unemployment insurance compensation process. As indicated in Exhibit D-2, the study includes claimants from various situational backgrounds:

- Claimants who were determined eligible for benefits and those who were ineligible
- Those who had an appeal or hearing and those who did not
- Those who filed claims by telephone and those who used other means
- Those who took advantage of opportunities to obtain employment-related assistance and those who did not

Exhibit D-2: Characteristics of Survey Respondents

	Number	Percent
Claim Status		
Eligible	2,423	80%
Not Eligible*	594	20
Appeal Status		
Appeal or hearing	275	9%
No appeal*	2,742	91
Method Used to File Continued Claim		
Telephone	1,130	47%
Mail	861	36
In-Person	325	14
Other	68	3
State Agency Provided Job Search Assistance or Referral to Training		
Yes	1,019	44%
No	1,322	56

*The number of interviews in these categories were capped to ensure an adequate sample of eligible claimants who could speak to a full UI experience, and of those with appeals to analyze satisfaction with the appeals process.

Fielding the Survey

Interviewing commenced upon final approval of the survey instrument and receipt of data files for the claimant samples from participating states. A total of 3,017 interviews were completed, 188 to 190 in each of the 16 states in the study sample. The average length of an interview was 16 minutes.

Interviewing was done in waves. A randomly selected portion of the sample for each state was released in each wave and assigned to interviewers. All interviews were conducted from a 30-line phone bank using Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI).

The CATI system tracked all attempts to reach a respondent, including the time and outcome of calls, referrals to other phone numbers, and indications of the best time to contact a respondent. At least five

attempts were made to reach every potential respondent. Interviewers worked two shifts and callbacks were rotated between shifts.

It was apparent from the beginning of the study that ensuring a high response rate would be a challenge because of the several limitations of the contact information available:

- The only direct source of contact information was the UI administrative record system in each state;
- State record systems contained no information on collateral contacts;
- *Telephone number* is not a required data element in any state system; and
- Even when available in the record, many telephone numbers were not current.

To supplement the limited information available, an outside telephone matching service was used to obtain updated telephone numbers. While these efforts helped, 32% of the calls made resulted in wrong numbers for given respondents or disconnected lines. The net effect of the difficulties in reaching claimants was that more sample (than originally anticipated) needed to be released in order to reach the target of 188 interviews per state and pre-determined quotas.

Exhibit D-3: Final Call Disposition

Not Contacted/Reached	5,713
No answer	1,647
Busy signal	465
Answering machine	3,180
Business/Modem/Fax	46
Call back*	257
Spanish*	118
Refusals	2,198
Refused	1,750
Mid-Interview termination	448
Not Qualified	277
Bad date	95
Never applied for UI	170
Claim still pending	12
Language Barrier	304
Unknown language	202
Mandarin	22
Cantonese	26
Vietnamese	39
Japanese	15
Completes	3,017
Over-quota**	4,412
Bad number/Disconnected line	7,567

*These were outstanding calls flagged for callbacks at the end of the study.

**Would have been able to participate if their quota groups had not been full.

The overall response rate for the study was 49%, including all contact attempts and adjusting for the effects of interviewing quotas.²⁰ As identified earlier, the study design set three pre-determined quotas. Respondents were screened against these criteria before the interview began and were excluded if they fell into a category that had reached its quota. For those claimants we were unable to contact and for those who refused to begin the interview, it is not possible to say which ones would have been excluded because we did not have an opportunity to ask the screening questions. We assume they would have been excluded in the same proportion as those we did contact and who were asked the screening questions, so we adjust the figures for not contacted and refusals accordingly.²¹

Data Issues

There are two sets of issues that need to be taken into account when interpreting the data collected for this study. First, interviewing could not begin until data files were received from the states. At the time when states were being asked to provide claimant files for the study, they were also dealing with computer software problems related to the approach of the new millennium. This led states to be very careful when agreeing to participate in the study. In fact, one state agreed to participate then realized it did not have the resources to follow through on this commitment and had to be replaced in the sample. These circumstances meant that the process of recruiting states and obtaining required claimant data was stretched over a longer period than originally intended. As a result, there were periods of longer than a year between the time information was recorded in state files, and when the interview took place. This delay sometimes tested claimants' recollection of events during their claims.

