
Citizens First 2000

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for the

Public Sector Service Delivery Council

and

The Institute of Public Administration of Canada

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Thank you

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Foreword

Citizens First 2000 is a world-leading survey on government service delivery and a key tool for service improvement in the public sector. It is also the culmination of creative partnerships and alliances over a number of years. In 1998, the Citizen-Centred Service Network (CCSN), sponsored by the Canadian Centre for Management Development (CCMD), worked together with many federal agencies and four provinces to initiate a study on what citizens thought about the services they received from government and published a first report, *Citizens First*. The report proved to be a landmark event and a watershed for the delivery of government services in Canada. The *Citizens First* initiative was recognized nationally and internationally when the Citizen-Centred Service Network won the coveted Gold Award for Innovative Management from the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC), in 1999, and won the silver medal in the International Innovations Awards of the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM) in the fall of 2000.

Citizens First helped governments across Canada to shape more effective service improvement strategies and to establish common benchmarks. As a result, the Public Sector Service Delivery Council (PSSDC) and IPAC recognized the need to carry it forward as a regular biennial survey that will help to chart progress and to deepen understanding of service delivery in the public sector. With IPAC acting as a catalyst and project *impresario*, a number of Government of Canada departments and agencies, all provincial governments, the Yukon Territory and the cities of Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal chose to participate in the 2000 survey. We are proud of this broad partnership, and of the resulting report, which will again be a major instrument for strengthening and refining public-sector service strategies across the country.

Our debts are many: to the officers in each of the jurisdictions who are passionate about improving the quality of government services to the citizens; to George Spears and Kasia Seydegart of Erin Research Inc. for their expert professional direction of the

research project and analysis; to Art Daniels and Brian Marson, co-chairs of the Research Sub-committee of the Public Sector Service Delivery Council, for guiding the project to a successful conclusion; and to the staff of the Institute of Public Administration of Canada for managing this great undertaking with finesse.

Citizens First 2000 continues where the work of the first edition ended. Bolstered by an unprecedented number of responses from Canadians in every corner of the country, the survey offers essential data, invaluable benchmarks, and important new insights that will continue to provide the foundation for policies and initiatives to improve government services.

Citizens First 2000 is not the last word on government service delivery. But it is another giant step forward by the governments of Canada: it is a powerful tool and a source of encouragement for all public servants, as they pursue their important work of improving government service delivery to Canada's deserving citizens.

Errol S. Price
President
Institute of Public Administration of Canada

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Co-Chair
Public Sector Service Delivery
Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Citizens First 2000 is a research enterprise sponsored by a partnership that includes the Government of Canada, the ten provincial governments, and territorial and municipal governments. Its purpose is to develop a better understanding of how citizens access and use government services, so that governments can improve service quality.

This report is a practical guide to improving service delivery. Based on responses from more than 6,000 Canadians, it lends insight into citizens' needs, expectations and priorities and provides the hands-on tools that government providers can use to improve service quality to citizens.

Citizens First 2000, conducted by Erin Research, builds on *Citizens First* of 1998 and extends the research to new areas, including Internet services and an investigation into access.

THE CHALLENGE

Across the spectrum of government services, citizens' ratings of service quality average between 60 and 65 out of 100. Individual services range higher or lower than this average, but overall, citizens expect better service. The immediate - and attainable - challenge is to move government service-quality ratings up towards the 70 mark.

Rapid change in service-quality ratings should not be expected. Across the broad range of services that *Citizens First* addresses, there are two likely reasons why progress will be slow and incremental. First, there are many separate programs, departments and governments that provide services. One province, for example, may make a dramatic improvement in its tax information services. The national picture, however, will not change appreciably until the majority of provinces undertake similar initiatives. A second reason is that citizens access some services infrequently - once a year for tax issues,

less often to renew passports. There is, therefore, a built-in time lag: service improvements go unnoticed until the next time citizens require that service.

THE OPPORTUNITY

A small set of five elements drives citizens' satisfaction with government services:

- timely service
- staff knowledge and competence
- an approach to service that is not only courteous and friendly but “ goes the extra mile” to assist the citizen
- fairness
- outcome

When *all* these elements are present in service delivery, citizens rate service quality in the excellent range, at 80 or more out of 100. When one or more of these elements is absent, service-quality scores drop quickly. When all five are absent, service-quality scores are near the single-digit range. These five drivers, then, define the path to better service. Service providers who improve them can be assured of high ratings from the citizens they serve.

MYTHS AND STEREOTYPES

Government service providers have laboured for some years under the belief that citizens regard government services as being of lower quality than private-sector services. In 1998, *Citizens First* shattered this myth by providing benchmark ratings of numerous public- and private-sector services. In each sector, some services rated high and others were low: quality ratings overlapped. The current research confirms and updates this result.

Citizens' Priorities

Citizens defined priorities for improved service at each level of government:

- *municipal*: road maintenance and public schools, followed by policing, public transit and public health;
- *provincial*: hospitals and other health issues;
- *federal*: six agencies share the top ranking: Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA), CECs/HRCCs, Canada Post, Employment Insurance, CPP/OAP, and Health Canada information services.

One priority for improving services cuts across all these areas (and others), and that is

telephone service. The telephone is the channel that citizens most often use to contact government and it's the one citizens rate lowest in service quality. This research points to specific problems (such as busy phone lines and incomprehensible automated telephone systems) and suggests specific solutions (such as telling callers how long they must wait in the telephone queue and suggesting alternate service routes such as the Internet).

There are many examples of excellence in government telephone systems. These include initiatives of individual call centres and ministries, as well as government-wide programs to implement high standards of service. Solutions that have been developed and published now require broader implementation.

THE INTERNET PROMISE

The Internet and other electronic service-delivery channels represent an opportunity for dramatically improving service-quality ratings, but their promise remains unproven.

These new technologies can overcome several limitations that are inherent in traditional service-delivery channels. They are capable of linking different levels of government and different program areas seamlessly, eliminating the need for citizens to negotiate the labyrinth on their own. They can also provide fast access and quick fulfilment of many transactions, effectively addressing the most important driver of satisfaction: timeliness.

In the present research, service delivered by the Internet represents a tiny proportion of citizens' service experience. The research contained in *Citizens First 2000* is the baseline against which future effects of Internet services can be assessed. If citizens find Internet service of high quality, service-quality scores will increase in direct proportion to the number of services that are offered through this channel.

The prospect is good. Canadians currently rate government web sites "as good as" or "better than" sites of private-sector organizations.

BUILDING ON THE MOMENTUM

The evidence is clear: citizen-centred government service is becoming a reality. The silos that once seemed to be inevitable structures of government are rapidly disappearing. This change has developed from several sources:

- outstanding leadership and commitment to citizen-centred service delivery
- research from *Citizens First* and related work/tools provides an intellectual foundation for attaining results

- significant achievements in reorganizing service-delivery systems around citizens' needs
- partnering with private and not-for-profit sectors to deliver integrated, accessible services
- strategic use of technology - computers and the Internet - to link services that were once separated geographically and institutionally
- an accumulation of experience and "best practices" that now appears to have reached critical mass.

The next few years will be exciting for government service providers and citizens alike.

THE PATH FORWARD

The results of *Citizens First 2000* are based on the perceptions and direct experiences of a representative cross-section of Canadians and speak to critical service-delivery challenges at all three levels of government. With these results in hand, governments can undertake a focused and concerted plan of action that will help build the momentum for positive change and create service-delivery systems that are truly responsive and citizen-centred.

A focus on six critical areas of citizen-centred service will accelerate the momentum:

1. Changing the face of government:

- Sustain top leadership and commitment to citizen-centred service throughout the public service.
- Use *Citizens First* results as the intellectual foundation for innovative policy and practice.
- Overcome destructive myths and stereotypes by communicating accurate information about government excellence to the public.
- Use *Citizens First* findings to improve staff confidence and build competencies.
- Provide training and tools to increase staff knowledge and competence and to empower service providers to "go the extra mile."
- Continue to foster advanced research as a basis for improving service delivery.

2. Access, Access, Access:

- Foster a proactive, go-the-extra-mile approach to the access of government services at the institutional and technological levels as well as in all direct, personal interaction with citizens.
- Focus improvement on the telephone, the "people's channel," currently the most frustrating point of access and yet the most commonly used channel.

- Streamline multiple channels into cost-effective, citizen-centred single gateways to service; ensure there is "no wrong door" for the citizen to access service.
3. Focus on the five drivers of citizen satisfaction in high-priority service areas:
- Incorporate the five drivers of citizen satisfaction into every line of government business.
 - Integrate regular measurement of service drivers and service standards and give staff feedback on their performance.
 - Determine drivers of satisfaction for specific programs (e.g., drivers for the CCRA may differ from those for a library or for a health information site on the Internet).
 - Organize, measure and refine services based on citizens' priorities.
4. Make seamless service the norm:
- Break down silos of service delivery between and inside governments to provide seamless service.
 - Forge partnerships and collaborate with other governments and the private, voluntary and academic sectors to develop optimal delivery systems.
 - Establish a Canadian Centre for Citizen Centred Service outside government to foster interjurisdictional, intersectoral and international citizen-centred research, innovation and service.
5. Deliver e-government intelligently:
- Harness new technology so that it is user-friendly and responsive to the citizen.
 - Ground development and improvement of channels (e.g., telephone, Internet) in the specific drivers and service standards identified by *Citizens First*.
 - Ensure citizens have a choice of channels and provide consistent information across all channels.
6. Lead by vision and manage by results:
- Establish clear, measurable objectives and criteria for service-quality improvement and citizen-centred service.
 - Ensure accountability for results in performance /service-delivery agreements.
 - Identify, share and showcase best practices.
 - Establish awards for best innovators and on-the-ground practitioners in important categories:

1. Access
2. Drivers of satisfaction
3. Single gateway service
4. Seamless service delivery
5. Citizen-centred technological solutions

The next frontier in citizen-centred research will be to survey internal service providers and to integrate these findings into pan-government service-delivery strategies.

1. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The *Citizens First 2000* project is a research initiative of the Public Sector Service Delivery Council (PSSDC) spearheaded by service-quality leaders from the federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments under the auspices of the Treasury Board of Canada and The Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC).

The PSSDC is carrying forward the work of the Citizen-Centred Service Network (CCSN), a consortium of government officials that launched this project in 1998. At that time, Erin Research Inc. conducted an independent investigation on behalf of the Canadian Centre for Management Development (CCMD) and CCSN. The resulting report - *Citizens First* - measured how Canadians perceive the services that their governments provide.

Citizens First defined three new perspectives on service quality:

- It challenged the widely held view that government services are second-rate by showing how polls have often underrated citizens' perceptions of government services.
- It defined the five elements of service delivery that most strongly affect citizens' perceptions of service delivery.
- It offered managers and service providers clear direction for improving services.

The CCSN produced two major research products, *Citizens First* by Erin Research Inc. and the *Common Measurements Tool* by Faye Schmidt and Teresa Strickland. The work of the CCSN was recognized in 1999 with the Gold Award for Innovative Management from the Institute of Public Administration for Canada and, in 2000, a silver medal in the International Innovations Awards of the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM).

Both these research initiatives continue today. The *Citizens First 2000* research replicates and extends the original study, while the *Common Measurements Tool* has undergone further development and is being used throughout Canada.

CITIZENS FIRST 2000

The second study builds on the 1998 investigation and is substantially broader in scope. In the first place, a significantly larger sample size (2,900 in 1998; 6,040 in 2000) has allowed a more detailed analysis of issues. And second, for perhaps the only time in Canadian history, citizen-focused research has been sponsored by a partnership made up of the Government of Canada, the governments of all ten provinces and one territory (Yukon), and three large municipal governments (Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver).

The extent of alliance and cooperation among governments in Canada speaks to the recognition of service delivery as a critical issue and to the determination of Canadian governments at all levels to address citizens' concerns.

The Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC) managed the project and brought together this unprecedented partnership of fifteen jurisdictions.

In addition to broadening the partnership base, *Citizens First 2000* addresses new service issues by adding the following perspectives to the original three listed above:

- It further explores the area of citizens' access to government services.
- It examines the drivers of citizen satisfaction as they relate to specific delivery channels (telephone, the Internet, single gateways).
- It tracks trends and compares results against the 1998 baseline survey, particularly with respect to the following investigations: citizens performance ratings on fifty government services, public- and private-sector benchmarks, and Canadians' priorities for improvement in government services.

THE GOAL

The goal of the *Citizens First* project is to reach a more complete understanding of how Canadians evaluate the services provided by their governments.

On a daily basis, citizens use a wide array of services from the public and private sectors. These services include everything from the daily newspaper to public transportation. Citizens bank, renew their driver's licences, visit the public library, see doctors, send and receive mail. In each of these instances, they evaluate their experience in terms of the service they've received. While these judgements are frequent and intuitive, the basis on

which they are made has not been well understood, especially when it comes to services provided by governments.

A better, clearer understanding of what drives citizens' evaluation of service is therefore essential in order for governments to make accurate, informed decisions about how to improve these services.

METHOD

The Erin Research methodology used in the *Citizens First* project is citizen-centred in that each issue is approached with the goal of bringing the citizen's perspective forward. It defines and quantifies what citizens judge to be good service so that service providers can understand citizens better and design delivery systems to meet their needs.

The methodology differs from other studies of public-sector service in that it examines the services of municipal, provincial and federal governments equally. This is entirely consistent with the citizen-centred approach because citizens do not define separate criteria of service quality for each level of government. Even if they did, the sharing of costs, responsibilities and service-delivery vehicles among governments has blurred distinctions among them to a significant degree.

LINES OF QUESTIONING

Building on the 1998 report, the *Citizens First 2000* investigation follows several lines of questioning:

- Are citizens' assessments of public- and private-sector services fluid, or are they relatively constant? Were the 1998 citizen scores an anomaly, or do they represent an enduring pattern?
- How do citizens rate the quality of services at all three levels of government?
- What barriers do citizens encounter when trying to access government services? Could services be grouped together through single-window gateways to make access easier?
- What are the satisfaction drivers for specific delivery channels such as the telephone, walk-in services and the Internet?
- What happens in the course of getting a service that causes a person to evaluate service quality as good or poor? Are there elements associated with good service that can be identified and quantified? How consistent are they from person to person and from one type of service to another?
- What additional refinements of service standards for routine transactions do citizens want?

- What are citizens' priorities for improving the quality of service they receive from all levels of governments?
- What can senior public-service officials and front-line service providers do to achieve effective and responsive citizen-centred governments?

SURVEY

The *Citizens First 2000* survey was completed in the summer of 2000 and included 6,040 Canadians. As in the 1998 report, survey participants were representative of the population with respect to age, gender and region.

A draft survey was reviewed by members of the PSSDC and suggestions were incorporated. Survey questions were then tested in focus groups to ensure that questions were clearly worded and that all issues of importance were included.

The survey, *Have Your Say!/Prononcez-vous !*, was designed as a pencil-and-paper instrument because the large number of questions and the format of some questions made it too unwieldy for telephone administration.

SAMPLE

The survey was mailed to a random selection of Canadian households in the summer of 2000. A letter of introduction identified the survey as being conducted by Erin Research, on behalf of the Government of Canada, the ten provincial governments, and municipal governments. The survey was distributed to 80,000 households, and 6,040 usable questionnaires were returned. Allowing for a non-delivery rate of 10 percent, the return rate is 9 percent, which is considered reasonable for a mail survey.

Returns were weighted by gender, age and population of province, using current Statistics Canada information, to produce a sample that matches Canadian demographics.

The margin of error for a sample of this size is ± 1.3 percent, 19 times out of 20. This figure applies to questions in polling format, where respondents choose between alternatives; for example, 60 percent say "Yes" and 40 percent say "No."

Much of the data reported in this study are in the form of scaled responses. For example, the mean service-quality score for municipal government services is 56 out of 100. These results are analysed using regression and related statistical procedures. Differences are reported only if 1) the statistical test is statistically significant, and 2) the effect in question accounts for at least 1 percent of the variance. This latter condition is necessary

because, in large samples, differences can be “significant” in a narrow technical sense but still too small to be meaningful.

When a group of comparisons is under consideration, the criterion for statistical significance is adjusted for the number of comparisons in the group. For example, if ten tests are performed, the minimum alpha becomes $.05 \div 10$, or .005.

In order to ensure that results from the 1998 and 2000 research could be accurately compared, Erin Research used similar methods of survey distribution and analysis techniques in both studies.

THE GOOD NEWS: GOVERNMENTS CAN MEET THE CHALLENGE!

The *Citizens First 2000* project has resulted in a series of challenging ideas about service quality. Some of these findings corroborate and amplify earlier work, and some overturn common beliefs. This is especially true of the gloomy view that government service finds little favour with citizens and that the quality of government service will inevitably be perceived as low.

The direction of both the 1998 and 2000 research, based entirely on citizens’ input, indicates that government services *can* meet high public expectations and compete in quality with services provided by the private sector.

2. MYTHS AND STEREOTYPES

Citizens speak out

- “The Canada Pension Department was most knowledgeable and everything was completed correctly and by the time they said it would take.”
- “I’ve had to renew my passport before but the system has gotten wonderfully efficient since the last time I was there.”
- “The people involved (RCMP) went out of their way to help and to make sure we were given justice.”
- “In the hospital the nurses and doctors treated me like I was the most important patient there. Exceptional service!!”
- “City does a very good job of cleaning and clearing snow.”
- “I was dealing with Customs and I thought I would be treated unfairly, but I was wrong. Everyone was very knowledgeable and friendly.”
- “Called police to handle domestic dispute in apartment other than my own. Police were very professional and did ‘top notch’ job!!”
- “My experience with our federal, provincial and municipal parks system is what continues to give me faith that government can work for the people.”

***“GOVERNMENT SERVICES CAN’T DELIVER THE QUALITY OFFERED
BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR.”***

WHO SAYS SO?

Just about everyone seems to hold the opinion that government services compare poorly in quality with what’s offered by the private sector. The idea is even supported by surveys showing that “government service” rates well below that of department stores, courier companies, grocery stores and other private-sector companies. This negative view,

which has gained considerable currency over the past few years, contributes to low esteem for public institutions and services, and erodes morale within the public service.

BUT IS IT TRUE THAT GOVERNMENT SERVICES ARE OF POOR QUALITY?

In a word, no. The fact is, the belief that government services are worse than private-sector ones is a view that rests on a small set of polls that provide little context or explanation for their findings.

The *Citizens First* project tests citizens' views of government and private-sector service in some detail, and the research results paint a decidedly different picture. In short, they show that the negative view of government service quality is not justified.

Quite simply, when citizens rate the quality of public- and private-sector services, one sector does *not* consistently outrank the other.

Citizens First survey respondents rated the quality of service they receive from twenty four public and private organizations. The selection includes widely used services that most people are familiar with and can judge from personal experience. Participants rated service quality using 5-point scales labelled "Very poor" to "Very good." Results are presented throughout this report in the more intuitive 0-to-100 format (see Figure 1).

Ratings for private and public services are mixed throughout the range of services. A cluster of public services tops the ratings (fire departments, public libraries), followed by alternating private and public services, singly or in small groups. The notion that private-sector services are of higher quality than government services would have government services grouped at the bottom of the list, which is clearly not the case.

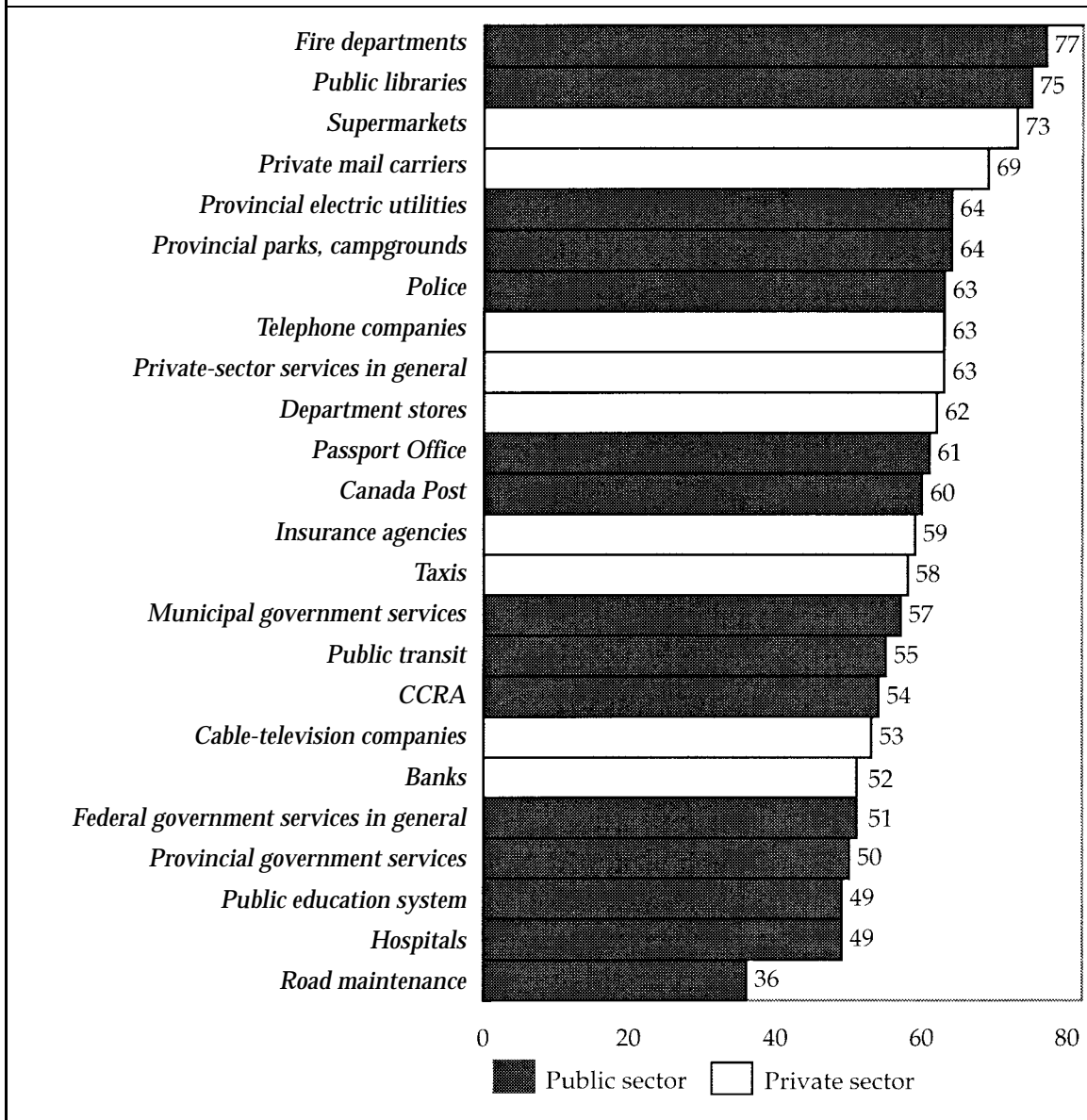
This result is based on a wider range of both private and public services than previous Canadian comparisons of its kind. It is consistent, as well, with results of a recent U.K. study that showed a similar pattern of alternating public and private organizations across a wide range of services¹ and also with U.S. research showing similar wide ranges in ratings of government services.²

THEN WHY DO PEOPLE THINK GOVERNMENT SERVICE RATES POORLY?

One reason for this misconception appears to result from confusing two ways of rating service quality - rating *specific* services and rating *service in general*.

The concept of government services *in general* seems to evoke a common attitude or stereotype about government. It may be based on experiences from years or decades past

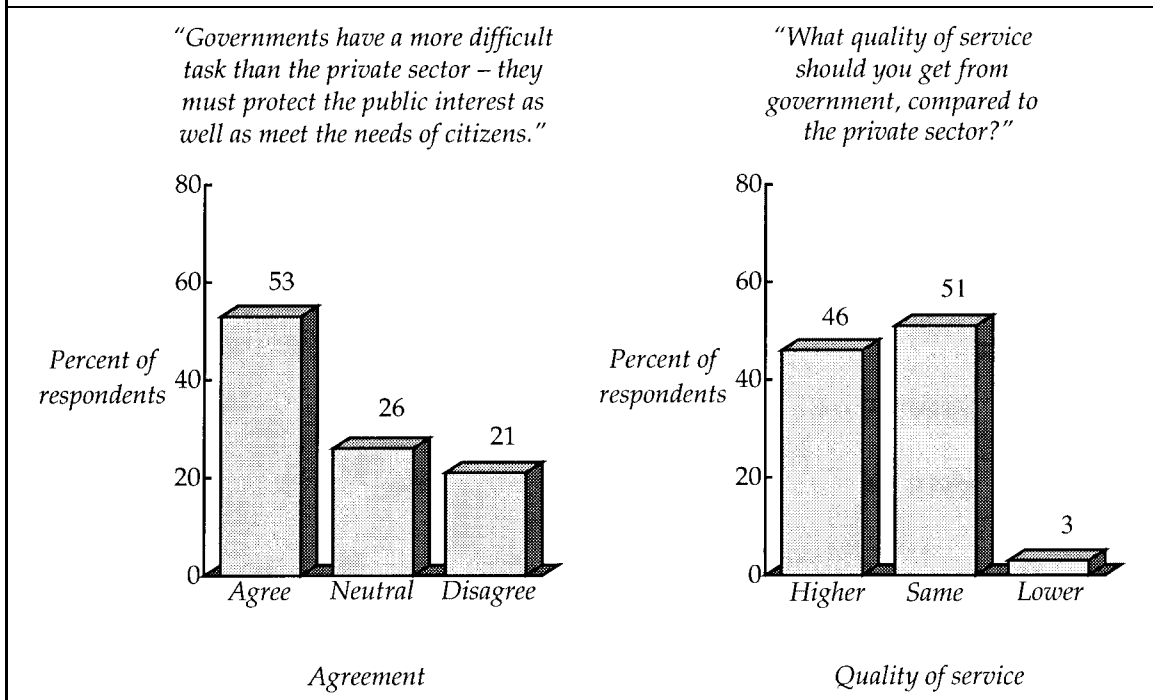
Figure 1
Citizens' ratings of public- and private-sector services.
Citizens First, 2000.



or it may derive from the accumulated information (and misinformation) that people pick up from media accounts and conversations with friends. In any case, the general impression of government service that most people carry around is that it is poor.

The list of twenty-four services in Figure 1 includes a designation for general services at each level of government (e.g., “Municipal government services”). It is interesting to note

Figure 2
Citizens' expectations of government service.
Citizens First 2000.



that, for each level of government, these general services score lower than most of the specific services for that level of government. “Municipal services *in general*” rates 57 out of 100, but fire departments, libraries, and police all rate higher; only road maintenance is lower. “Provincial services *in general*” rates 50 out of 100, but provincial utilities and parks are significantly higher. “Federal services *in general*” scores 51 out of 100, while each specific federal service, including Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, rates higher.

The myth of poor government service results in part from surveys that asked people to rate government services *in general*. *Citizens First 2000* shows that it is easy to reproduce these low ratings but also that they are quite misleading. Citizens regard the individual services that governments provide more positively than government *in general*. Chapter 6 extends this line of inquiry to include an even broader range of specific government services.

WHAT DO CITIZENS EXPECT?

Citizens *expect* government services to be as good as, if not better than, what they can get from the private sector! Two additional survey results illuminate this finding (see Figure 2). In the first place, a slight majority of respondents, 53 percent, appreciates that “gov-

Figure 3
Citizens' expectations of government: 1998 and 2000.
Citizens First 2000.

“Governments have a more difficult task than the private sector - they must protect the public interest as well as meet the needs of citizens.”

	<i>Percent of citizens</i>		
	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
1998	54	25	21
2000	53	26	21

“What quality of service should you get from government, compared to the private sector?”

	<i>Percent of citizens</i>		
	<i>Higher</i>	<i>Same</i>	<i>Lower</i>
1998	42	53	5
2000	46	51	3

ernments have a more difficult task than the private sector - they must protect the public interest as well as meet the needs of citizens.”

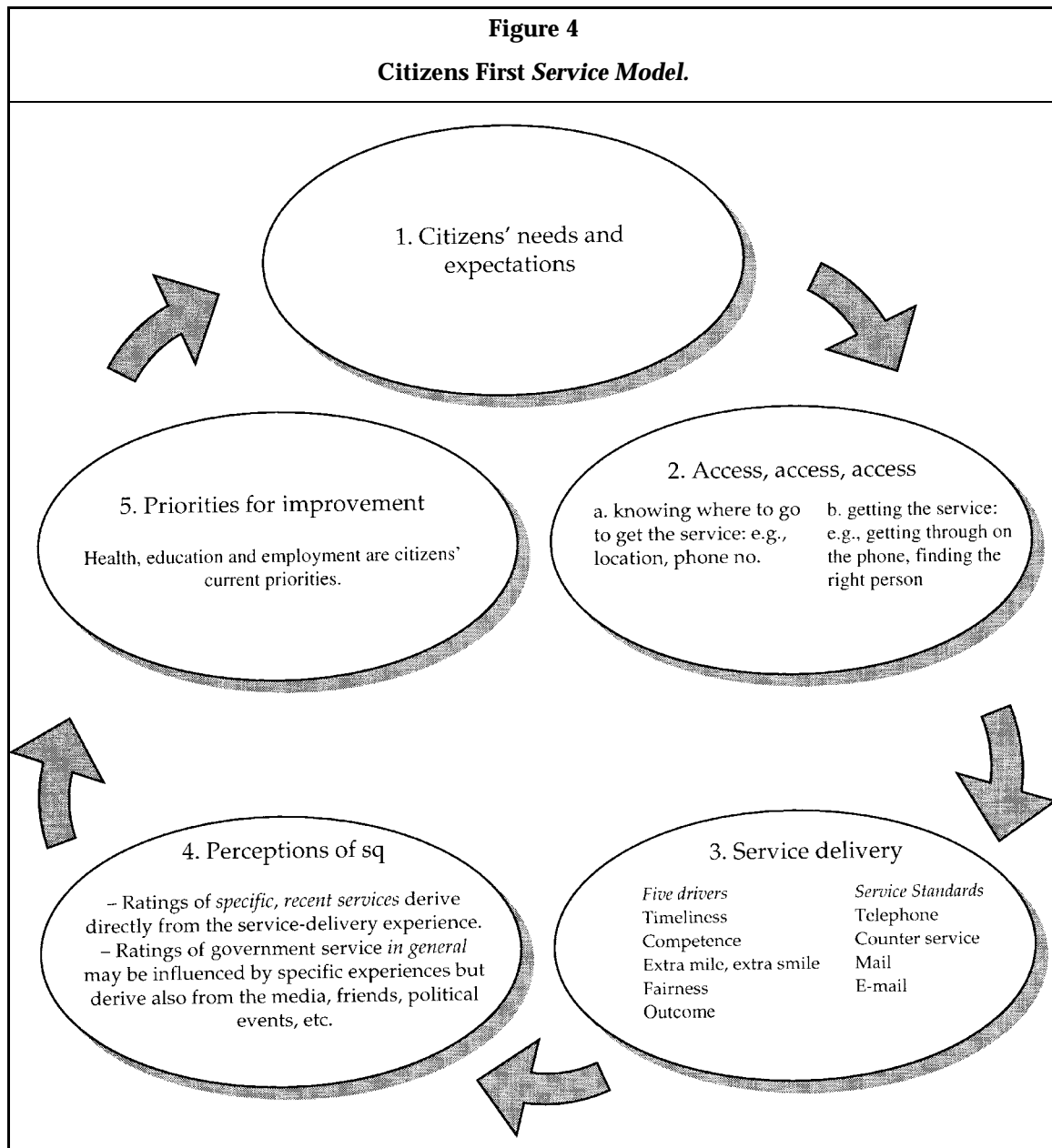
The second result, however, expands on the first and reveals an important caveat. It shows that citizens believe added responsibility does not diminish governments' task in terms of provision of services. Forty-six percent of respondents contend that governments should provide a *higher standard of service* than that provided by the private sector; only 3 percent think that government service can be lower in quality.

Service lesson: These results stand as a powerful citizens' mandate to improve the quality of government services. A resounding 97 percent of Canadians want government services to match or exceed the quality of private-sector services.

Figure 3 provides the 1998 and 2000 results for comparison. Responses to “Governments have a more difficult task” ... did not change significantly from 1998 to 2000. Responses to “What quality of service should you get” ... did change significantly: more citizens now state that they want a higher quality of service from government than from the private sector.

3. THE SERVICE MODEL

The service model that grew out of the research results has five phases, summarized in Figure 4. (This model was also presented in *Citizens First 1998*.)



CITIZENS FIRST SERVICE MODEL

1. Citizens' service needs and expectations

- When citizens approach a government service they bring expectations based on earlier service experiences and also on more general attitudes towards government.

2. Access to service

- To get the service, the citizen must know where to find it. This may be difficult if it is the citizen's first experience with the service or if service delivery has changed as a result of government restructuring.
- After making initial contact, access problems can continue if, for example, the phones are busy or the citizen receives conflicting information.

3. Service delivery

- When obtaining service, citizens assess government performance along many dimensions. Service delivery is timely or it is not, staff are competent or they are not, and so on. Citizens' responses to questions about service delivery point to five key elements that drive service-quality ratings. When all five drivers are in place, citizens rate many services in the 80s; when one or more drops below a threshold level, service-quality ratings fall accordingly.
- *Timely service* is the single strongest determinant of service quality across all services and across the three levels of government. The research provides standards for timely service delivery in routine phone, counter service, mail and e-mail transactions.

4. Perceptions of service quality

- Specific service experiences lead to detailed perceptions of service quality. These provide useful information for improving service.
- Specific service experiences may also contribute to citizens' perceptions of government service *in general*. These are considerably more negative than are perceptions of most specific experiences. The widely held belief that governments provide poor quality service rests largely on polls that measure service at this general level.

5. Citizens' priorities for improvement

- Perceptions of service quality contribute to citizens' priorities for improving service.
- Priorities for improvement may also be influenced by the larger arena of public discourse, including politicians, opinion leaders and the media.
- Priorities for improvement, in their turn, help to shape citizens' expectations when they next encounter government services.

4. ACCESS

Citizens speak out

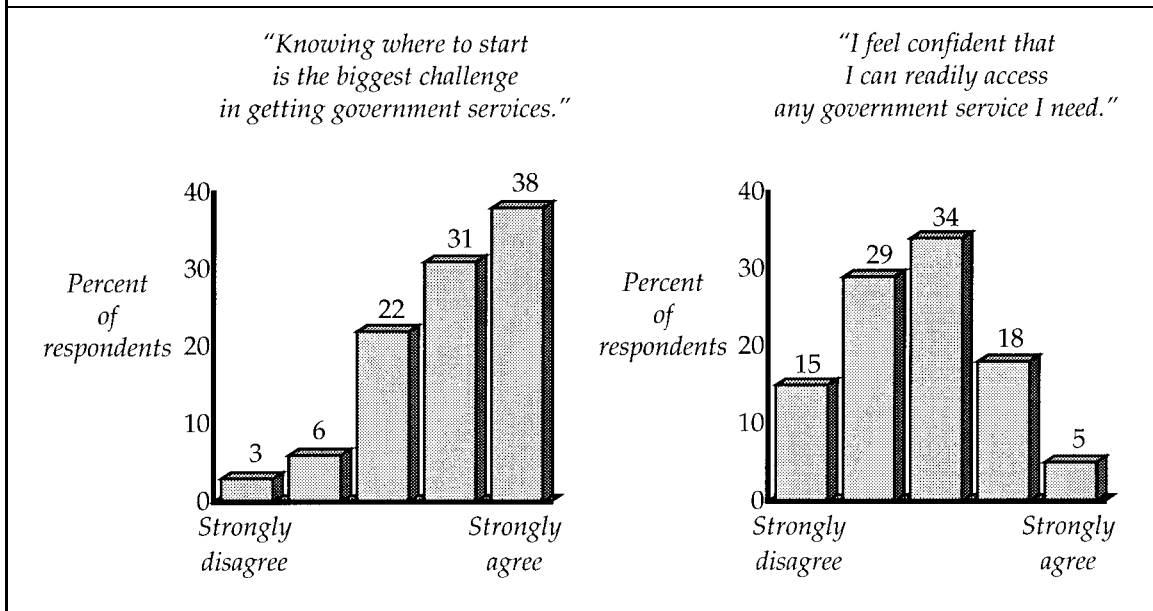
- “The only negative was in first trying to access service - finding out where to call for a SIN number.”
- “A lot of government forms no longer carry telephone numbers on how to reach that department, as though it were a secret. Put one number on each form that anyone can call to discuss this particular topic. Do not just point them to “the nearest government office.”
- “I feel that a large proportion of senior citizens need more help in both accessing available services and knowing what services are available.”
- “It should be easier and quicker to reach a real person to speak with.”
- “Most people work 9-5. Offices should be open late so we can use the services.”
- “Government services should be open on weekends and/or evenings.”
- “Ensure satellite offices are located within 30-minute driving distances of rural towns. Ensure departments are sufficiently staffed to preclude inordinate waiting periods.”

CITIZENS DON’T KNOW WHERE TO START

Many citizens perceive an overwhelming challenge when they contemplate locating a government service. Figure 5 is a clear illustration of just how pervasive this attitude is: 69 percent of citizens agree or strongly agree with the statement “Knowing where to start is the biggest challenge in getting government services.” Only 9 percent have little or no problem finding services, and 22 percent fall somewhere in between.

Furthermore, only 23 percent agreed with the statement “I feel confident that I can

Figure 5
Two common beliefs about access.
Citizens First 2000.



readily access any government service I need." That leaves the vast majority - 77 percent - anywhere from a bit flustered to totally bewildered!

It is not difficult to establish why these attitudes exist:

- Many government services aren't used very often, so the citizen faces a new or hazily remembered process each time.
- Many government services are not available in the storefront manner typical of private-sector services.
- Who provides the service? Many citizens aren't sure which level of government delivers what they want, so they have no idea where to begin their search.
- The names of services, agencies and departments often change, making it frustrating to try finding services in the Blue (or Grey) Pages of the telephone directory.

IT HAPPENS TO EVERYONE

The conclusion that some Canadians are overwhelmed at the prospect of seeking government services may not seem surprising. But surely there are segments of the population who have the situation well in hand - public employees, for example, or those with post-

Explaining “Variance”

The five bars in the left-hand chart of Figure 5 show how people differ in their response to the idea that government service is difficult to access. These differences can also be represented mathematically, and the statistical term that describes these differences is *variance*. In simple terms, variance is the measure of how people differ in their response.

A research study such as *Citizens First 2000* seeks to understand why people differ - in mathematical terms it seeks to *explain* the variance in response. For example, suppose that in Figure 5, every person aged 18 to 24 answered “strongly disagree” (1 out of 5) to the statement. At the same time, every person aged 25 to 34 answered 2 out of 5, all people 65 and older answered 5 out of 5, and so forth. Age would then account for 100 percent of the variance in peoples’ response to this question (i.e., age would provide a complete explanation of people’s response).

In fact, this did not happen! People of *all* ages said that they had no difficulty accessing government services; likewise, people of *all* ages said that they had a hard time.

Age did play a small role. Older people tended to agree more strongly than did young people that services are difficult to access. But the effect is very small: age accounts for just 2 percent of the variance in response. Is it therefore advisable to develop access strategies for different age groups? Certainly not.

As a rough guide, those who design service improvements should pay close attention to research results that explain about 20 percent of the variance in a given situation. If results explain 30 or 40 percent of the variance, the case is that much stronger.

The “drivers of satisfaction” discussed in Chapter 5 explain almost 70 percent of the variance in satisfaction ratings of government services. They establish an extremely solid basis for policy formulation and service strategy development.

secondary degrees. Do these citizens approach government services with a more settled outlook? In fact, this is not the case.

The challenge of knowing where to start is universal. It is not affected by any of the following factors:

- education
- employment by a government or publicly funded agency *versus* other citizens
- size of community (small-town residents *versus* city dwellers)
- income

What about Demographics?

Surveys reporting “demographic breaks” - that one region of the country differs from another, or that women and men differ, or that income groups differ - are the norm. An often-quoted line is that demographics explain 30 percent of just about anything. When the *Citizens First* project assessed demographic influences on research results contained in this report, however, it found that these influences are for the most part small and infrequent.

In fact, in the context of explaining how people access and use government services, demographics typically explain less than 5 percent of anything. Other factors - such as getting timely service and being treated fairly - far outweigh differences among regions or age groups or other demographic variables. In service-quality research, demographics may help to hone results, but they rarely represent the major results themselves.

So demographics don't count? Such a claim runs counter to established beliefs. For example, it is a common assumption that rural and urban Canadians differ in their needs and expectations about government services. But the *Citizens First* projects found that these groups do not differ in their perception that government services are difficult to access, and these groups do not differ to any meaningful degree on most of the results in this survey.