Second, there were a small number of questions from the interview that seemed to be more difficult than others were for claimants to answer. This is not surprising in a study with many questions, especially one that represents the first national test of an Unemployment Insurance claimant satisfaction survey. We believe that most of the problematic questions remain useful for analysis although they provide less precise information. This should be a special concern of those who plan on reinterpreting the data. Appendix B, which contains the results of all survey questions, also provides more detail on potential data problems.

²⁰ Given the lack of alternative contact information, claimants without working telephone numbers are excluded from the calculation entirely.

²¹ The actual formula used to calculate response rate has as its denominator (completes + (completes / (completes + never filed + overquota)) x (not contacted + refused)). The numerator is completed interviews.

The formula adjusts the number of individuals not-contacted to eliminate those who would not have been subject to an interview even if they had been contacted. These individuals would have been in one of two groups—claimants who were in a quota category that was already full, or respondents who said they never filed a claim.

Suggestions for Survey Designers and Administrators

Questionnaire Design

A full discussion of instrument design would require a separate report. Here we summarize the most salient lessons from our experiences.

Length of Survey

The average length of the interview was 16 minutes. The interviewers who administered the survey say this length was “about right”—long enough to gather needed information without discouraging the respondents.

The survey took longer for some claimants who experienced more unemployment insurance activities than the typical claimant. This included claimants with appeals or frequent visits to the office. If someone else using this instrument expected more claimants to answer these optional sections, the instrument would have to be shortened elsewhere.

Remember that the number of questions asked, not the number on the form, determines the length of the interview. The skip patterns for this particular questionnaire ensure that no claimant was required to answer all questions.

Topics to Include

The questionnaire used in this study was designed to provide basic estimates of satisfaction for all the major features of the Unemployment Insurance system. It is unlikely that any state planning its own customer satisfaction study would want to cover all of these topics. They are more likely to select certain topics to investigate in greater depth. The questionnaire presented in Appendix A can serve as a foundation, but we expect no one will adopt it as is.

The design of a questionnaire normally begins with an exploration of how end-users will use the survey findings—who are the users, what issues are they concerned about, what decisions will be based on the findings, and what resources are available to conduct the survey.

The way to gather this information is to ask the end users, which this study did in several ways:

- Before designing the questionnaire, discussions were held with State and Federal decision-makers.
- A review was conducted of existing customer satisfaction data collection materials collected from the states. This review was driven in part by the mandate of the study to set benchmarks for those aspects of satisfaction with which states were concerned. It was also an implicit investigation of issues that were important to State administrators.
- State and Federal staff were given an opportunity to comment on draft questionnaires to ensure they were on target.

When designing a customer satisfaction survey, there is an added step required to discover which topics to cover—listen to the views of those customers. If an issue is not important to claimants, it does not matter how satisfied they are regarding that issue; they will not be satisfied overall.

There are several ways to gather this information. During the design of the current study, focus groups were held with claimants in two states and state staff members were asked to remember the issues frequently mentioned by claimants.

As part of the survey itself, we continued to test which issues were of concern to claimants. A question was asked about which topics were important (Question 11 in Appendix A). The answers to this question were not often included in the report. The level of importance those claimants gave each item was so uniformly high that the question did not differentiate views to any degree. However, in general, adding a question on importance can help identify primary areas for policy action—issues that claimants find important but have low satisfaction, or areas where efforts should be reduced—areas where much effort is being expended to keep satisfaction high even though the issue is unimportant to claimants. Appendix E suggests some options for organizing this type of information.

Terminology

When administering a questionnaire, it is critical to use terminology claimants understand. Staff of unemployment insurance programs use language very precisely, relying on terminology that makes fine distinctions; e.g. they are careful to distinguish monetary from non-monetary decisions, the ability to work from availability for work, and initial determinations of ineligibility from disqualification during the claim. This precision and attention to detail are what keeps the Unemployment Insurance system operating efficiently and in accordance with its rules.