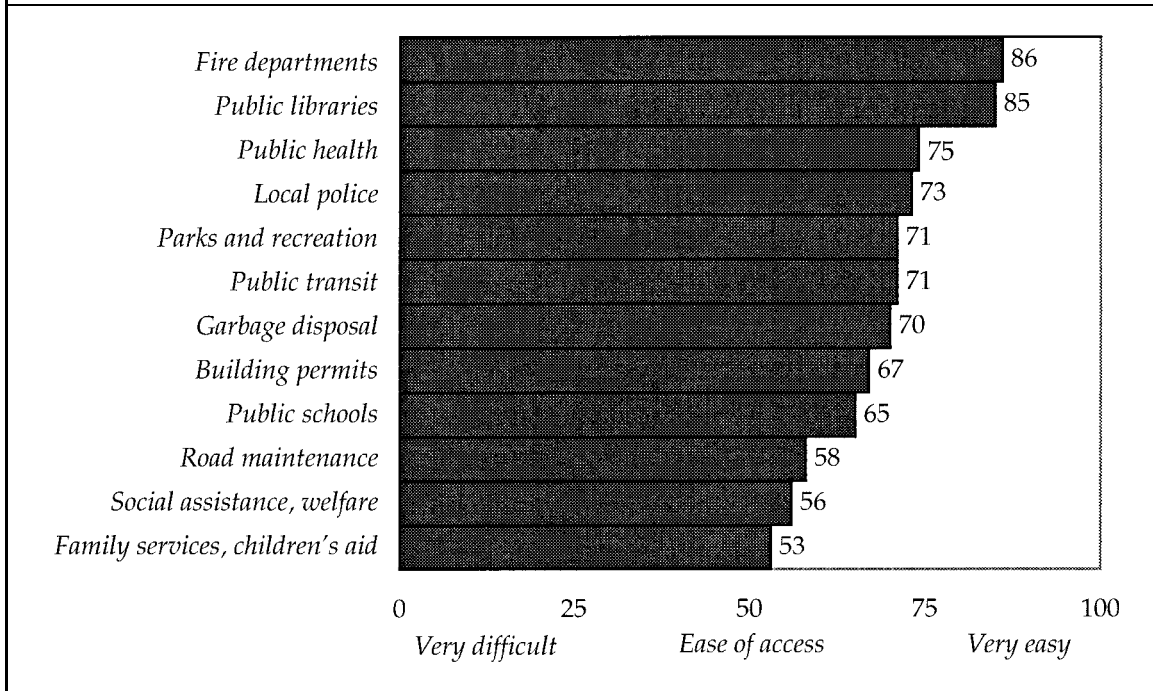
The likely reason is that both urban and rural citizens experience many government services in an identical manner. They typically access Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, passport applications, information services, Canada Pension Plan and many other services by mail and/or telephone, and delivery of these services is the same whether one lives in city or country.

Visits to government offices are also essentially the same for rural and urban dwellers. A motor vehicle licence office provides identical service in a small town as in a city, as does any other service that is tied directly to a government computer.

In general, one of the primary goals of governments is to provide equitable service to all citizens. Governments go out of their way to treat all citizens equally and to be seen to do so. This is very different from marketing in the private sector, where companies often attempt to create a distinctive demographic profile (a “market segment”). By contrast, governments strive to minimize demographic impacts on service delivery.

To be clear, there are contexts in which demographic variables *do* explain 30 percent or more of the variance. Trends that emerge over extended periods of time are a classic case - for example, consumer buying habits change enormously over a lifetime, from starting a household to raising children to retirement.

Figure 6
Ease of access - municipal services.
Citizens First 2000.



Age is the only variable that has a noticeable effect on this attitude; younger people are less daunted than older ones. In all, however, age accounts for only 2 percent of the “variance” in response to this question.

Where age is a statistically significant variable, it is not a very important one. This is common in surveys with large samples (greater than 500 to 1000 respondents): relationships among variables are statistically significant - meaning firm in a mathematical sense - but are too small to be of consequence in designing program improvements.

IS ACCESS REALLY THAT DIFFICULT?

It appears clear that many citizens approach the task of seeking information on government services with a fair amount of fearful apprehension. It is useful, then, to look at what their actual experience is and discover whether their concerns involve perception or reality.

Figures 6 through 8 show the result when respondents were asked to describe ease of access to a particular government service they'd used in the past year. They were asked to first choose a single experience, which could be

Figure 7
Ease of access - provincial services.
Citizens First 2000.

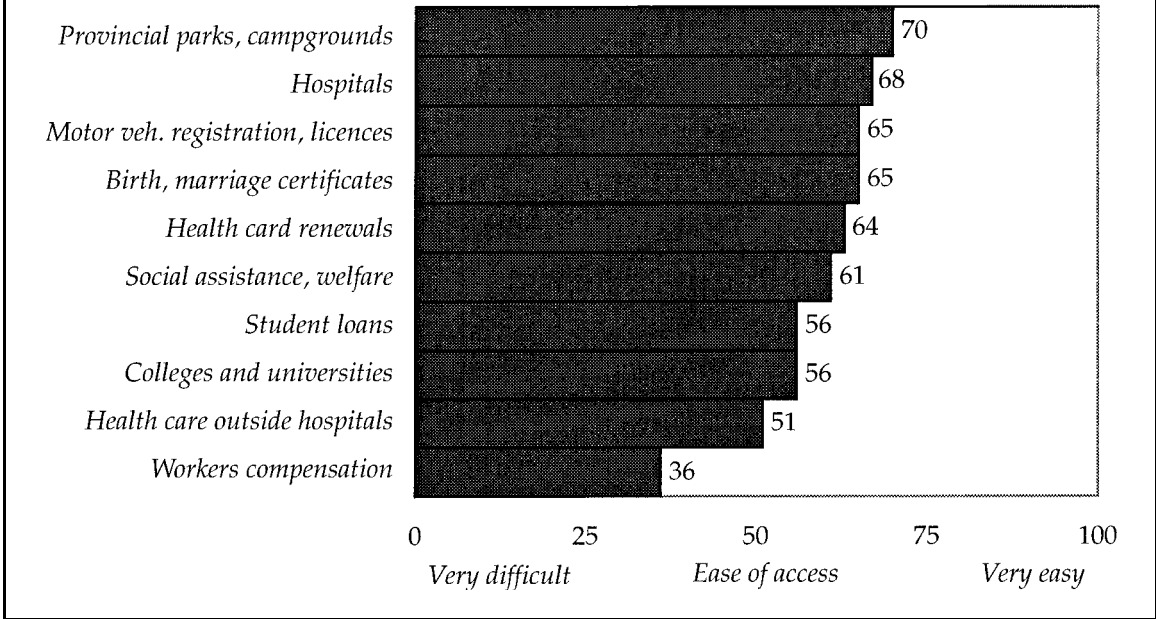
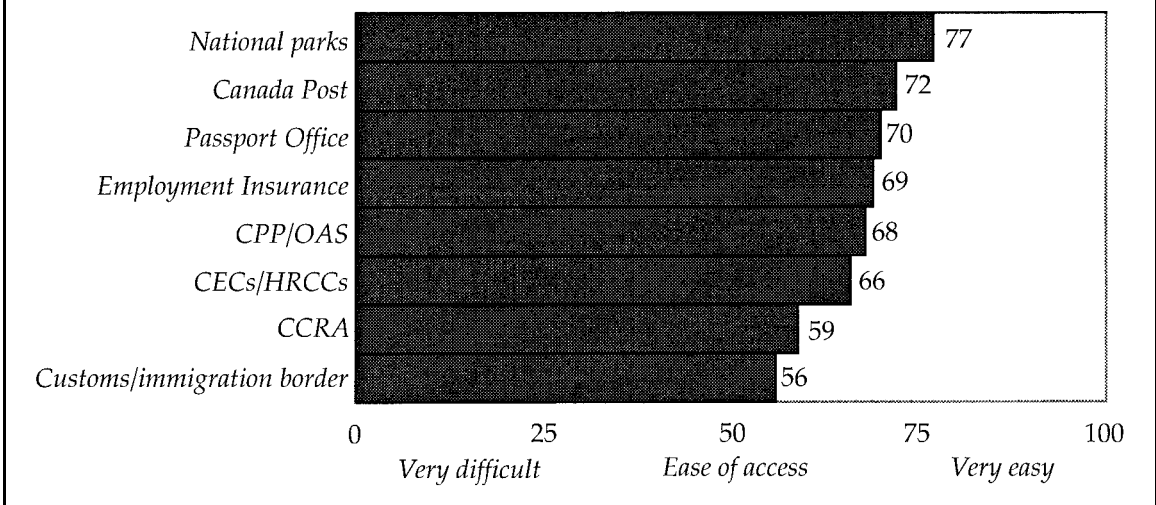


Figure 8
Ease of access - federal services.
Citizens First 2000.



- a service from any level of government;
- a simple or complex experience; or
- a happy experience or not.

Across the 6,040 respondents, well over one hundred different services were chosen. Some - Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, local police services, hospitals - were chosen frequently; others, such as Coast Guard Search and Rescue and hunting, fishing or firearms registration, were chosen less often.

Respondents described their chosen service in some detail and included a rating of how easy or difficult it was to access.

Results show a broad range of access ratings across all levels of government. Local fire departments, provincial parks and campgrounds, and the Passport Office are all services that citizens rate as easy to access, while family services, workers compensation, and customs and immigration border services receive low marks for ease of access.

ANTICIPATION AND REALITY DON'T MATCH UP

Two things are clear from the results so far:

1. Many people believe that government services are difficult to access (though a few consider it easy).
2. Citizens' actual experience accessing specific services varies greatly. Some services are, in general, more or less easy to access, and, within any given service, there are those who find access easy and some who do not.

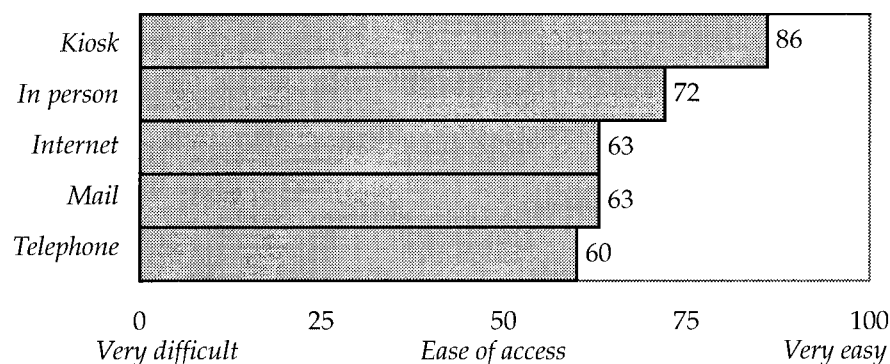
Looking at these findings, it is useful to consider the relationship between a person's *attitude* about accessing government services and their *experience* with the specific service that they described. In other words, do people who "anticipate" difficulty in access "experience" such difficulty?

The correlation between these variables is near zero. There is essentially no connection between what citizens believe about the accessibility of government services and their actual rating of accessibility for a specific service! What does this mean?

In the first place, if "perception is reality," then many people likely *do* approach government services with apprehension. Moreover, their apprehension may be rooted in actual experience - even if the negative experience was years or decades in the past. It's even possible that apprehension remains in spite of more positive recent experiences. While this mystery cannot be solved here, the service lesson is clear:

Service lesson: Because many citizens approach government with doubt and trepidation, the initial contact with front-line staff is critically important. This contact - whether it's a smile, a friendly hello, or a concerned response - has enormous power to quickly dispel initial apprehension.

Figure 9
Ease of access for single-channel service experiences.
Citizens First 2000.



Note: Results are based on those who used a single channel. Those who used, for example, both telephone and mail are excluded, as it is not possible to separate out the contribution that each channel makes to the judgement of ease of access.

THE CHANNEL QUESTION

There are apparent differences associated with ease of access via different service-delivery channels - the telephone, the Internet, walk-in services and so on. Describing the ease of access associated with different channels is important but also complex. This section presents the results on access channels to date and identifies a number of questions that can be pursued in the future.

Figure 9 illustrates ease of access for respondents who obtained their chosen service by five different channels. These results speak to situations where citizens used a single channel to access service (multi-channel experiences are described later). Because these situations are single-channel, they represent the simpler end of the spectrum of service delivery. Kiosks are deemed easiest to access.

These results need to be regarded with caution. They do not imply that kiosks are a better way of providing service than walk-in centres or mail. Kiosks offer a small number

of routine services such as renewing a driver's licence or getting a copy of one's driving record. Each of the five channels provides a different mix of services. Some are more complex than others, and the differences in access ratings may reflect the nature of the services that are accessed through a particular channel rather than any inherent ease or difficulty of the channel itself.

This raises an important issue for future research: We need some way to capture the essential difficulty or complexity of the service that the citizen is seeking. Access is fundamentally easier when renewing a driver's licence than when arranging for long-term health care. Characterizing service needs along a continuum of complexity would enable us to determine the relative contributions of channels and services to ease of access. Unfortunately, there was not sufficient space in the present survey to do this, so it remains a potentially important missing piece of the access puzzle.

With this limitation in mind, it remains that the ease-of-access rating of 86 for kiosks is high by any standard.

By contrast, the rating of 60 for the telephone channel is low by almost any standard. The telephone *should* be easy: the technology is simple enough, after all - you just pick it up and dial. Moreover, it is the channel that accounts for the majority of citizens' contacts with government.

Services that Require Multiple Channels

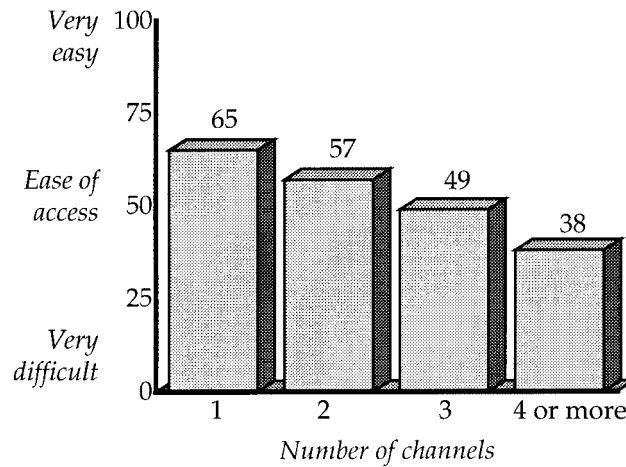
The most frequently used channels are "in-person" and "telephone"; each of these accounts for more than one-third of all contacts with government. Citizens regard in-person access as relatively easy, while they consider telephone access relatively difficult.

What happens when getting the service requires both telephone and walk-in channels - is the ease of access close to the telephone rating, close to the in-person rating, or does it fall somewhere in between? The answer is at first surprising.

The ease-of-access rating for those who used both telephone and walk-in services is 55 out of 100 - *lower than that for either of the individual channels*. This points to a general finding about access: The more channels that a person must use to get a service, the more difficult their rating of access becomes (Figure 10).

This result requires careful assessment. Part of the reason behind it is that services requiring multiple channels tend to be more complex than those requiring a single channel. But how much does the drop in ease of access reflect more difficult services, and how much does it reflect the problems that arise trying to negotiate multiple channels?

Figure 10
Access is easier when you have to go through only one channel.
Citizens First 2000.



This is another instance where having a measure of the inherent complexity of the service need would be helpful. One measure that is related to complexity, however, is time, and the survey did ask citizens how long it took them to get the service they were seeking. Multi-channel experiences do in fact take longer than single-channel experiences (Figure 11).

The first panel in Figure 11 shows that 62 percent of single-channel service experiences are concluded within one day. In the following panels:

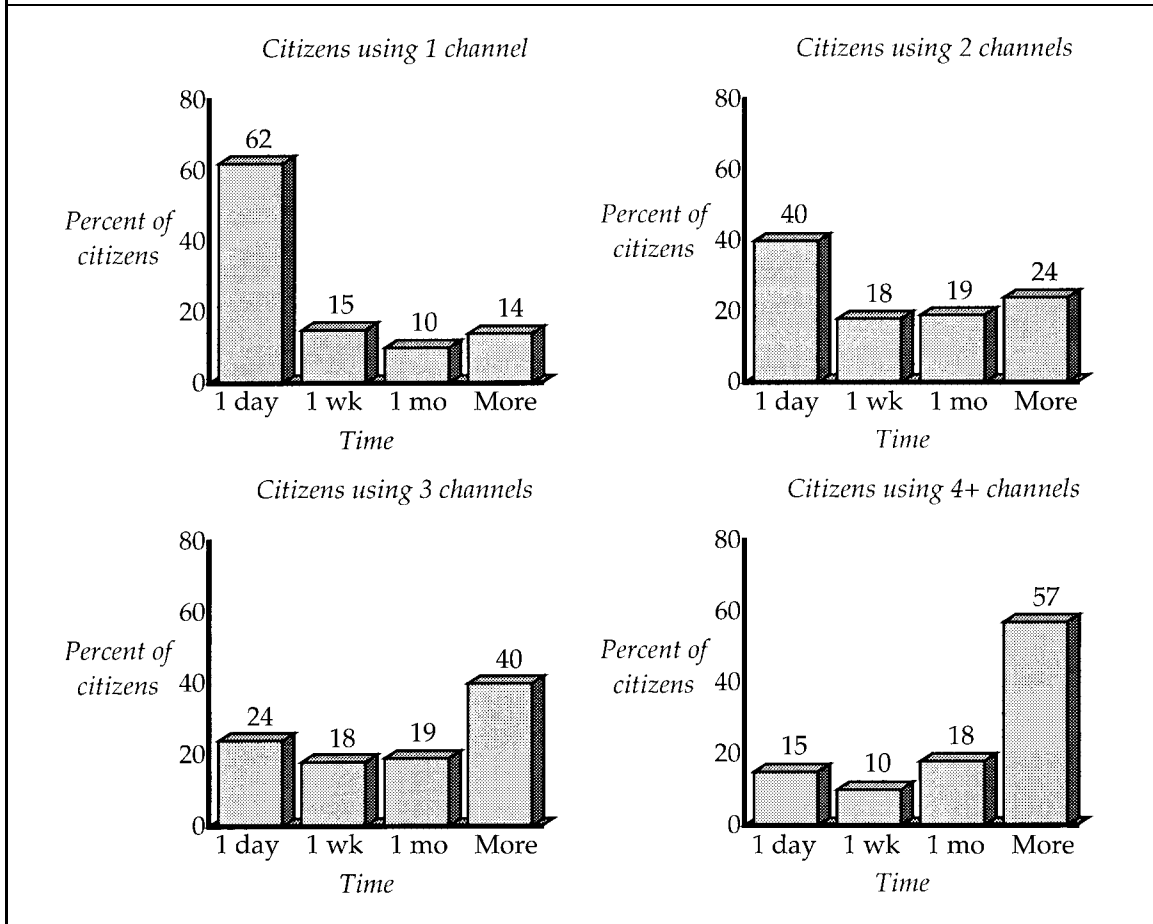
- Forty percent of two-channel experiences are concluded within one day.
- Twenty-four percent of three-channel experiences are concluded within one day.
- Fifteen percent of experiences requiring four or more channels are concluded within one day.

The fact that multi-channel experiences are longer and more complex than single-channel experiences explains at least part of the result shown in Figure 10. Access is easier when you have to go through only one channel. Is there more? Do more channels necessarily mean greater difficulty? The data at hand do not provide an answer, but there are two possibilities, and both probably occur at this time. One is that each additional channel is a further impediment to access, presenting yet another obstacle for the citizen to overcome. The second is that channels are seamlessly coordinated so that the citizen is led from one to the next without stress or frustration.

Figure 11

More channels imply more time to get the service.

Citizens First 2000.



Consider a citizen who does some preliminary research on a question by looking up the relevant government Internet site. The citizen then follows up with a call to an agent. The result can be either that the agent has no knowledge of what is on the site - and the citizen's inquiry must start again from square one - or that the agent understands what the site does or does not offer, and advances the citizen's quest accordingly. This is a simple illustration of what can happen with any change of channels.

Today's new service-delivery strategies actually encourage citizens to use multiple channels to access services. The Internet is the most prominent new channel, and it often functions as a precursor to a phone call or a mailed request or an office visit. Call centres and information lines are handling more and more contacts, many of which lead the citizen on to a further channel. The service-delivery challenge is to make one channel facili-

tate entry to the next. The research challenge, which is only begun in this present project, is to design a method that measures how 1) the inherent complexity of the service need, and 2) the movement among delivery channels contributes to ease or difficulty of access.

WHAT MAKES ACCESS EASY OR DIFFICULT?

Preceding sections describe access in a global manner - some services are easier than others and some channels may be easier than others. This section seeks to identify the elements that predict ease of access across channels and across services: what is it that causes the citizen to say that access is easy or difficult?

Analysis of the survey data reveals three factors that underlie citizens' ratings of ease of access to government services. They are, in order of importance, as follows:

Factor 1. Specific difficulties that the citizen has getting to the service

The more obstacles the person encounters getting to the service, the harder that service is to access. Problems can include telephone issues, distance, getting bounced from person to person, etc.

Factor 2. Previous experience with the service

Those who know how to get the service when they start out have an easier time.

Factor 3. The total length of time it takes to get the service

Longer experiences rated the service more difficult to access, possibly because they are inherently more complex and involve more contacts.

Each of these factors contributes an increment to citizens' ratings of ease of access. Together, they account for 36 percent of the variance in ratings of ease of access. Following sections describe their effects in detail.