Much of the terminology will need to be translated into more generic terms if claimants are to understand it. This translation is difficult. If done poorly, the concept a question is trying to assess will be lost. Even if done well, some precision may be lost, but it is better to lose some precision than to ask questions respondents cannot understand.

This study instituted several activities to determine how best to frame questions for claimants:

- Focus groups with claimants in different states;
- Discussions were held with staff in each state whose customers would be called. This identified state-specific references, such as the “colloquial” names for state agencies commonly used by claimants;
- Pretesting the questionnaires with a small number of actual claimants before final fielding of the instrument; and
- A review of questionnaires used by other state and national studies to benefit from their ideas and experience.

Any of these activities could benefit states planning customer surveys in the future. They are valuable even if all they do is confirm that the wording you plan to use is indeed familiar to the claimants with whom you will be speaking.

Obtaining Information from Official Records

This study supplemented interview responses with data from states. There are two advantages to using information from state records rather than gathering it through the survey:

- Since this information does not have to be captured through the questionnaire, there is more time during the interview to ask questions only the claimants can answer.
- As long as they are recent and accurate, use of official records does not introduce the problem of claimant recall. This is especially important for issues that require precise recollection of fine distinctions, areas such as separation reason, benefit level, or reasons for denying eligibility.

If they are to use information from institutional records, researchers need to develop precise specifications for the data to be transferred from the states. In this study, these specifications were determined using a four-step process described below. In a study run within a single state, they might be combined into a single step:

- 1) Calls were made to all states to determine what information was kept in permanent and accessible automated files. The review of this information also identified categories used to code the information.
- 2) Any information that was not systematically available in most states was either dropped from the study or added to the questionnaire and obtained from claimants.
- 3) Information was gathered from data processing staff regarding formats and media in which they would prefer to transfer data.
- 4) Based on information gathered in previous steps, detailed specifications for items to be included, coding schemes, record layouts and transfer media were mailed to the states.

Even with carefully developed standard data specifications, some flexibility was required to accept information in a form that was practical for individual states to provide. However, though there were a few exceptions, most states were able to transfer information easily and accurately.

States actually have access to more institutional data than was available to this study. In particular, we had to avoid data that was only available by merging state databases. In a single state, it might be more feasible to merge client information from Unemployment Insurance, wage records, job service and dislocated worker records to obtain a fuller picture of claimants' background.

Contacting Claimants

In a multi-state study, the research staff is highly dependent on state records for information on how claimants can be contacted. Typically, state unemployment insurance programs keep more information on addresses to which checks are to be mailed, than they do on items such as telephone numbers that are useful for finding people with whom phone interviews are planned. If states are interested in conducting telephone surveys, it would help to maintain current primary and back-up telephone numbers for each claimant.

Interviewing Skills

Interviewers in this type of study require two sets of knowledge. They need to have the interviewing skills that will allow them to gather information consistently across all claimants, sticking to the survey instrument, and maintaining rapport with the person they are interviewing. This ability is found only in experienced telephone interviewers. At the same time, those who will interview claimants need to know unemployment insurance rules and procedures if they are to accurately record claimants' description of the system, and if they are to alert supervisors to claimant experiences that are not captured in the questions.

No government agency or research organization is likely to have many interviewers who have both sets of skills—interview techniques and knowledge of the Unemployment Insurance system. To be properly prepared, most interviewers will need substantial training in at least one of these areas.

In this study, only experienced interviewers were used. They received training on unemployment insurance and supervisors regularly monitored their interviews. Regular meetings among interview staff were held to answer general questions and remind them of project requirements. Claimants' experiences with the system are varied enough that interviewers need significant assistance if they are to understand each claimant's unique response.

And Finally

Every study will encounter a unique set of problems. Our hope is that the discussion in this appendix will help states anticipate survey design and management issues before they start their own survey efforts. This should help them establish procedures to avoid these problems, and develop solutions that are tailored to their unique, local circumstances.

Recommended Issues for Future Claimant Satisfaction Studies

This study, despite the number of issues covered, was designed to meet a relatively narrow set of objectives. It is not the only way these topics could have been investigated, nor does it cover every topic worth studying. The remainder of this appendix discusses additional research that might follow-up on this report, as well as topics for new investigations of customer satisfaction within the Unemployment Insurance system.

Measuring Customer Satisfaction

The study discussed throughout this report was designed as an initial test of national customer satisfaction measurement for the Unemployment Insurance system. It is intended to serve as a foundation upon which others can build. The experience of the research contractor on this project suggests several areas where continued measurement of customer satisfaction could be useful for both Federal and State agencies.

First, the study clearly points to the need for follow-up surveys that focus on emerging issues such as electronic filing and reemployment services.

- The Unemployment Insurance system is undergoing dramatic changes. There is increasing use of electronic filing, currently by telephone, but it would not be surprising if filing by computer becomes increasingly available.
- In the time between design of the survey instrument for this study and preparation of the final report, the system put an increasing emphasis on reemployment services for unemployment insurance claimants as part of a more coordinated workforce development system. It will be important to continually monitor whether these changes erode or enhance the currently high level of satisfaction.

Second, employers are a key group of customers and their satisfaction should be systematically monitored. Survey procedures would have to be modified for employers for two reasons:

- While almost all employers have contact with the Unemployment Insurance system, it is generally much less intense than that of claimants who encounter the system during a time of crisis in their lives.
- In addition, researchers would have to gather information from several different kinds of employer customers in order to address the full set of satisfaction issues. These include benefits managers, payroll managers, representatives of external payroll services, and senior managers.

Third, we have noted that customer satisfaction may be high when services meet expectations. As expectations rise in response to improvements in the system and continued strong performance, it may be difficult to maintain high satisfaction levels without extra effort. Continued monitoring of claimant satisfaction is a necessary maintenance function to ensure that extra effort is paying off.

Fourth, for the system to be judged adequate, we should expect both that claimants are satisfied, and that they actually get the type of services unemployment insurance intends to provide. It is important to link both outcome and satisfaction measures. For example, the present study found that, although claimants are generally satisfied with the reemployment services provided, few actually enroll in job training or find jobs as a direct result of these services. A full examination of whether these services were beneficial would determine whether these services led to jobs and training and whether claimants were satisfied with the assistance they received.

Fifth, as states may also want to adopt a broad-based survey, similar to this one, as part of their customer satisfaction programs. This would provide an overall customer satisfaction report card. Repeating the survey on a regular basis would give state policy makers an indicator of performance on a wide range of issues, and help them allocate resources across those areas.

However, states may also choose more targeted surveys to assist front-line program staff. For example:

- A customer satisfaction survey might be used to identify potential areas of dissatisfaction with a new program initiative; or
- A very focused, quick-turnaround survey might be used to quickly spot emerging customer issues and service problems, and alert front-line managers to potential problems.

Sixth, states might also follow-up on issues raised in this report. For example, they could:

- More closely examine specific concerns identified by claimants to determine what kind of problems can be addressed early in the claims process and used as flags for potential dissatisfaction;
- More systematically examine the use of the telephone to deal with more complicated issues such as answering questions related to specific claims, providing claim-specific problem solving, or holding appeal hearings;
- More thoroughly measure overall satisfaction in relation to interim outcomes such as benefit exhaustion, profiling, enrollment in job training, and return to work;

- Continue to ask whether claimants feel they are better off as a result of their experiences in the Unemployment Insurance system and probe for their reasons; and/or,
- Follow the approach used by some states and regularly survey their own staff and managers regarding *their* satisfaction.

States have the option of pursuing any issue in much more detail than was possible in the present study, which necessarily emphasized breadth over depth of coverage in setting comprehensive national benchmarks for the Unemployment Insurance Service.

For example, states could develop and implement studies that focus on specific aspects of reemployment services such as job search assistance, referral to job training, and employment success. More detailed information could be collected, such as how claimants became employed again, what assistance they received from the Unemployment Insurance system, how much practical assistance the system provided, and what further assistance they might have liked. Similarly, relevant data could be assembled from all state data bases related to employment, i.e., Unemployment Insurance, dislocated worker programs, job service system, profiling data bases, and wage records. Combining survey responses and administrative records could provide a rich base for analysis on the employment services claimants receive and how they relate to satisfaction.