The first and third factors are matters that governments can act on directly. The specific problems listed in Figure 12 are elements of the service-delivery process. Service providers can improve telephone access, they can work to minimize the number of times a person is referred on, and so on. The total length of time it takes to get a service is largely within government's control as well (recognizing that things cannot always go as quickly as citizens would like, for example in matters where rights and responsibilities may conflict - zoning changes, approvals, justice matters and so on).

The effect of each factor on ease of access is illustrated below.

Figure 12
Access problems at each level of government.
Citizens First 2000.

<i>Access problem</i>	<i>Percent who experience the problem</i>		
	<i>Federal</i>	<i>Provincial</i>	<i>Municipal</i>
1. Busy phone lines	32	28	25
2. Bounced from person to person	27	30	28
3. Trouble with telephone trees or voice mail	20	16	14
4. Could not find the service in the Blue Pages	13	14	13
5. Did not know where to look	11	12	13
6. Parking difficult	12	14	9
7. Trouble finding the service on the Internet	6	6	5
8. Had to travel too great a distance	5	8	5
9. Other (e.g., long waits)	11	12	9
Percent who report any access problem	65	64	55

1. Access problems

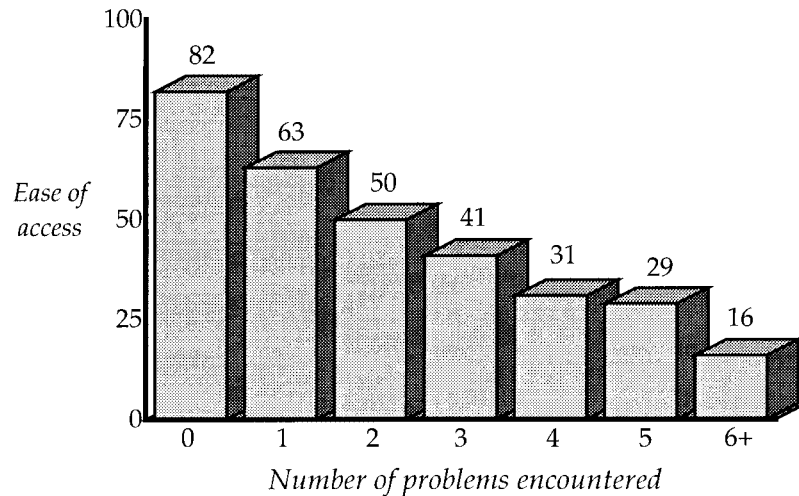
The *Citizens First 2000* survey listed eight common access problems. Respondents checked any that applied to their own service experience. The results can be seen in Figure 12. They are broken down by level of government, showing that citizens' experience is rather similar at each level.

The telephone figures prominently in the list of problems. The first, third and fourth items are telephone problems, and the second, getting bounced from person to person, is a telephone issue in large measure (though it can also occur in other modes).

In general, experienced users fared slightly better in terms of access than did first-time users. First-time users encountered 1.5 problems, on average, while those who had used the service before had 1.1 problems on average.

Citizens who used municipal services reported an average of 1.2 access problems, while those who used federal and provincial government services reported an average of 1.5. This difference does not necessarily mean that municipalities do a better job of service delivery than other levels of government. Since the results compare different services at

Figure 13
The number of problems encountered affects ease of access.
Citizens First 2000.



each level - public transit at the municipal level versus health care at the provincial level, and Canada Pension Plan at the federal - they may simply reflect a set of services at one level that are inherently easier to access than the sets at other levels.

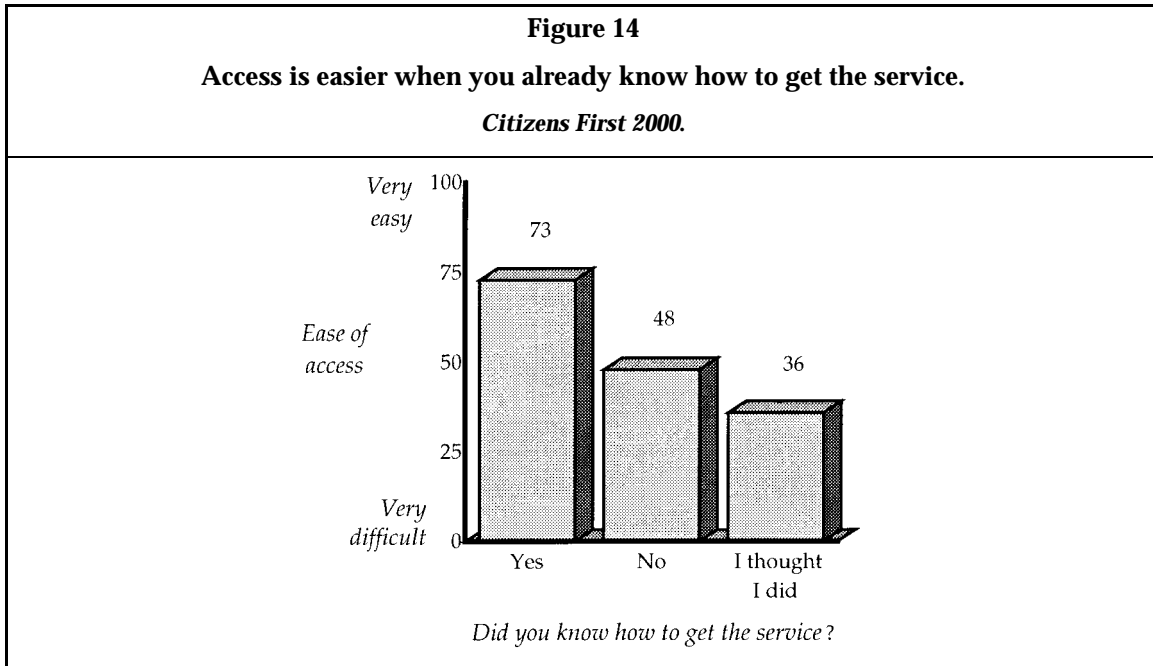
The effect of these problems on ease-of-access ratings is dramatic (Figure 13). Citizens who reported no access problems (a group that includes more than one-third of respondents) rated ease of access at 82 out of 100. Encountering a single problem - any one of those listed in Figure 12 - drops ease of access to 63 out of 100! Each additional problem reduces ease of access by a further increment.

2. Knowledge of the service situation

Knowledge also makes access easier. Not surprisingly, those who answered “ Yes, I knew how to get the service” found access easier than those who said “ No, I did not know how to get the service.” The lowest scores, however, came from the 15 percent of respondents who thought they knew how to get it, but found that they did not. This setback caused ratings to drop to 37 out of 100 (Figure 14).

3. Time

The effect of duration on ease of access is clear from Figure 15. Services that take only five



minutes or thirty minutes to access are perceived as very easy. From one hour to one month, scores are near 60 out of 100. Past one month, access scores drop again.

It should be noted that the bars in Figure 15 represent somewhat different services. Services that take five to thirty minutes are likely to be routine transactions, while those requiring more time may be more complex.

FIXING THE BIGGEST PROBLEM

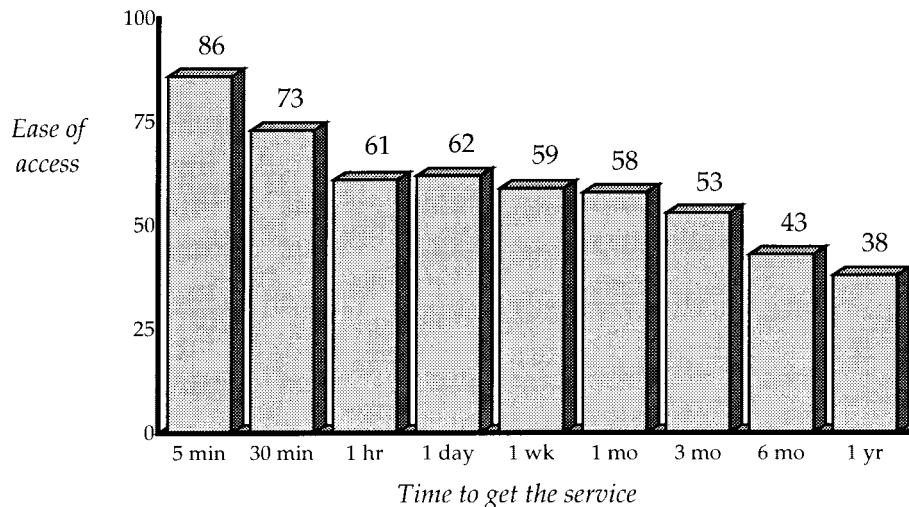
The results illustrated in Figure 12 present a strong case for the assertion that telephone problems are the major barrier to accessing government services. Both in the 1998 and 2000 surveys, telephone problems top the list of difficulties that citizens encountered, regardless of level of government.

The list of access barriers includes three phone-related issues:

- busy phone lines
- trouble with telephone trees or voice mail
- could not find the service in the Blue Pages of the telephone directory.

Thirty percent of all respondents identified one or more of these telephone issues as a problem in the context of the specific service experience they described.

Figure 15
The duration of the service affects ease of access.
Citizens First 2000.



Of course, many people did not use the phone to access service. Considering only those who actually used the phone, Figure 16 shows that 55 percent report one or more problems with telephone access.

Among telephone users, busy lines were the number-one access problem, reported by 40 percent of all those who used the phone. Twenty-four percent of users identified problems with automatic phone systems or voice mail, and 18 percent mentioned the Blue Pages.

Service lesson: A majority of citizens who contacted government by telephone experienced one or more problems getting through! The telephone is “the people’s channel” - the most frequent means of contacting government - and must be a convenient and reliable avenue to service.

If telephone problems represent the most significant barrier to access, the telephone also presents government with the greatest opportunity for service improvement.

Solutions to some of the problems are quite clear. If a phone line is overly busy, for example, it indicates a need for more operators or for routing calls to other locations. Citizens suggested several additional solutions to problems with accessing services via telephone (Figure 17).

Figure 16
Telephone access problems.
Citizens First 2000.

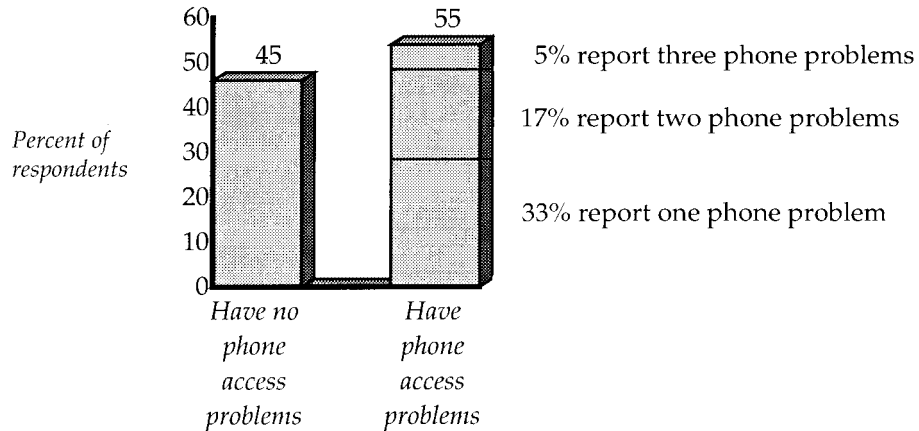


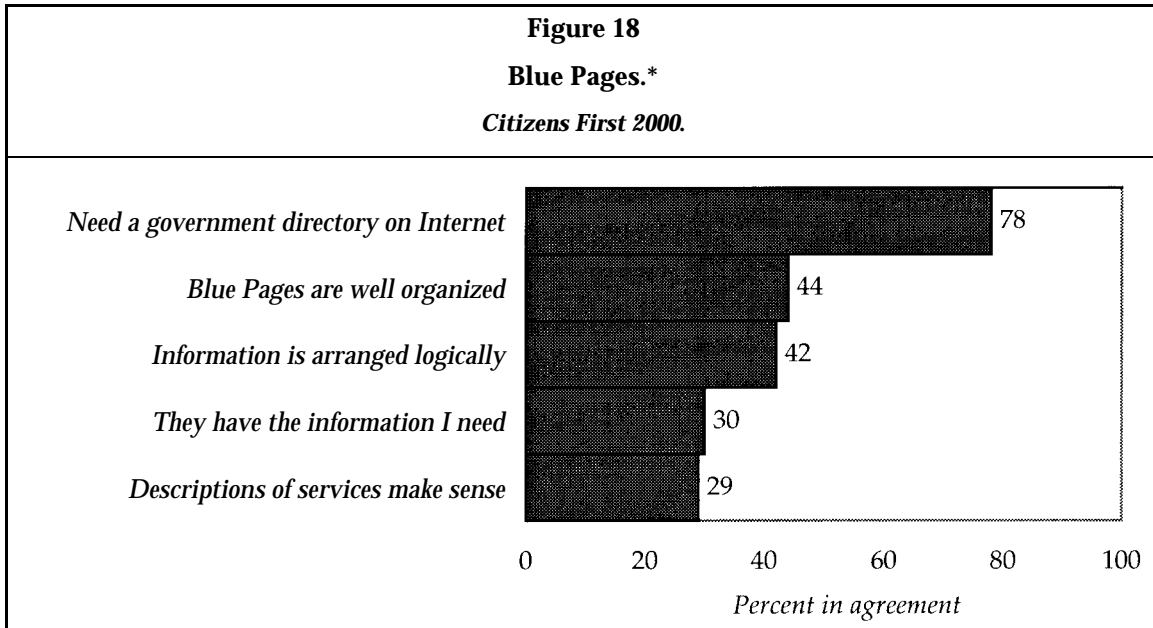
Figure 17
Solutions to telephone frustration.
Citizens First 2000.

<i>Solution</i>	<i>Percent in agreement</i>
In automatic systems, press zero to get a real person.	95
The system gives the location of the office and its hours of business.	86
The system informs how many minutes you will wait in the queue.	82
The system informs of an Internet site where the information is available.	58

RATING THE BLUE PAGES

Survey results clearly show that citizens use the telephone as their primary means of making contact with government. At the same time, governments have long recognized that the Blue Pages do not work well, and they have been trying to improve this. In many provinces and territories, federal and provincial governments have cooperated in re-designing the Blue Pages, and the process is well under way. The new design has already appeared in a small number of centres and will become increasingly widespread in the coming year. Some provinces are moving ahead more rapidly than others.

Respondents were asked to rate the Blue Pages, based on an experience they'd had in



*In some areas, these are known as Grey Pages

the past year, and Figure 18 shows the result. Clearly, efforts to improve the Blue Pages have not yet impressed themselves on citizens.

There may be several reasons for this. First, some people don't use the Blue Pages often enough to become familiar with how they work. Second, change in general is slow to register, as it must compete with past perceptions and negative experiences.

CITIZENS WANT AN INTERNET DIRECTORY

The section on the Blue Pages included a question about whether there should be a complete directory of government services on the Internet. Given the growth of the Internet and the enormous impact of information technology, it is perhaps not surprising that an overwhelming 78 percent of respondents answered yes to this question.

In fact, the idea of a comprehensive government Internet directory enjoys almost universal popularity. Ninety-three percent of people who describe themselves as expert computer users agree with the need for such a directory, but so do 67 percent of those who describe themselves as beginners. Eighty-five percent of those under thirty-five agreed, but so did 64 percent of those over age sixty-five. The results cut across all income levels and are consistent across the country, with more than 70 percent agreement in every province and territory.

5. DRIVERS OF SATISFACTION

WHAT ARE “DRIVERS OF SATISFACTION”?

The *Citizens First* project has demonstrated that the drivers of satisfaction with government services are *elements of the service experience itself*. In order to pinpoint what those elements are, it is crucial to ask people about *specific* encounters with government (e.g., What happened when you asked for information on a tax issue? What happened when your mother needed home care?).

Drivers are *not* primarily demographic factors such as age or region or language. These elements have a relatively minor impact on how citizens perceive service quality. Therefore, knowing that a person hails from Yorkton or Moncton, or that he or she works as an electrician or a nurse, does not indicate how that person regards government services.

Drivers are also *not* primarily attitudinal factors such as those reported in Chapter 4 of this report. So knowing that a person feels confident about accessing needed services tells relatively little about how that person experiences specific services.

1998 DRIVERS

In 1998, *Citizens First* research identified five “drivers of satisfaction” - the elements that most strongly influence citizens’ perceptions of service quality across the many services provided by three levels of government: timeliness, knowledge/competence, “the extra mile/the extra smile,” fairness, and outcome.

The 2000 research repeated the 1998 analysis of drivers to test whether the original five stand the test of time. Results show that they remain the five most important elements determining client satisfaction across the entire range of governments and services. They account for 69 percent of variance in satisfaction rating.

2000 DRIVERS

Drivers of Citizen Satisfaction.

Citizens First 2000.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Timeliness | <i>"I was satisfied with the amount of time it took to get the service."</i> |
| 2. Knowledge, Competence | <i>"Staff were knowledgeable and competent."</i> |
| 3. The Extra Mile, The Extra Smile | <i>"Staff went the extra mile to make sure I got what I needed / I was treated in a friendly, courteous manner."</i> |
| 4. Fairness | <i>"I was treated fairly."</i> |
| 5. Outcome | <i>"I got what I needed."</i> |

The drivers of client satisfaction are listed here in order of importance, with timeliness having the most profound effect on citizens' satisfaction and outcome having the least effect.

This does not, however, mean that outcome is not important. All five drivers are by definition critical to service delivery (i.e., they define the service-quality improvements that matter most to citizens). Listing the five in order of importance simply means that should a provider wish to select a single area to change, more timely service should be the one.

THE EXTRA MILE, THE EXTRA SMILE

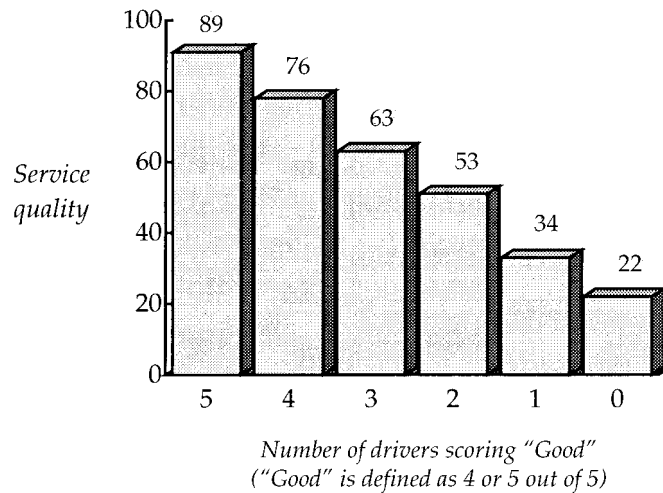
The 2000 research has helped clarify the third driver, "courtesy." In developing the 2000 survey, a number of focus groups were held, and participants indicated that satisfaction is greatly increased when staff "go the extra mile" to ensure that citizens get what they need. Citizens saw this as an extension of the item "I was treated in a friendly, courteous manner." As a result, a new item was added to the survey questions on "A recent experience." It reads "Staff went the extra mile to make sure I got what I needed."

Survey results confirm the focus-group recommendations. "Going the extra mile" and "courtesy" combine to form a dimension that is stronger than either one alone. From the citizens' perspective, courtesy means more than formal politeness. It means reaching out - proactively - to ensure that the client is helped through each step and each aspect of the service experience to make sure the citizen attains the best possible outcome.

IMPACT OF THE DRIVERS

Figure 19 shows the impact of the five drivers on service-quality ratings and documents just how critical these elements are to good service.

Figure 19
Impact of drivers.
Citizens First 2000.



- The first bar represents citizens who received good service on each of the five drivers. “ Good” is defined as a rating of either 4 or 5 out of 5. These citizens experienced timely service from courteous staff who went the extra mile and who were knowledgeable. These citizens were treated fairly, and they got the outcome they were after. The result? They rated service quality, on average, at 89 out of 100!
- The second bar represents those who received good service on any 4 of the 5 drivers. These respondents rated one driver at 3 out of 5 or less, and rated service, on average, at 76 out of 100.
- The third bar represents citizens who received good service on any 3 of the 5 drivers. In this case the average service-quality rating falls to 63 out of 100.

Service lesson: The five drivers of satisfaction are the most critical determinants of satisfaction with government service. Providing good service on each dimension guarantees high service-quality ratings from citizens.

This summarizes the situation at the broadest possible level, that is, in terms of all the services of all three levels of government. The five drivers do not, however, apply equally to each and every service that is offered. Good service is not the same thing for public transit, hospitals and taxation agencies. Elements that do not figure among the present five drivers may very well be critical in certain service areas. Nevertheless, the five do define a huge piece of the puzzle, accounting for 69 percent of the variance in service-quality ratings across the entire spectrum of government services.³

In the following sections, we move beyond this overview and examine drivers in different service areas including Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, police, and Internet services. Government service providers may also wish to conduct their own research and so establish the drivers that are critical in their own areas.