Whatever states decide to do in measuring customer satisfaction, their data collection strategy should be tailored to further their own need for policy relevant information on how the system is performing.

As they tailor surveys for their own needs and begin to implement them, they will likely benefit from technical assistance from the Federal government and its agents. The experience gained in this initial study can provide one part of the practical assistance that will help states design customer satisfaction measures to meet their specific objectives.

Appendix E: Gap Analysis and Strategy Maps

An analysis that compares the *importance* of an issue to claimant *satisfaction* with agency performance in that area can provide a useful guide to policy action. Improvement efforts and resources can be focused on boosting performance in those areas rated high in importance but low in satisfaction. Below we present two approaches that may be used for this type of analysis. Results were not presented in the body of the report because satisfaction ratings are so high. Currently, there is little practical leverage offered by the identification of these importance-satisfaction disparities.

Performance Gap Analysis

One approach is performance gap analysis. Results from both importance and performance ratings are combined and displayed graphically. The relative importance respondents give to selected issues can be considered an estimate of their expectations. Therefore, a comparison with perceived performance ratings can be interpreted in terms of meeting, exceeding, or falling short of these expectations.

Exhibit E-1 shows the gap between importance and satisfaction for ten aspects of the unemployment insurance benefit payment process. Issues are labeled along the horizontal axis and each issue is rated on a 5-point scale along the vertical axis. Gap scores are shown above the labels. Falling short of expectations is represented by a negative number (-), while exceeding expectations is represented by a positive number (+). In the case of exactly meeting expectations, the gap is zero.

In general, on a 5-point scale, any gap in excess of 0.5 (either positive or negative) can be considered cause for action. Expectations exceed performance by exactly 0.5 for three issues and 0.6 for one other issue. Note that in all four cases, both expectations and performance ratings are in the top quartile of the grid.

Strategy Maps

A different approach to graphically presenting the disparity between expectations and experience involves the use of strategy maps. A strategy map provides an overall view of strategic opportunities in the form of a four-cell table. "Performance" is plotted on the vertical axis and "Importance" on the horizontal axis. A mid-point of "Importance" and "Performance" is determined by the average rating of all attributes included in the analysis. Importance and performance ratings of each attribute are then plotted and compared against this mid-point or average score. Note that the midpoint merely divides the grid at the average of what is being tested—it is NOT a cutoff between important versus unimportant attributes, or areas of high performance versus low performance.

Exhibit E-2 shows a relative picture of performance and importance for the same ten issues discussed in the gap analysis. Note that these are *relative not absolute ratings*. In an absolute sense, all these issues are important to claimants and have average ratings of 4.0 or higher on a 5-point scale. The same is true for satisfaction. The gap display presented in Exhibit E-1 compares absolute ratings of performance and satisfaction. By contrast, the strategy map presents these ratings relative to average scores and highlights those issues that provide the most policy leverage.

- The upper left quadrant identifies issues that have relatively high satisfaction ratings but are relatively unimportant to claimants. These issues offer almost no policy leverage. If anything, they indicate areas where a lower level of resources might be committed.
- The lower left quadrant identifies issues that have relatively low satisfaction ratings and are relatively unimportant to claimants. These issues offer minimum policy leverage.
- The upper right quadrant identifies issues that are rated highly in terms of both importance and satisfaction. These are issues that need maintenance of effort but no more.
- The lower right quadrant is the “opportunity” quadrant. It identifies issues in need of improvement (i.e., higher in importance, lower in performance). These issues offer the most leverage to administrators and suggest where resources ought to be committed.