PERFORMANCE ON SERVICE ELEMENTS

Having identified the five elements that drive service quality, it is important to assess how well governments are performing in these critical areas. Response distributions for four of the five drivers appear in Figure 20. In terms of outcome, 68 percent got what they wanted, 14 percent got part of it, and 19 percent did not get what they wanted.

Where should service providers put their efforts? Improving service on any of these dimensions will pay off, but timeliness is a very good place to start. It has a stronger effect on service-quality ratings than any of the others, *and* it receives the lowest performance score.

Note, however, that these performance scores are averaged across the spectrum of government services. One should not assume that clients of any particular service rate performance in exactly this manner. Once again, there is no substitute for accurate knowledge of one's own client base.

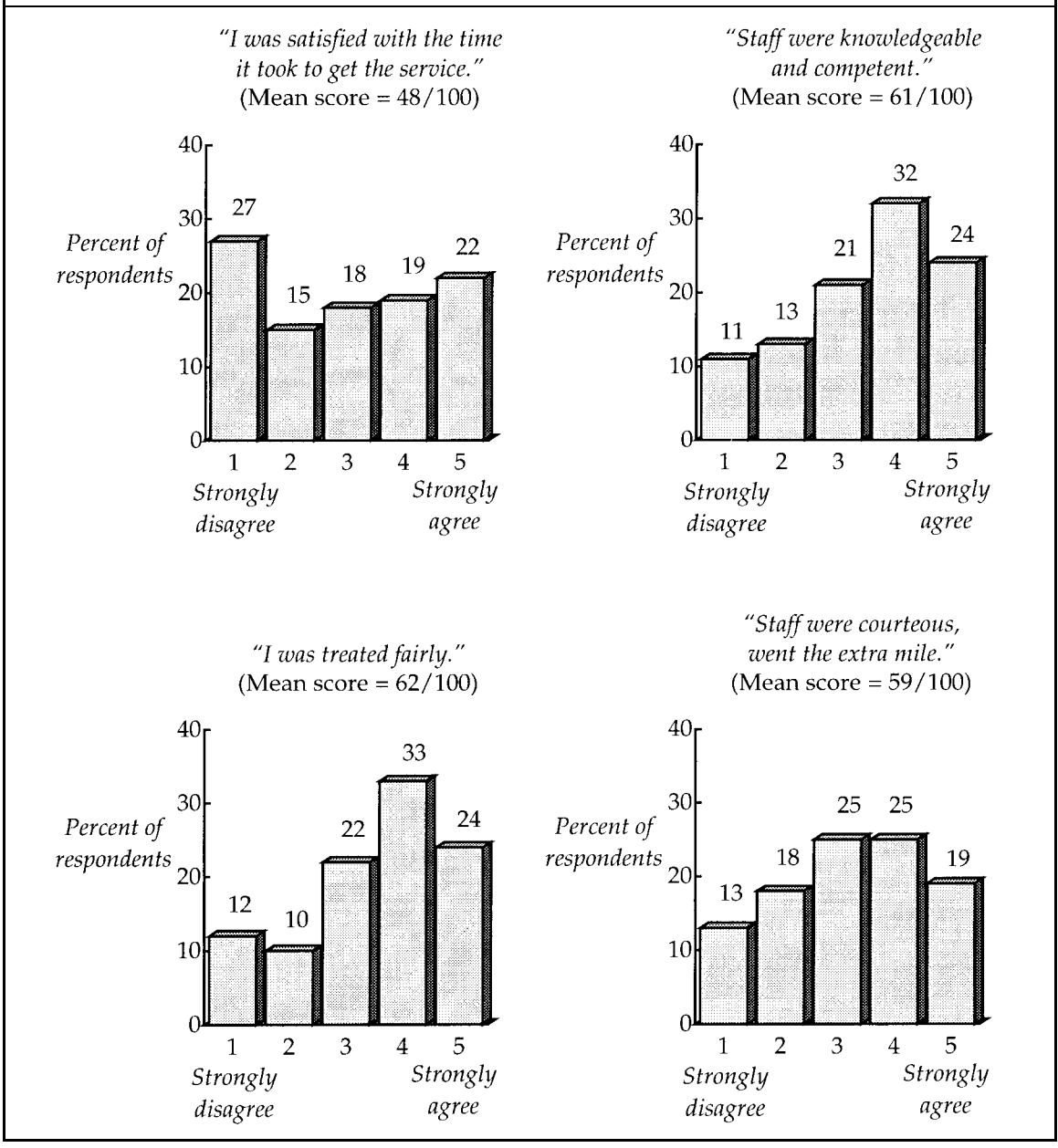
DRIVERS FOR SPECIFIC SERVICES AND SPECIFIC CHANNELS

As five drivers characterize the entire spectrum of government services, it is important to ask whether they hold for individual service areas as well. Because they explain such a larger proportion of the variance in satisfaction ratings, there is a good chance that they will apply to many different services. This section explores drivers in several specific contexts in order to test their generality.

Each analysis begins with a large initial set of variables that could potentially bear on service-quality ratings. The variables that are responsible for determining service-quality scores are then selected from this set. The set includes the standard demographic variables (gender, age, size of community, education, income) plus approximately fifteen variables that describe the person's experience getting the service.

These results must be preceded with the cautionary note that the samples are self-selected. The respondents who described a Canada Customs and Revenue Agency service experience chose to describe the CCRA rather than, say, a hospital experience. A random sample of CCRA customers might produce different results.

Figure 20
Performance on drivers.
Citizens First 2000.



This set of analyses shows that the five drivers do tend to recur across very different types of service (Figure 21). They occur in different combinations, and their relative importance varies. Additional elements such as "knowing how long the process will take" can also appear in certain contexts. The analyses for hospitals and police are still based on aggregated groups of service providers - "hospitals" includes inpatient and

Figure 21
Drivers for service clusters.
Citizens First 2000.

<i>Service type</i>	<i>Drivers</i>	<i>beta *</i>
<i>All services</i>	Timeliness	.40
	Courtesy, extra mile	.20
	Knowledge, competence	.16
	Fairness	.14
	Outcome	.08
<i>CCRA</i>	Timeliness	.31
	Knowledge, competence	.20
	Courtesy, extra mile	.19
	Clear how long the process would take	.18
	Clear accurate information	.15
<i>Hospitals</i>	Timeliness	.39
	Courtesy, going the extra mile	.33
	Clear accurate information	.19
	Knowledge, competence	.15
<i>Police</i> <i>(all levels of government)</i>	Fairness	.67
	Timeliness	.27

* Beta indicates the relative strength of the drivers. Larger values are stronger.

outpatient services across the country, and “police” includes services of municipal, provincial and federal governments. These analyses go some way to identifying drivers for specific service providers, but there may be considerable variation from hospital to hospital and from one police force to another.

Service lesson: In sum, the five original drivers characterize government service across the board. Service providers will enhance their service delivery by using them. If, however, a program or department can do its own research, it will gain in both clarity and certainty.

Ideally, governments would deliver “good” service (defined as at least four out of five) on all five drivers. This typically leads to service-quality ratings over the 80 out of 100

Figure 22
Drivers for telephone and walk-in service-delivery channels.
Citizens First 2000.

<i>Service type</i>	<i>Drivers</i>	<i>beta *</i>
<i>Telephone</i>	Timeliness	.43
	Knowledge, competence	.26
	Extra mile	.20
	Outcome	.10
<i>Walk-in</i>	Timeliness	.34
	Courtesy	.21
	Extra mile	.12
	Knowledge, competence	.12
	Fairness	.11
	Outcome	.11

mark. There are, however, practical limitations on some services. Not every service can always provide citizens with the outcome they want (tax department and building applications are examples), and, as a result, these services may not achieve the overall ratings that libraries or parks might expect.

Service lesson: Each type of service faces different opportunities and limitations. Service providers should assess their performance against other providers of similar services rather than against any overall aggregate.

The analysis of drivers can also be conducted for service-delivery channels. Analyses for the telephone and walk-in channels are presented here. These show some differentiation, indicating that attention must be paid to both the service type and the delivery channel. An analysis of Internet services in Chapter 8 presents further evidence of channel-specific drivers.

The two channels differ mainly in that courtesy and fairness number among the drivers for walk-in services, but not for telephone services (Figure 22). The importance of the interpersonal element is apparently greater in face-to-face situations. This makes sense. It is easier to pick up cues about courtesy and fair treatment in the walk-in setting. Facial expression and body language play a part, and the client observes how she or he is treated in relation to other clients. The entire physical dimension of walk-in service is absent on the telephone, and the analysis of drivers shows how important it is for walk-in services.

6. THE MEASUREMENT OF PROGRESS

This chapter explores service-quality ratings for the two years of the *Citizens First* project, 1998 and 2000. Trends are examined for the twenty-four public- and private-sector services shown earlier in Figure 1, then for a set of fifty municipal, provincial and federal services.

Results show what many large organizations both public and private, have found that change in client perceptions of service quality comes slowly. Reasons for the incremental pace of change are suggested, and the possible role electronic service delivery has in accelerating change is explored below.

PUBLIC- AND PRIVATE-SECTOR RATINGS, 1998-2000

Figure 23 presents service-quality ratings for twenty-four public- and private-sector services. Two aspects of these results merit discussion:

- The four ratings of service *in general* all show an increase from 1998 to 2000. Federal, provincial, municipal and private-sector services *in general* each increase by 3 to 4 points out of 100.
- At the level of specific services, there is very little apparent change between the results from 1998 and 2000. Most are within the survey's margin of error of about 2 points in 100.

The Increase for Service-Quality Scores in General

One might assume that a rating of services *in general* is a kind of summary or stand-in for ratings of specific services. This was likely the thinking behind the surveys that tracked citizens' ratings of government services *in general* through the 1990s.

Figure 23
Service-quality ratings for public and private providers.
Citizens First 2000.

<i>Service</i>	<i>Service quality (0-100)</i>	
	<i>1998</i>	<i>2000</i>
<i>Fire departments</i>	78	77
<i>Public libraries</i>	75	75
Supermarkets	74	73
Private mail carriers	68	69
<i>Provincial electric utilities</i>	63	64
<i>Provincial parks, campgrounds</i>	64	64
<i>Police</i>	63	63
Telephone companies	63	63
Private-sector services in general *	60	63
Department stores	-	62
<i>Passport Office</i>	60	61
<i>Canada Post *</i>	55	60
Insurance agencies	55	59
Taxis	57	58
<i>Municipal government services *</i>	53	57
<i>Public transit</i>	55	55
CCRA*	50	54
Cable-television companies	-	54
Banks	51	52
<i>Federal government services in general *</i>	47	51
<i>Provincial government services *</i>	47	50
<i>Public education system *</i>	47	49
<i>Hospitals</i>	46	49
<i>Road maintenance</i>	35	36

*Statistically significant difference between 1998 and 2000

Note: Government services appear in italics. Department stores and cable-television companies were not included in the 1998 survey.

The present results show this assumption to be false: ratings of service *in general* increase, while scores for specific services do not. If general ratings were a summary of the specific, they would follow the average of specific services up and down. In the present instance, they would remain unchanged from 1998 to 2000.

This leaves the question as to what ratings of service in general actually measure, if anything. In Chapter 2 it was proposed that, because these scores are so low, they reflect negative stereotypes of government. Why did they increase from 1998 to 2000? The reason is open to speculation, but it may indicate that the generally good economic situation of the past two years reflects well on governments at all levels.

In any case, the conclusion is confirmed that general ratings are not a reliable guide to what citizens think of individual services.

The Stability of Scores for Specific Services

From 1998 to 2000, many governments worked to improve service delivery. Does the lack of change mean that their efforts have been in vain?

Not necessarily. It is really too early to tell. What is certainly true is that rapid change in service-quality ratings should not be expected. Across the broad range of services that *Citizens First* addresses, there are several reasons that progress will be slow and incremental (Figure 23).

- One reason stems from the sheer number of governments and services involved. One province, for example, may make a dramatic improvement in its tax information services. The national picture, however, will not change appreciably until the majority of provinces undertake similar initiatives.
- A second reason is that citizens access some services infrequently - once a year for tax issues, less often to renew passports. There is, therefore, a built-in time lag: service improvements go unnoticed until the next time a citizen requires that service.
- A third reason is that major innovations may require changes to policy or legislation. Municipalities depend on provinces for enabling legislation. All levels of government are struggling with policy and legislation that will facilitate implementation of the new generation of electronic services. Issues such as how citizens will identify themselves online in a secure way (authentication) and the coordination of related services across jurisdictions present difficult policy decisions within governments and among them.
- A single good service experience may not be sufficient to change a person's opinion. It may require repeated good experiences before the change registers as a new way of doing business and not just as a lucky exception to the norm.

THE INTERNET PROMISE

The preceding section sets out compelling reasons why rapid change in service-quality scores should not be expected. There is one factor, however, that could change this. The

Internet and other government online services represent an exceptional opportunity for dramatically improving service-quality ratings, although the promise remains unproven.

These new technologies can overcome several limitations inherent in traditional service-delivery channels. They can link different levels of government and different program areas seamlessly, eliminating the need for the citizen to negotiate the labyrinth on their own. They can also provide fast access and quick fulfilment of many transactions, addressing the most important driver of satisfaction, timeliness.

Service lesson: In the present research, service delivered by the Internet represents a tiny proportion of citizens' service experience. This year 2000 project is the baseline against which future effects of Internet services can be assessed.

If citizens find Internet service of high quality, then service-quality scores will increase in direct proportion to the number of services that are offered by that channel. If, on the other hand, citizens find Internet services no better than present modes, then no change in quality will result.

The verdict on electronic services is still years away, as relatively few services are available online and the majority of citizens have little experience with them. But the prospects appear good. Citizens already rate government web sites "as good as" or "better than" sites of private-sector organizations. Internet services will increasingly represent an option for those who choose to use them. Furthermore, those who do choose Internet services over the traditional channels will presumably do so because they prefer this route. It is a strong hypothesis, then, that the Internet and other electronic channels will drive up service-quality ratings.

CITIZENS' RECENT EXPERIENCE

This section expands the performance ratings of government services to fifty specific services spanning the three levels of government. Citizens rated only services that they had used in the past year, so their evaluations are based on relatively recent experience. Results for 1998 and 2000 are presented by level of government in figures 24 to 26.

For the most part, ratings are similar for 1998 and 2000. This echoes the results of the previous section comparing public and private services. The reasons for stability are the same. First, each of the fifty services tested is composed of many programs and/or service-delivery outlets across the country, and thus many individual improvements must occur before ratings increase. Second, there is an inherent time lag in many of the service areas - when citizens use services infrequently it takes time for them to experience improvements.

Figure 24
Ratings of recently used federal services, 1998 and 2000.
Citizens First 2000.

Service	Service quality (0- 100)	
	1998	2000
National Film Board, National Museums	70	73
National Parks	73	71
CPP, Old Age Pension	69	71
Passports: Get or renew a passport	66	65
Canadian Coast Guard, Search and Rescue	66	63
Canada Post	57	62
RCMP *	68	59
Customs and Immigration border services	58	57
Information services	55	57
CCRA - Income tax	57	55
Health Canada - Information services	55	55
Citizenship services	57	54
Canada Employment Centres *	47	54
Financial services	52	52
Employment Insurance (EI)	45	51
Federal courts	-	44
Federal prisons, parole system	36	38
Mean of seventeen federal services	60	61

* Statistically significant difference between 1998 and 2000

Change did occur in several specific services. The largest change - a drop from 68 out of 100 to 59 out of 100 - was experienced by the RCMP. The most likely reason for this is fallout from the lengthy inquiry into security at the APEC summit, which was the subject of much high-profile, negative publicity for several months prior to this survey going to field. The inquiry had no direct bearing on services that citizens received from the RCMP and, in a strictly logical sense, should not have affected the RCMP's ratings. Apparently, however, citizens do not compartmentalize their opinions, resulting in a spillover effect on service-quality scores.

Significant change is also evident for Canada Employment Centres (CECs), which rose by 7 points out of 100. This survey cannot identify exactly why this change occurred. It

Figure 25
Ratings of recently used provincial services, 1998 and 2000.
Citizens First 2000.

<i>Service</i>	<i>Service quality (0- 100)</i>	
	<i>1998</i>	<i>2000</i>
Provincial museums, art galleries, etc.	71	73
Provincial parks, campgrounds	71	69
Public health: information, vaccinations, lab test	66	68
Health card application or renewal	62	67
Motor vehicle registration, drivers licences	66	65
Health care other than hospitals	-	62
Agricultural services	63	61
Provincial Police (Ontario, Quebec, Newfoundland) *	68	60
Birth, marriage registration and certificates	60	60
Colleges and universities	58	60
Hunting, fishing, firearms licences	63	58
Wildlife, forestry, conservation services	56	-
Hospitals	51	55
Mental health services (e.g., counselling)	55	51
Job training/retraining, apprenticeship programs	47	51
Provincial courts	38	46
Social assistance, welfare	42	44
Small business start-up services	41	44
Student loans	40	43
Provincial jails, probation and parole	41	39
Workers' compensation, injured worker programs	34	37
Mean of twenty provincial services	62	63

* Statistically significant difference between 1998 and 2000

may be the result of changes in the operation of CECs - or changes in the clientele, given that unemployment decreased from 1998 to 2000 - or some combination of both factors.

Specific and General Service Ratings

These results invite a final point about ratings of specific services versus services “in general.” The fifty services listed in figures 24 to 26 were selected because they are widely

Figure 26
Ratings of recently used municipal services, 1998 and 2000.
Citizens First 2000.

<i>Service</i>	<i>Service quality (0- 100)</i>	
	<i>1998</i>	<i>2000</i>
Fire departments *	86	80
Public libraries	77	77
Garbage disposal	74	72
Parks and recreation programs	70	71
Local police force	68	64
Public transit: bus, streetcar, subway	58	58
Publicly funded schools	54	57
Building permits and planning services	58	56
Public health	55	56
Family services, counselling, children's aid	56	55
Public housing	52	51
Road maintenance and snow plowing	45	47
Social assistance, welfare	44	45
Mean of thirteen municipal services	64	64

* Statistically significant difference between 1998 and 2000

used and represent the spectrum of government services. Averaging across these services therefore gives a reasonable approximation of services “in general.”

Looking at the data for 2000, the seventeen federal services (Figure 24) have a mean service-quality rating of 61 out of 100. This is fully 10 points higher than the rating for “federal government services in general,” from Figure 23.

This pattern holds for the other two levels of government as well. The twenty provincial services in Figure 25 have a mean service-quality rating of 63 out of 100, a substantial 13 points higher than the rating for “provincial government services in general.” The basket of 13 municipal services, Figure 26, enjoys a mean rating of 64 out of 100, 7 points above the score for “municipal services in general.”

These results constitute a further demonstration that asking citizens to rate service “in

general” is not a useful exercise. Averaging across the fifty municipal, provincial and federal services produces a more credible measure of service quality in general.

Simply stated, when citizens evaluate services they have used recently, they draw on particular memories of actual experiences. The result is a wide range of scores for different government services that is similar to the range of scores generated for private-sector services.

Service lesson: Results of the *Citizens First* project for both 1998 and 2000 confirm that asking citizens to rate government services in general gives an unrealistically, gloomy portrait of how citizens view government service delivery.

Next Steps

This is not the end of the story. It is encouraging that government services are in the same league as those of the private sector, but mean scores of 61 or 64 for the baskets of major services leaves room for improvement. Recall, too, that 46 percent of Canadians think government services should be *better* than those of the private sector (Figure 2). Chapter 5, on drivers of satisfaction, showed that it is possible to make major gains in service-quality scores, and it identified the five elements of service delivery that lead to high ratings of service quality. Chapter 7 provides specific information on the principle driver, timeliness, by mapping citizens’ expectations for timely service in routine situations. Chapter 8 extends the search for solutions to Internet services.

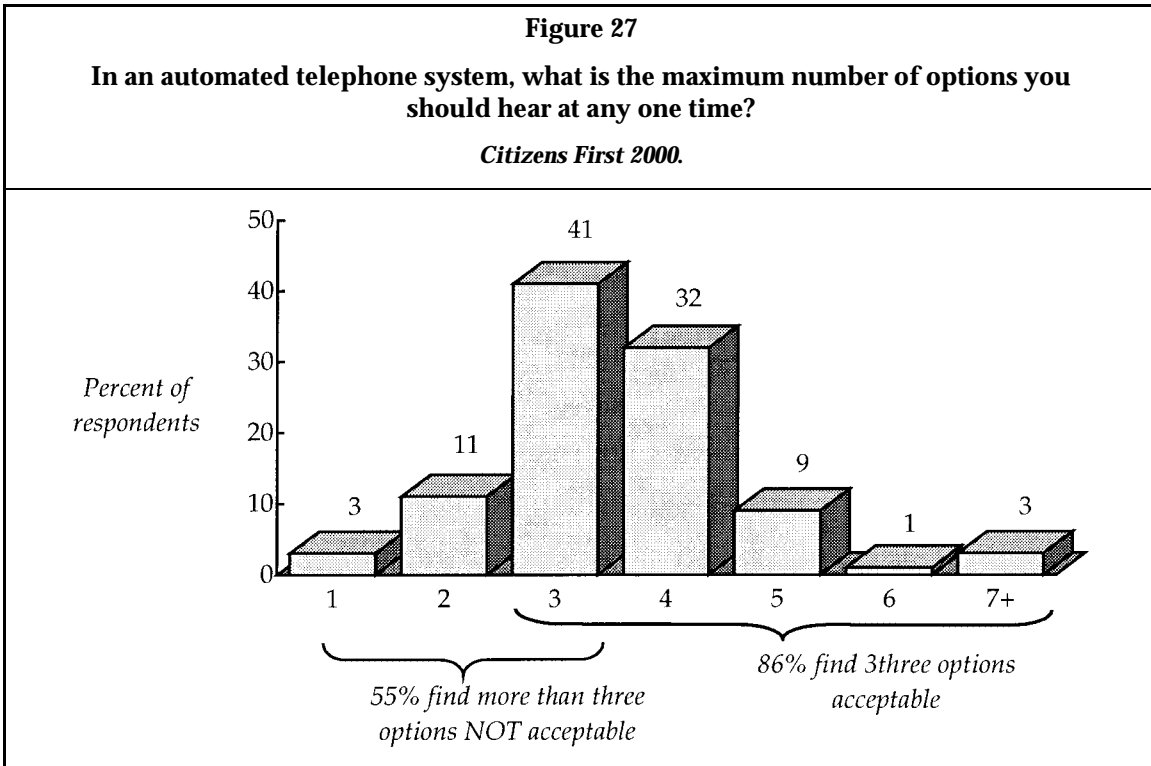
7. SERVICE STANDARDS

Citizens speak out

- “Wading through layer upon layer of voice mails and menus is very annoying. First contact with any agency should be with a real person, not a variety of tape machines.”
- Government services should be open on weekends and/or evenings.”
- “I waited one hour at least when I didn't have to. Perhaps a sign stating questions-only section would help.”
- “The voice mail gives too many options too quickly. I had to phone a few times to relisten to all the options.”
- “The postal service and process were very good and understandable but simply too long. Most requests for information through mail still take 6-8 weeks. That is not reasonable.”
- “Had questions about adjusting previous deductions. Waited less than five minutes. Information was quick and helpful. Positive impression.”
- “Have informed employees who give you their name right away.”

The *Citizens First* project has shown that refining the way in which service quality is measured casts government service in a significantly better light and is cause for considerable optimism. Service-quality scores in the neighbourhood of 60 percent represent a strong base from which to build better services for citizens. Knowing what citizens expect in the way of routine encounters with service providers is, therefore, critical intelligence. A successful service system simply cannot be built without it.

The *Citizens First* project asked citizens to register their expectations of service in five routine situations, and the results provide a general guide to expectations of government service.



The types of transactions described in the survey are universal, such as how long it takes to answer a phone call or how long one should expect to wait in line at a service counter. The questions were asked in general, without reference to a specific service context.

Service providers, in examining these results, will want to know whether they apply to their particular context. There is no guaranteed answer to this. In the absence of more specific research, these results should serve as a valuable framework for service improvement.

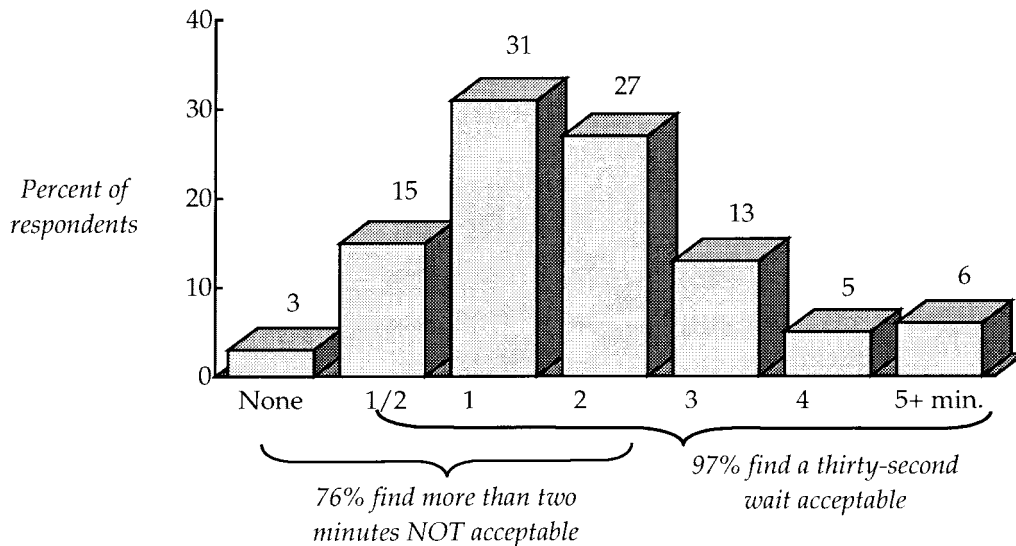
Service lesson: If there is an indication that the service in question might depart from the general norm, however, there is no substitute for asking a representative sample of citizens to state their service expectations.

The results reported here include service standards assessed in *Citizens First 1998* as well as the present survey, in order that a full set of results is available in one document. Service expectations change very slowly, and the 1998 results are still current (see figures 27 to 30).

Figure 28

When you telephone with a routine request, how many minutes is it acceptable to wait for a government representative?

Citizens First 2000.



TELEPHONE SERVICE

Everyone has encountered telephone “trees” that present too many or too few options. What do citizens think is the right number (Figure 27)?

Service lesson: Most - 73 percent - believe that either three or four options is the maximum at any decision point in an telephone system. As Figure 27 shows, three options is the more cautious design choice. A tree with four options risks annoying 54 percent of the population.

In practical terms, the complexity of the options will be a factor in this decision. If it takes many words to explain the options, then fewer options can be accommodated.

Demographic factors that might influence citizens’ choice were examined, and just one variable - age - is important to note. Young people generally tolerate a longer list of options than do older people. The mean number of options recommended by those who are 18 to 24 years in age is 4.0. This figure decreases steadily with age, and the mean number of options recommended by those 65 years and older is 3.0. Age accounts for 7 percent of the variance in response to this question.⁴

Figure 29

When you telephone with a routine request, what is the maximum number of people you should have to deal with?

Citizens First 2000, 1998.

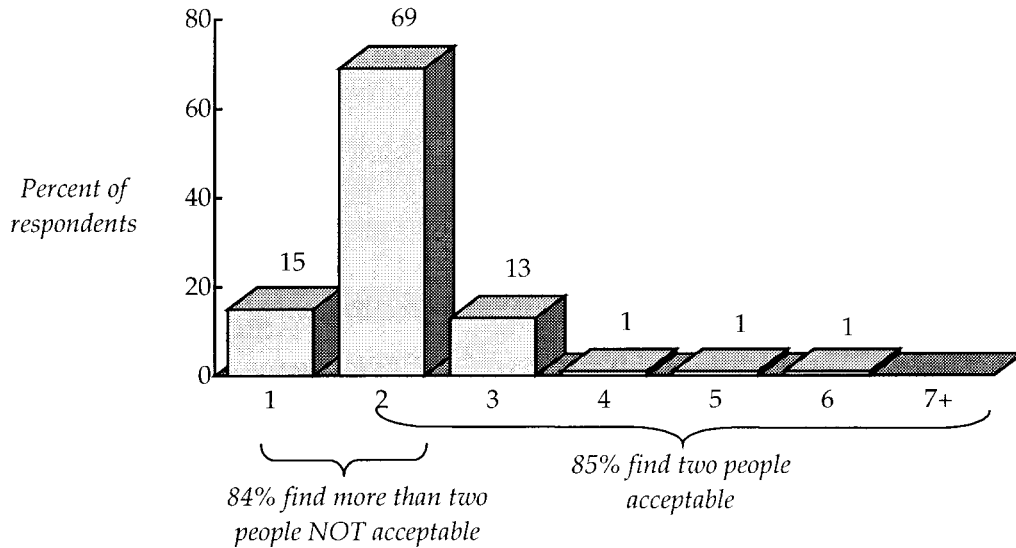


Figure 30

If you leave a telephone voice mail message at 10:00 am, what is an acceptable time to wait for a return call?

Citizens First 2000, 1998.

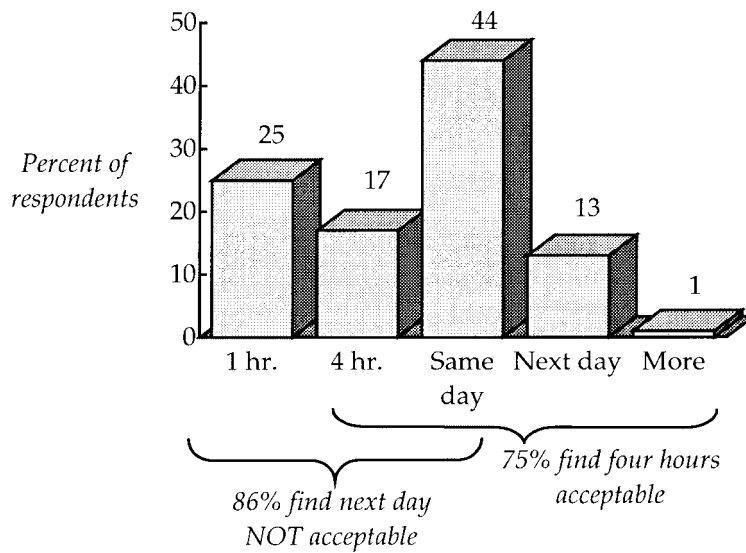
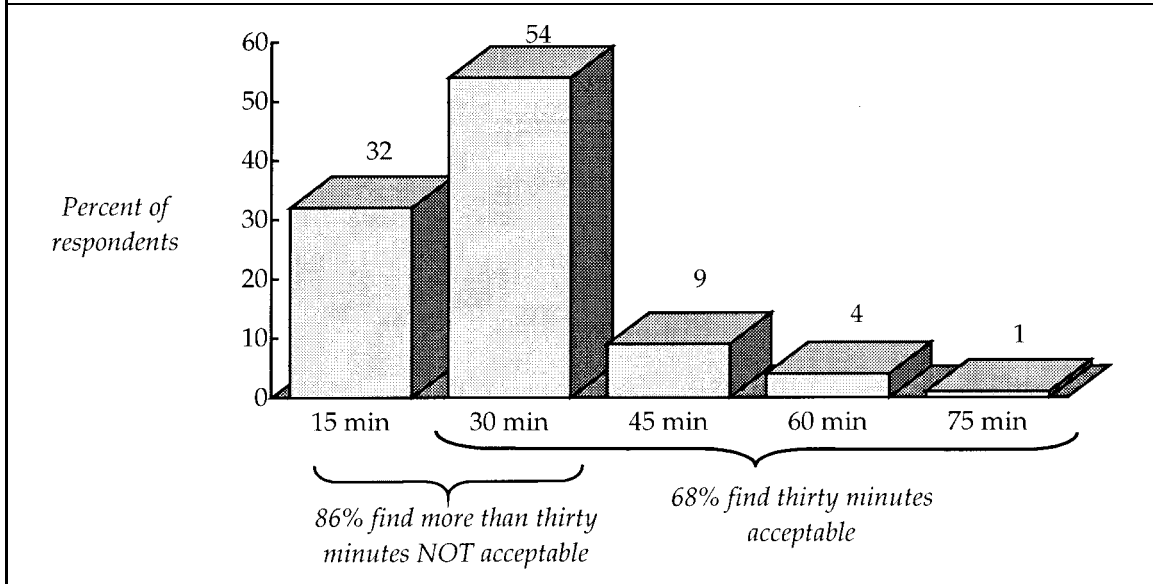


Figure 31

When you visit a government office for a routine service, what is a reasonable amount of time to spend travelling (one way)?

Citizens First 2000.



WALK-IN SERVICES

Service lesson: Thirty minutes is the maximum amount of time most citizens are willing to travel to access government services.

Rural residents and older people allow slightly longer travel times - but not much longer. Seventy percent of rural residents want travel times of 30 minutes or less, compared to 88 percent of urban residents. As these demographic variables account for only 4 percent of the variance in response, they should be regarded as an interesting finding. They do *not*, however, constitute an argument for different service standards for rural dwellers (Figure 31)!

Clearly, setting up offices of all three levels of government within thirty minutes drive of every Canadian is not a practical solution. More efficient alternatives include service counters that offer service of all levels of government, and, of course, making as many services as possible available remotely - by telephone, mail and the Internet (see also figures 32 and 33).

MAIL DELIVERY

Figure 34 shows the overall time that citizens expect to receive a reply when they contact

Figure 32

When you visit a government office, how many minutes is it acceptable to wait in any line?

Citizens First 2000.

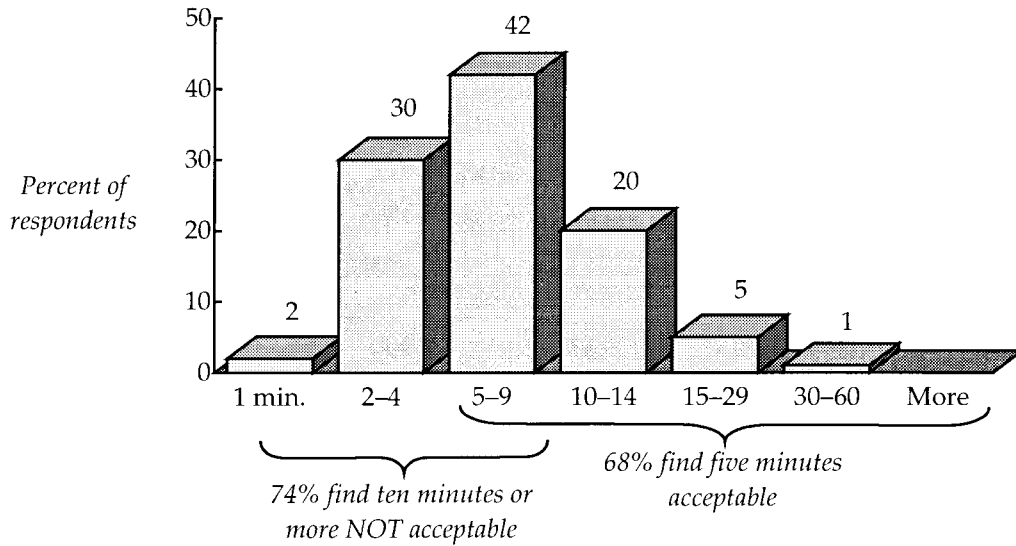
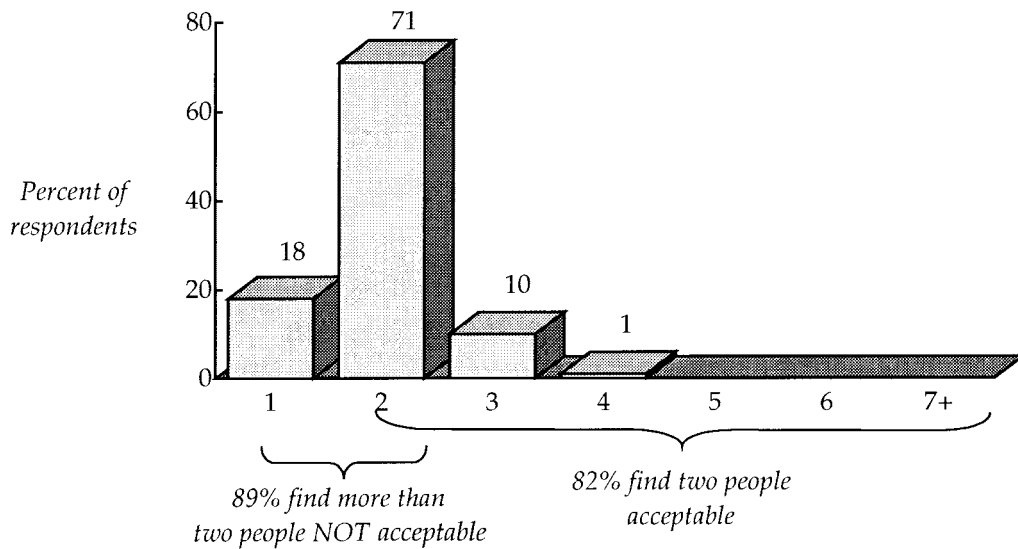
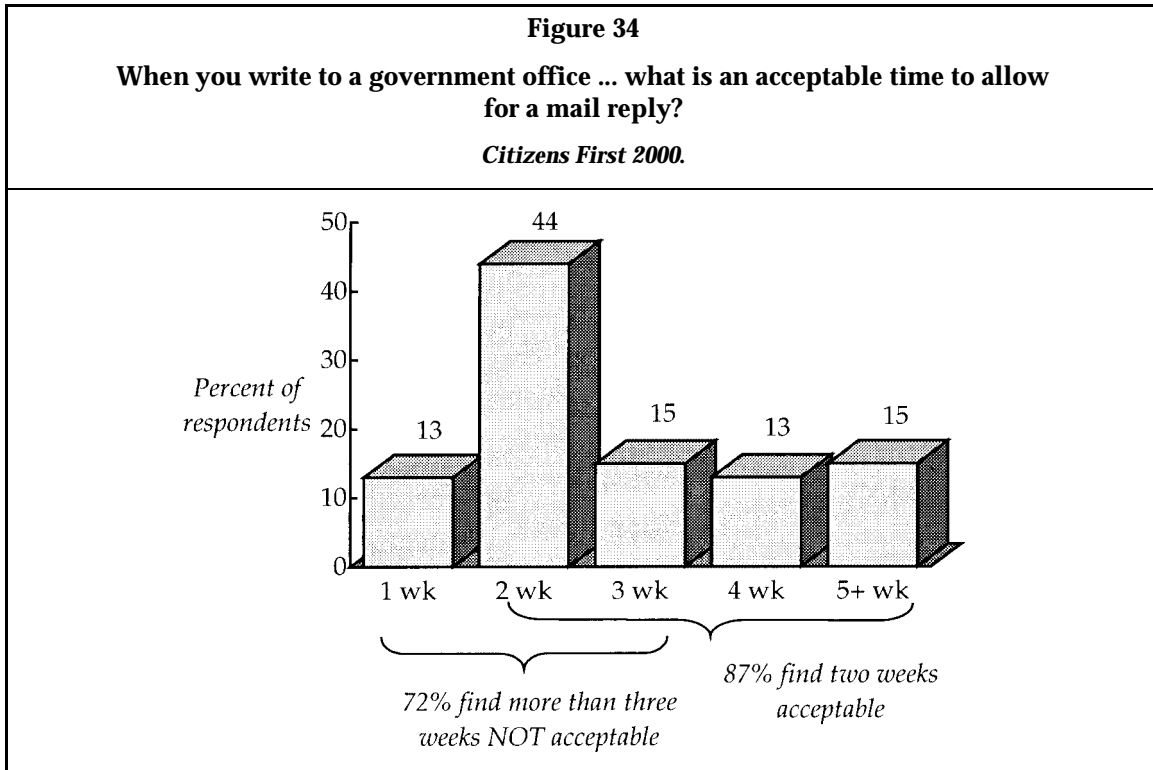


Figure 33

When you visit a government office ... what is the maximum number of people you should have to deal with?

Citizens First 2000.





government by mail with a routine request. Responses include the total elapsed time, including mail delivery in each direction.

Figure 35 shows that the expectation for one-way letter delivery is two to three days, indicating that about one week should be subtracted from the times in Figure 34 to give the actual government turnaround time. The largest group of citizens therefore expects government to process their request in one week

Service lesson: Citizens expect government to process routine mailed-in requests in one week (delivery time to and from government adds several days to this).

Citizens are divided in their opinion of an acceptable time for mail delivery. Three-day delivery of a first-class letter is acceptable to 61 percent, and two-day delivery is acceptable to 96 percent.