Exhibit E-1: Performance Gap Analysis

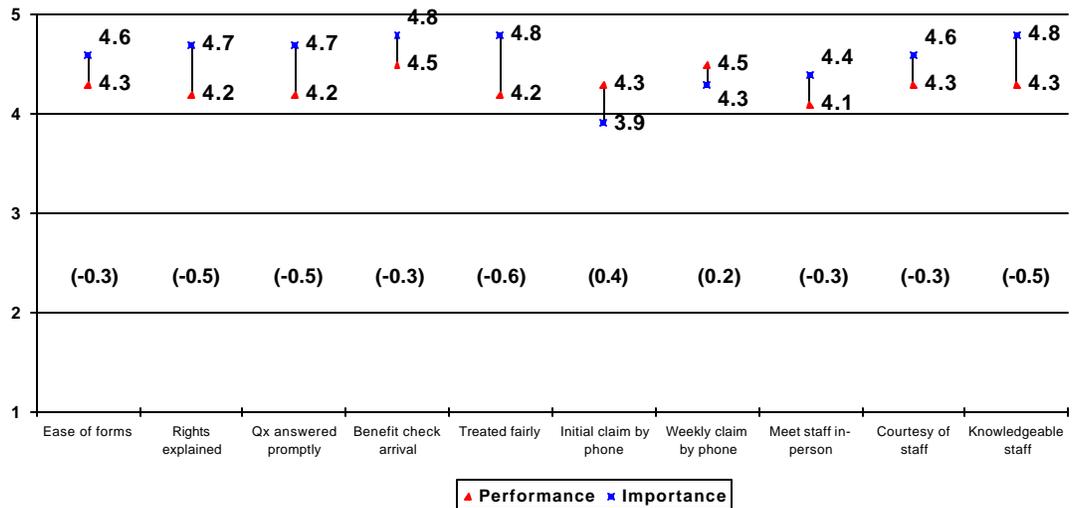
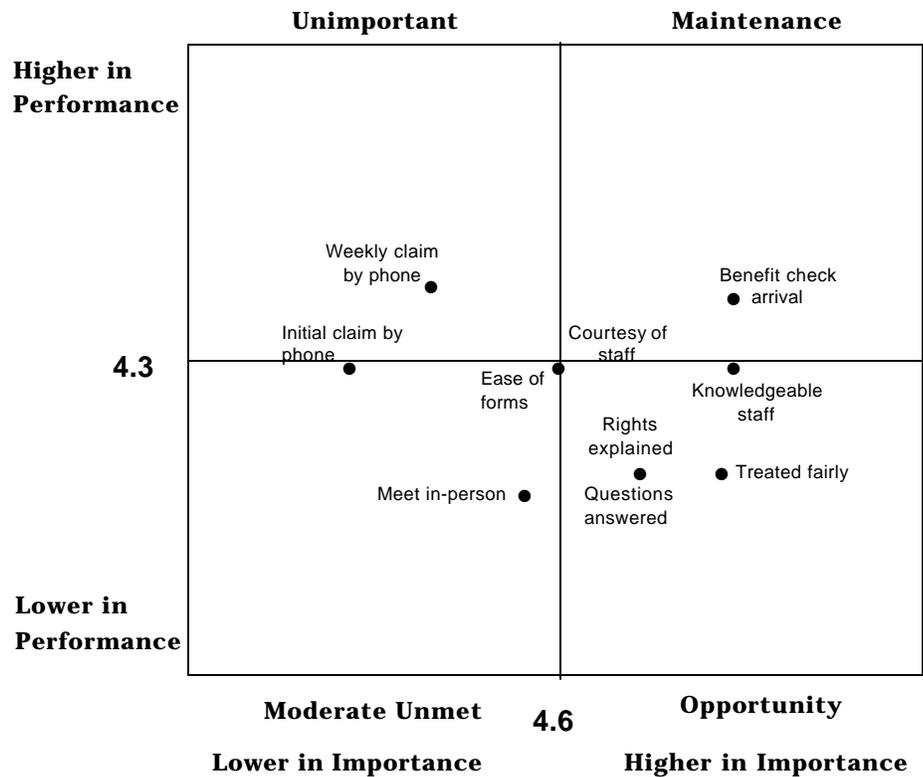


Exhibit E-2: Strategy Map



In situations where there is more variability in ratings of importance and less uniformity in ratings of satisfaction, these analytic tools can be useful, practical guides to action for policy administrators.