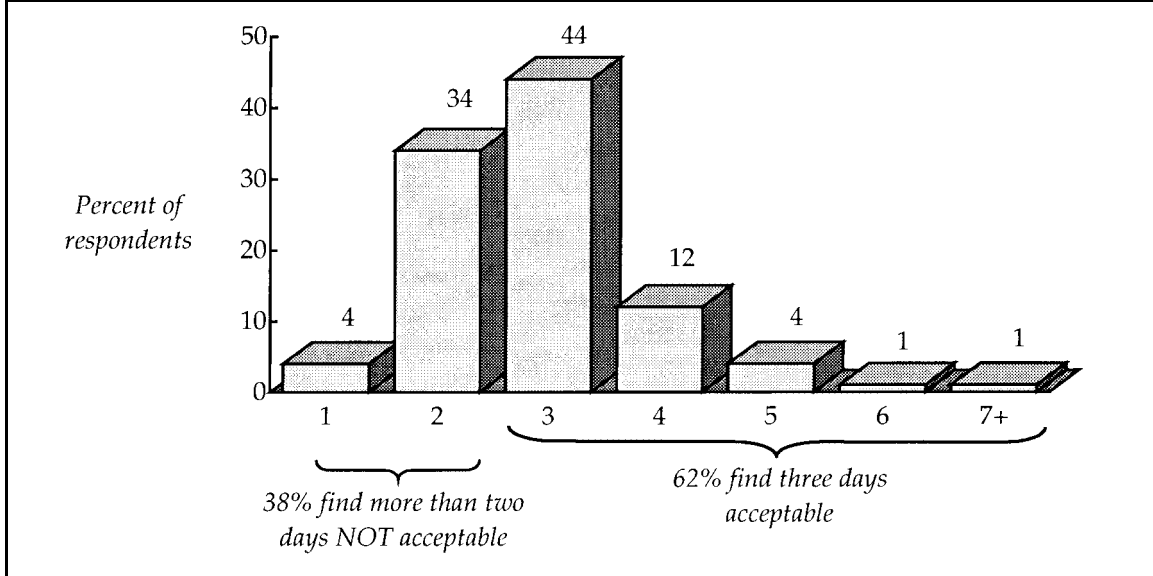
E-MAIL

Readers who are familiar with *Citizens First 1998* will notice that the current results for e-mail, Figure 36, are quite different from those reported two years ago. Now, most citizens expect an e-mail response either “Same day” or “Next business day.” In 1998, 30 percent

Figure 35

When you mail a letter between two Canadian cities, what is a reasonable number of days for the letter to arrive?

Citizens First 2000.



of respondents chose the four-hour response! Responding in this time-frame would put a huge burden on most organizations, public or private sector.

Expectations have therefore relaxed substantially since 1998. The reason for the current, more realistic result is likely that more people are familiar with the possibilities and the limitations of e-mail. The four-hour response is more frequently the choice of people who do not use computers. Those who use them recognize that responding to e-mail is a human task: the delivery of the message may be almost instant, but creating the response still requires time and diligence.

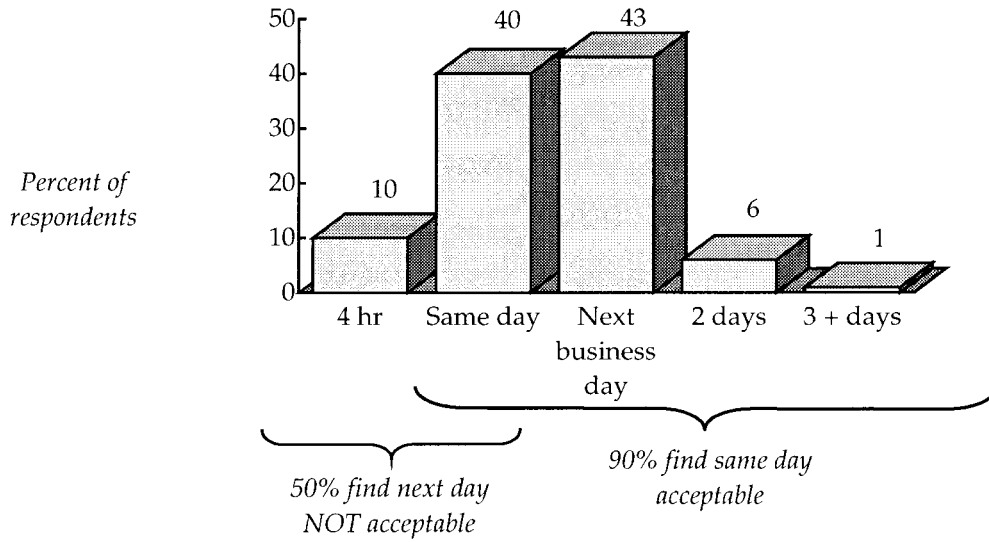
Service lesson: Citizens expect a speedier response to e-mail than to letter mail. Eighty-seven percent of respondents will allow governments a week or more processing time for letter mail, but less than one percent would allow a week for e-mail!

This observation requires some follow-up. The survey question in *Citizens First* did not define “routine request,” and it may be that citizens have different questions in mind when they think of sending a “routine request” by letter mail versus e-mail. The conclusive research would define a specific request and ask citizens when the response should come back in various modalities such as e-mail, letter mail, and voice-mail messages.

Figure 36

When you e-mail a government office at 10 am with a routine request, what is an acceptable time to get a reply?

Citizens First 2000.



8. NEW DELIVERY STRATEGIES

CITIZENS AND TECHNOLOGY: INTERNET SERVICES

All three levels of government offer Internet-based services, and the available range of these services increases almost daily. While this revolution in service delivery moves ahead with great speed, many providers rightly question whether the population is keeping up. In other words, do citizens possess the know-how to effectively use services delivered through the Internet?

The situation is encouraging. Most Canadians already use the Internet, and most have visited government web sites. Not only that, but Canadians regard these government sites as being of good quality - as good as or better, in most cases, than private-sector sites.

Computer Competence

The ability to use a computer is the primary prerequisite for making use of Internet services. Figure 37 shows how respondents to the *Citizens First 2000* survey rated their own skills in this regard.

Nineteen percent stated that they do not use computers. This group, the majority of whom are over age 65, represents those to whom Internet-delivered services are not available. Among those aged 18 to 64, however, 90 percent rate their skill at the beginner level or better.

Moreover, Figure 38 illustrates that the majority of those in each of the age groups under 65 consider themselves at the intermediate level or higher (i.e., well able to use Internet services).

Figure 37
Canadians' self-ratings of computer skill.
Citizens First 2000.

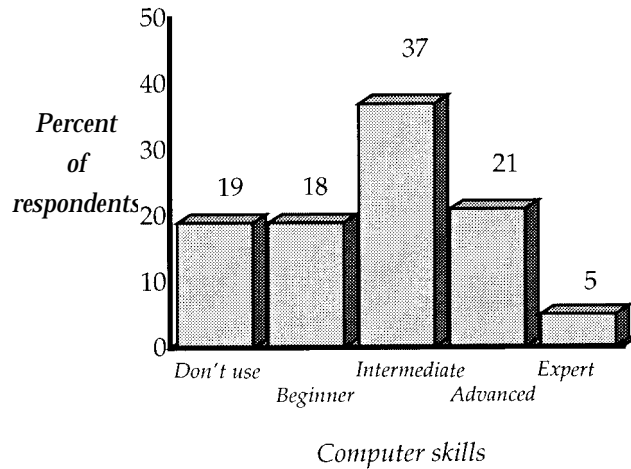
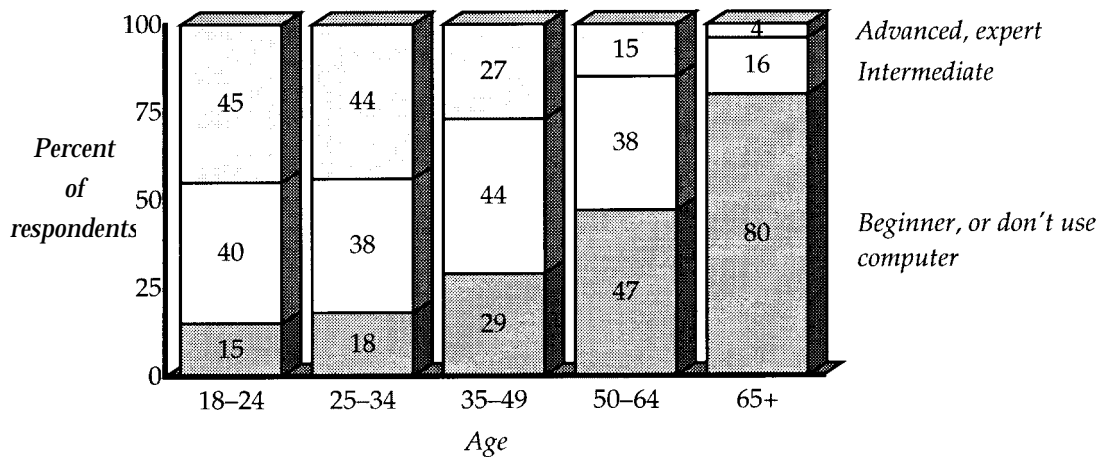


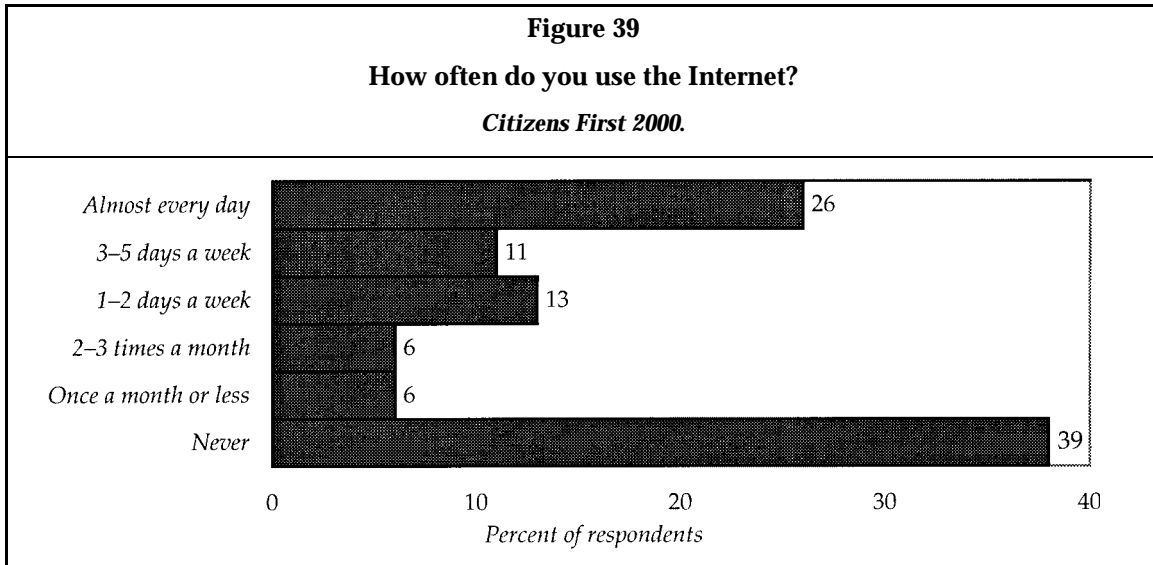
Figure 38
Age and computer expertise.
Citizens First 2000.



Since 81 percent of Canadians profess to have at least some computer skills, it is therefore reasonable to consider this as the upper limit on Internet use at this time.

USE OF THE INTERNET

Respondents are divided almost evenly between those who use the Internet on a regular



basis and those who do not. As Figure 39 shows, 50 percent of Canadians use the Internet at least once a week, while 50 percent use it less than once a week (or never).

This balance is, of course, shifting rapidly towards more Internet use by more people. From a service-delivery perspective, however, it is useful to note who is leading this trend and who is lagging behind.

Internet use is one area of this survey where demographics play an important role. Five demographic variables reveal quite a bit about the frequency of Internet use. In fact, together they explain 20 percent of the variance in citizens' use of this delivery channel. Listed in order of importance, these factors are as follows:

- *age*: Younger people are more frequent Internet users.
- *income*: Higher income is associated with greater Internet use. Among those with family incomes under \$30,000, 36 percent use the Internet on a weekly basis. Among those with family incomes over \$90,000, the incidence of weekly use rises to 69 percent.
- *education*: More education means greater use. Among those who have completed elementary or high school, 30 percent use the Internet on a weekly basis; among those who have completed post-secondary education, 59 percent use it on a weekly basis.
- *size of community*: Use is greater in larger centres. Fifty-nine percent of those in cities with populations over one million use the Internet on a weekly basis. This compares to 39 percent weekly use by rural residents.
- *gender*: Forty-five percent of women and 54 percent of men use the Internet on a weekly basis.

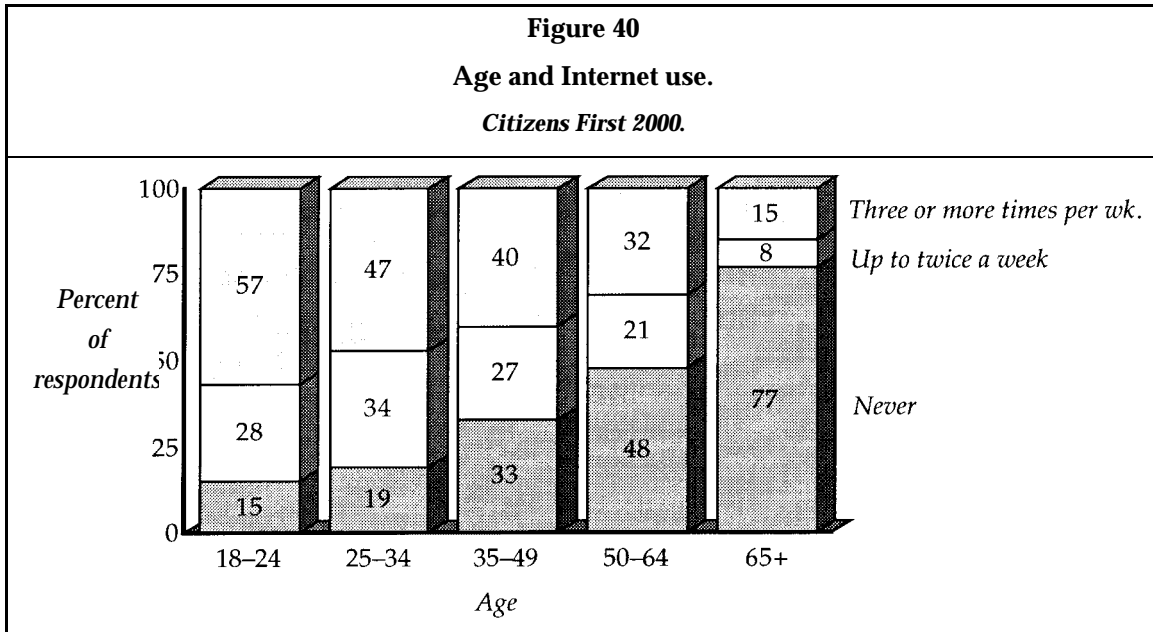


Figure 40 shows Internet use by age group. More than half of those 18 to 24 years of age use the Internet three or more times per week, compared to one-third of those 50 to 64 years of age, and one-seventh of those 65 years and older.

USE OF GOVERNMENT INTERNET SITES

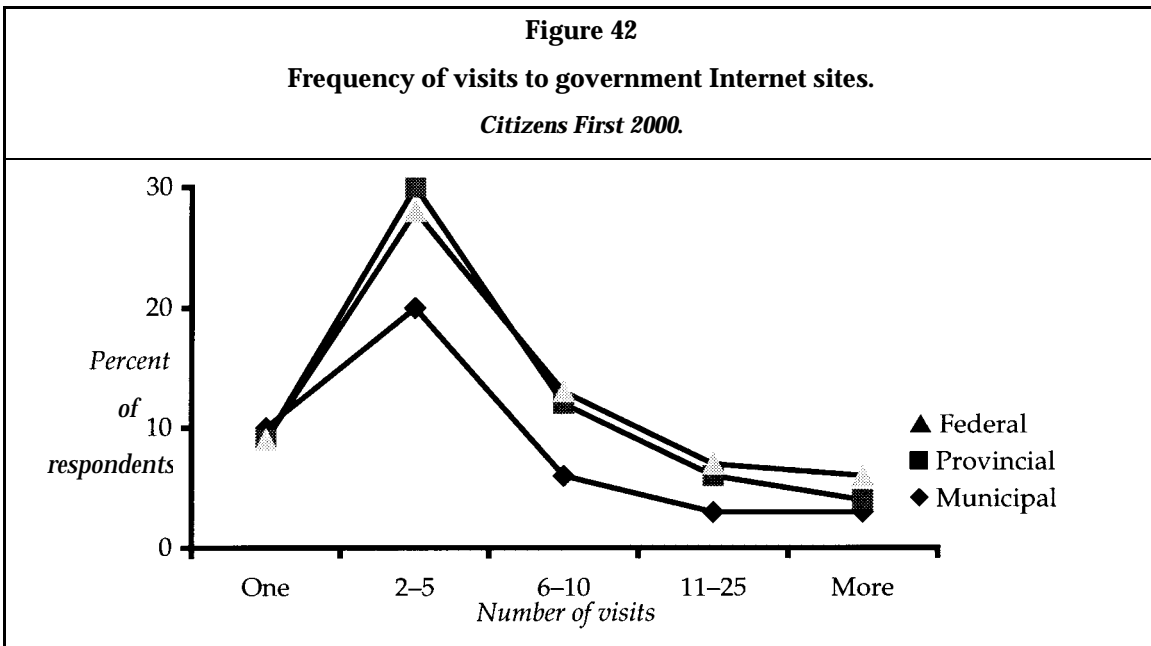
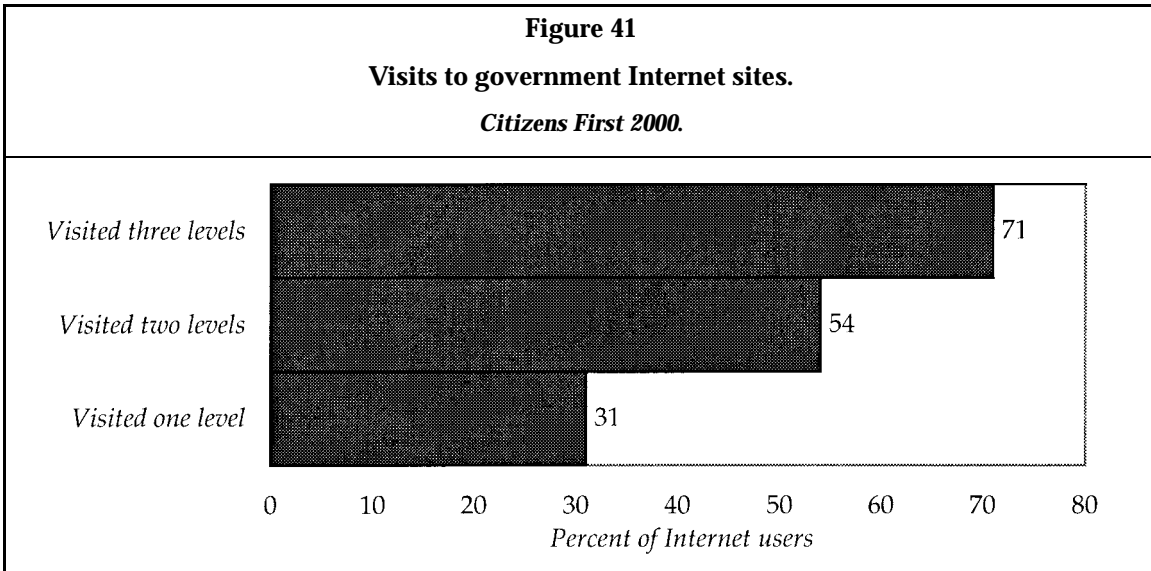
Results presented in the remainder of this chapter describe the 62 percent of Canadians who use the Internet. Among these Internet users,

- seventy-one percent have accessed the online services of at least one level of government;
- fifty-four percent have used the online services of two levels of government;
- thirty-one percent have used the online services of all three levels of government (Figure 41).

Demographic differences

The use of government sites differs on the basis of education and, to a small extent, age:

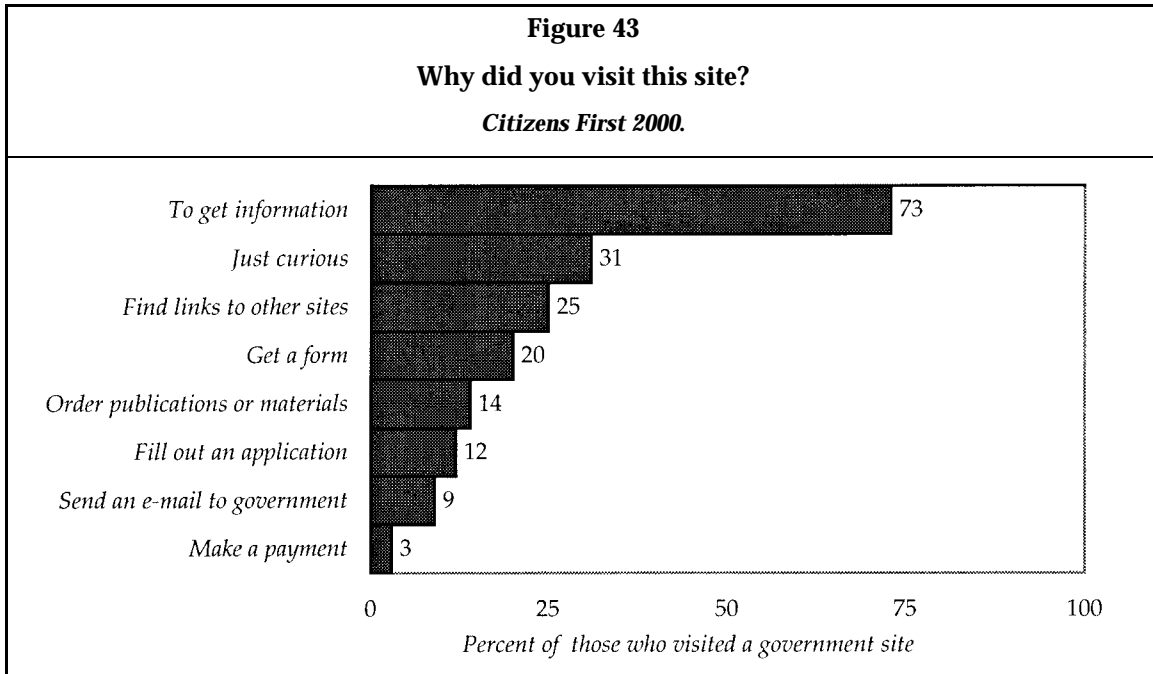
- *education:* Among those with public or high school education, 55 percent have visited at least one government site. This proportion increases to 78 percent among those with post-graduate degrees.
- *age:* Among those up to age 65, 72 percent have visited a government site; over age 65, 58 percent have done so. This is consistent with the fact that there are fewer proficient computer users in the 65-plus group.



The use of government sites does not differ on the basis of either gender or income level.

Frequency of Use

Citizens First 2000 asked respondents how often in the past year they had visited the Internet sites of each level of government. While the pattern of use is similar at each level, Figure 42 shows that slightly more people have visited federal and provincial sites than



Note: Respondents could indicate several reasons for the visit, so percentages add up to more than 100.

have visited municipal sites. About one-quarter of respondents have made two to five visits to federal sites in the past year, one-quarter have made two to five visits to provincial sites, and one-fifth have made two to five visits to municipal sites. At the upper end, 6 percent made more than twenty-five visits to federal sites and 4 percent made more than twenty-five visits to provincial sites.

These results quite likely underestimate the frequency of visits to government sites. First, time is a factor. Within the context of filling out a survey, a respondent may well have difficulty recalling, for example, that eight months ago she or he went to a government site to get information on a student loan. Second, perception plays a part. A citizen who checks the Environment Canada weather forecast on a regular basis may not automatically perceive this site as a “government service.”

EXPERIENCE WITH GOVERNMENT SITES

The survey asked respondents to choose one specific government site with which they were familiar and to answer a series of questions about it. The results provide a more defined sense of how citizens relate to these sites.

Reasons for Visiting the Site

Figure 43 breaks down the reasons citizens went to particular government sites. Most - 73

percent - went looking for information. A smaller number went to conduct some type of transaction.

With respect to transactions, the survey suggested four types: getting a form, ordering materials, filling out an application, and making a payment. Forty-five percent of those who described a visit to a government site conducted one or more of these transactions.

Perceptions of the Site

What contributes to the impression that the site is good or not? Respondents rated the performance of their chosen site on a scale from "Very good" to "Very poor". Five factors determine 45 percent of the variance in these performance ratings, thereby giving quite a solid answer to this question:

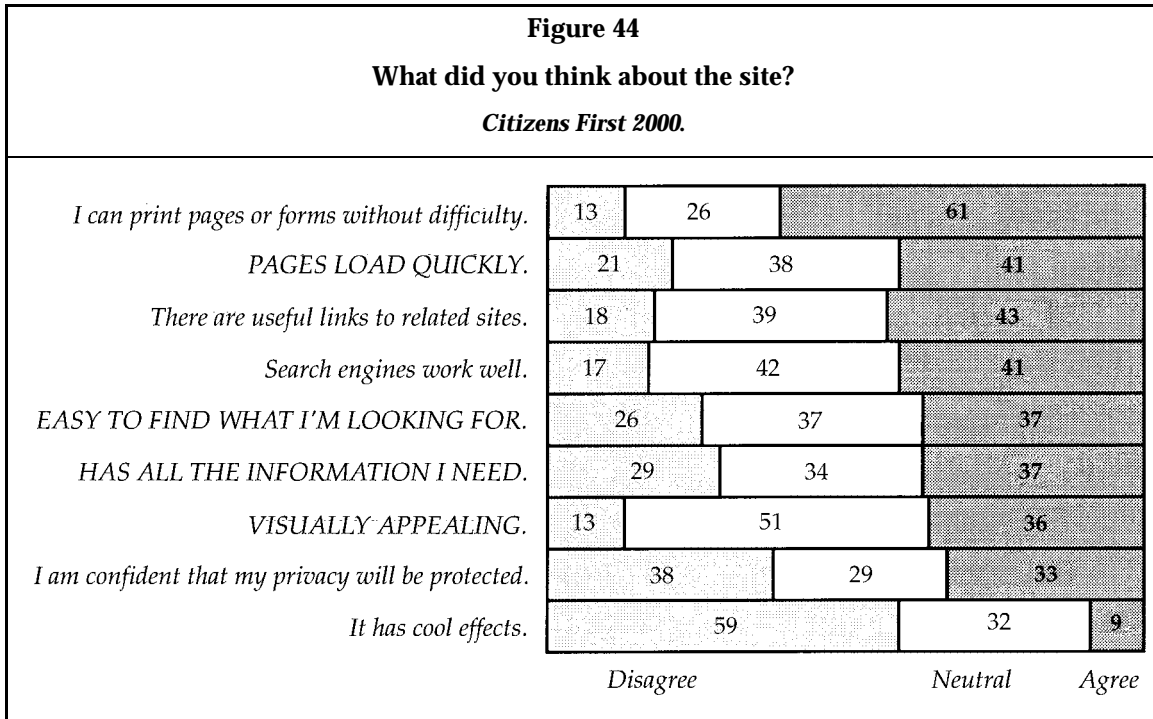
Drivers of Satisfaction for Internet Sites.	
<i>Citizens First 2000.</i>	
1. Ease of Navigation	<i>"It's easy to find what I am looking for."</i>
2. Outcome	<i>"I got what I wanted."</i>
3. Visual Appeal	<i>"It is visually appealing."</i>
4. Informative	<i>"It has the information I need."</i>
5. Fast	<i>"Pages load quickly."</i>

The first two elements are the strongest; the latter three are all similar in strength, but decidedly less critical than the first two.

For those who conducted transactions, one additional factor enters the equation - "I can print forms without difficulty."

These drivers differ from those for services delivered through traditional channels. Outcome is the only element that is common to both Internet and traditional modalities, but its meaning may diverge in the two contexts. At this time, most Internet experiences are information-seeking rather than transactional (though this is changing).

The difference in drivers between traditional channels and the Internet is not surprising. Traditional delivery modes are mediated by human service providers, who talk to you directly on the telephone, or at a service counter, or indirectly through correspondence. The concepts of staff knowledge, fair treatment and timely delivery have meaning in this context, but with Internet services, they hardly apply. There are no staff to display either knowledge or the lack of it, or to treat the citizen fairly or unfairly. The meaning of timeliness changes completely in the Internet context: in traditional modes, it refers to the



time the citizen must wait for the service provider, but in the Internet context, the user decides how to allocate his or her time. Ease of navigation and pages loading quickly bear a distant resemblance to timeliness in the traditional context, but they are hardly the same thing.

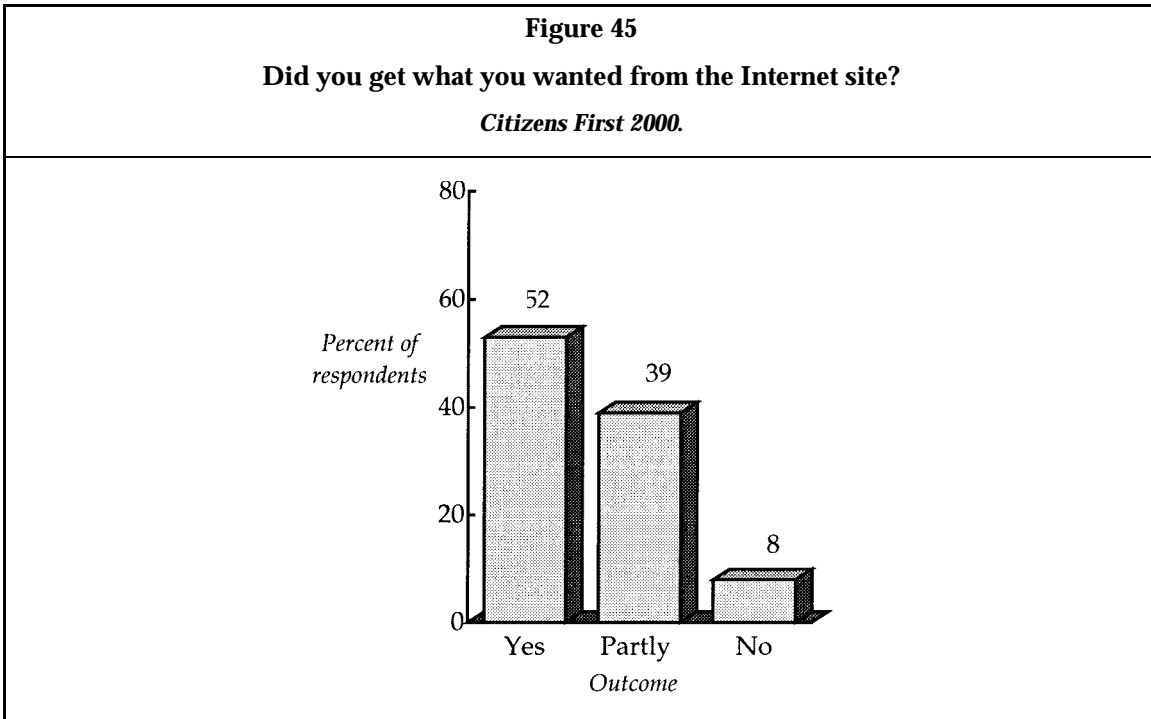
Figure 44 shows how citizens described the performance of government Internet sites along eight dimensions. Four of the five driver elements appear in this chart (shown in capitals).

Ratings Based on Outcome

Not surprisingly, getting what you are after has a strong impact on citizens' ratings of government sites. Only 52 percent of respondents said that they did in fact get what they were after, so it is important to take a closer look at outcome (Figure 45).

In the first place, the outcome was the same for those who were searching for information or doing transactions - 52 percent were successful in both cases:

- People who rate themselves as expert computer users were more successful than others - 61 percent of this group got what they wanted versus about half of those below the expert level.



- Demographic factors such as age, education, and gender have no significant bearing on successful outcome.

This - together with the fact that ease of navigation is a driver - suggests that many citizens do find it somewhat difficult to get what they are after.

This may be an inevitable aspect of the transition to Internet services. Some services are available on the Internet while others are not. Even when a service is available, there are often problems to be faced: a site that is poorly organized, for instance, or one that requires the downloading of a new browser or plug-in. It is also worth keeping in mind that those who are not expert computer users have only a 50-50 success rate in getting what they are after.

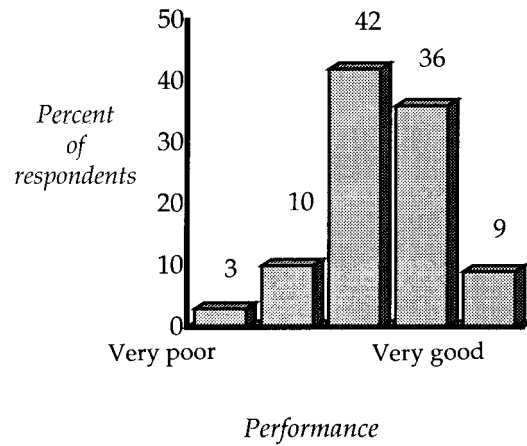
COMPARING PRIVATE AND GOVERNMENT SITES

The problems faced by citizens using the Internet to access services are problems common to all sites, private as well as government. It is encouraging, then, that citizens rate government sites on the whole as being as good as or better than private-sector sites (Figure 46)!

Figure 46

Rate the overall performance of this site compared to other sites you know, both government and private sector.

Citizens First 2000.



9. CITIZENS' PRIORITIES FOR SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

Citizens speak out

- “Education and health need to be given more money. Budgets at all three levels of government should reflect a concern for these two areas in a manner that is not currently evident.”
- “Increase the number of persons providing snow removal/road maintenance. Driving conditions have remained unacceptable for substantial periods of time.”

This chapter documents citizens' priorities for improving the fifty municipal, provincial and federal services previously discussed in the service-quality ratings section of Chapter 6.

The survey asked respondents to choose their three top priorities for improvement at each level of government. Respondents chose any three services as priorities for improvement, whether or not they used the service.

One might expect that services that rate high in service quality would be low priorities for improvement, while services that rate low in quality are high priorities for improvement. Generally speaking, while there is some small tendency towards this, service quality and priority for improvement are not closely linked.

Service lesson: It is important to ask citizens what their priorities for improvement might be rather than make assumptions based on service-quality ratings or other information.

MUNICIPAL SERVICES

There is clear consensus as to the top priorities for improvement at the municipal level.

Figure 47
Priorities for improvement in municipal government services.
Citizens First 2000.

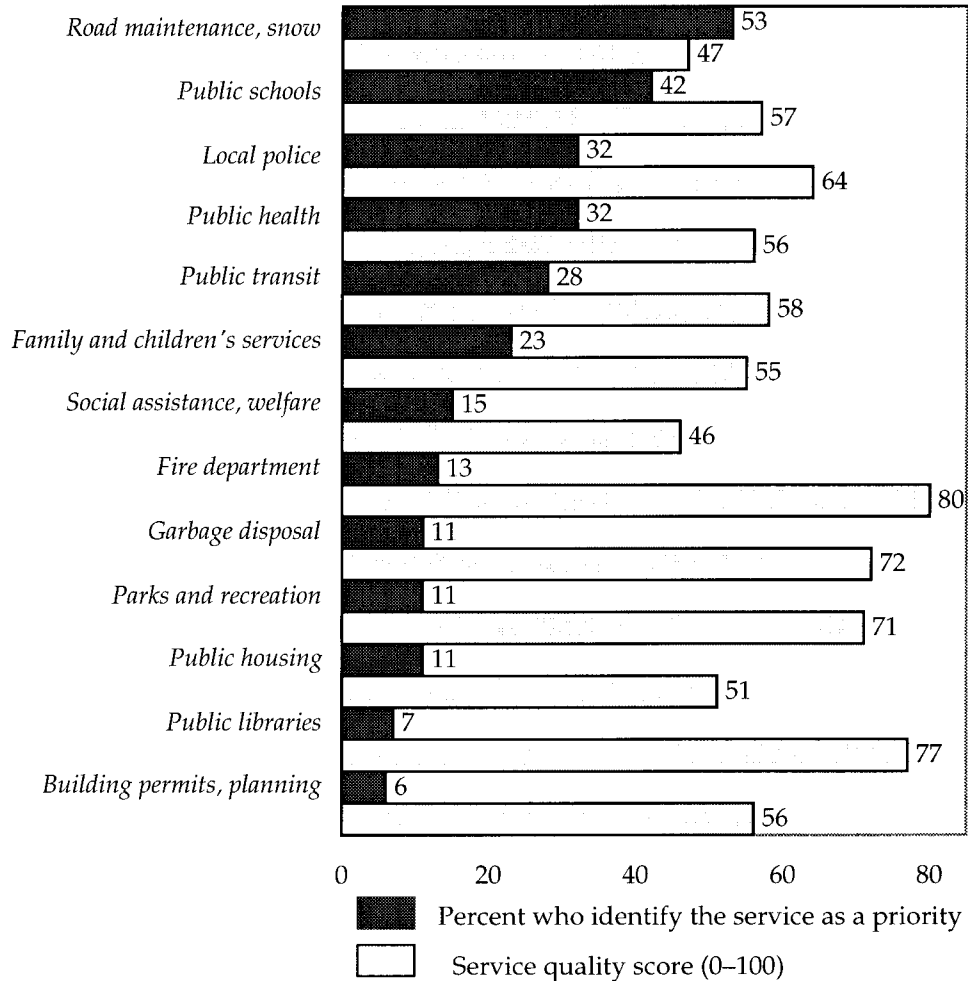
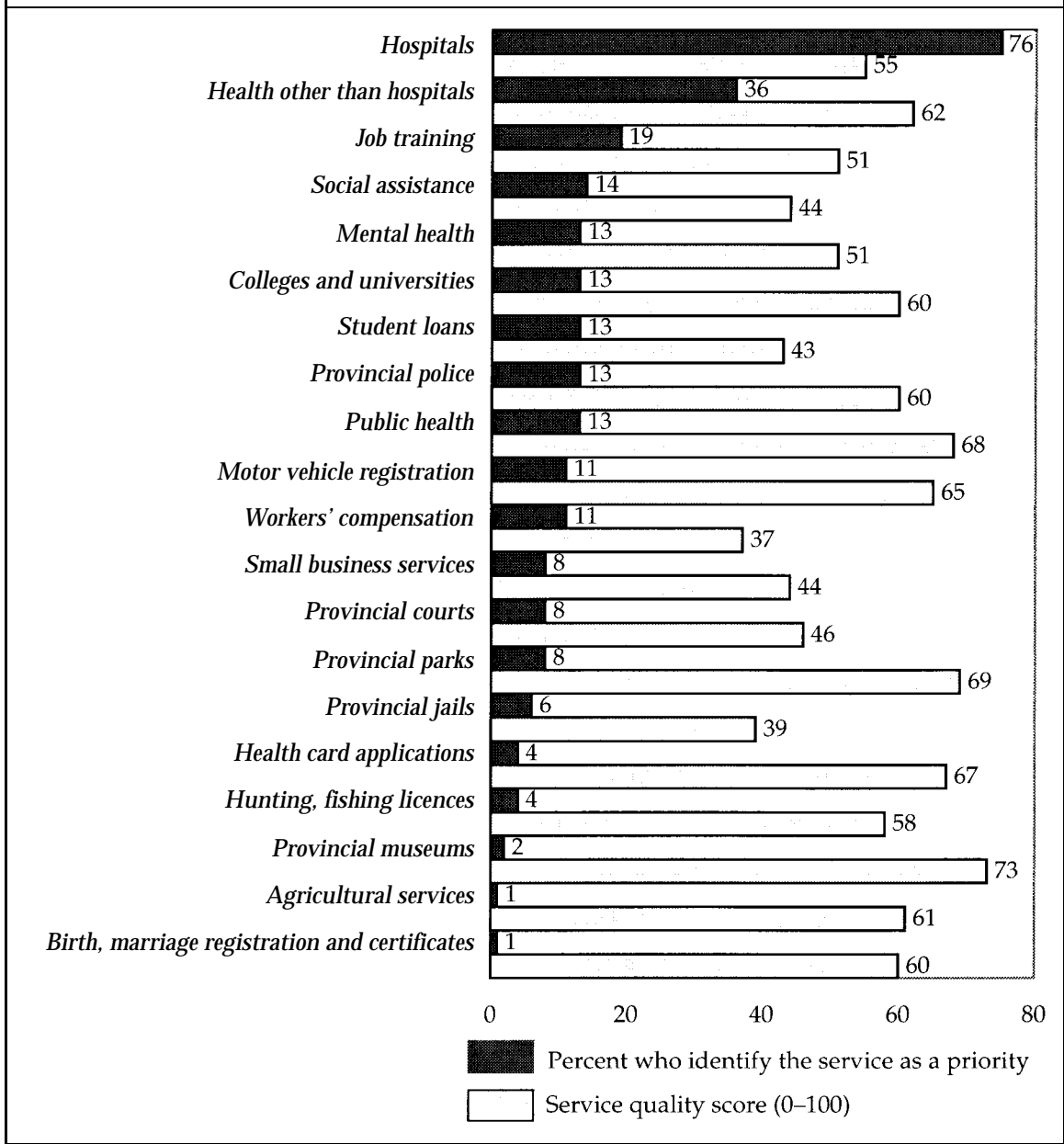


Figure 47 shows that out of the thirteen municipal services listed, more than half of the respondents chose road maintenance, and 42 percent chose public schools.

PROVINCIAL SERVICES

As in 1998, respondents could not have been more clear about their priorities for improvement at the provincial level: it's all about health care (Figure 48).

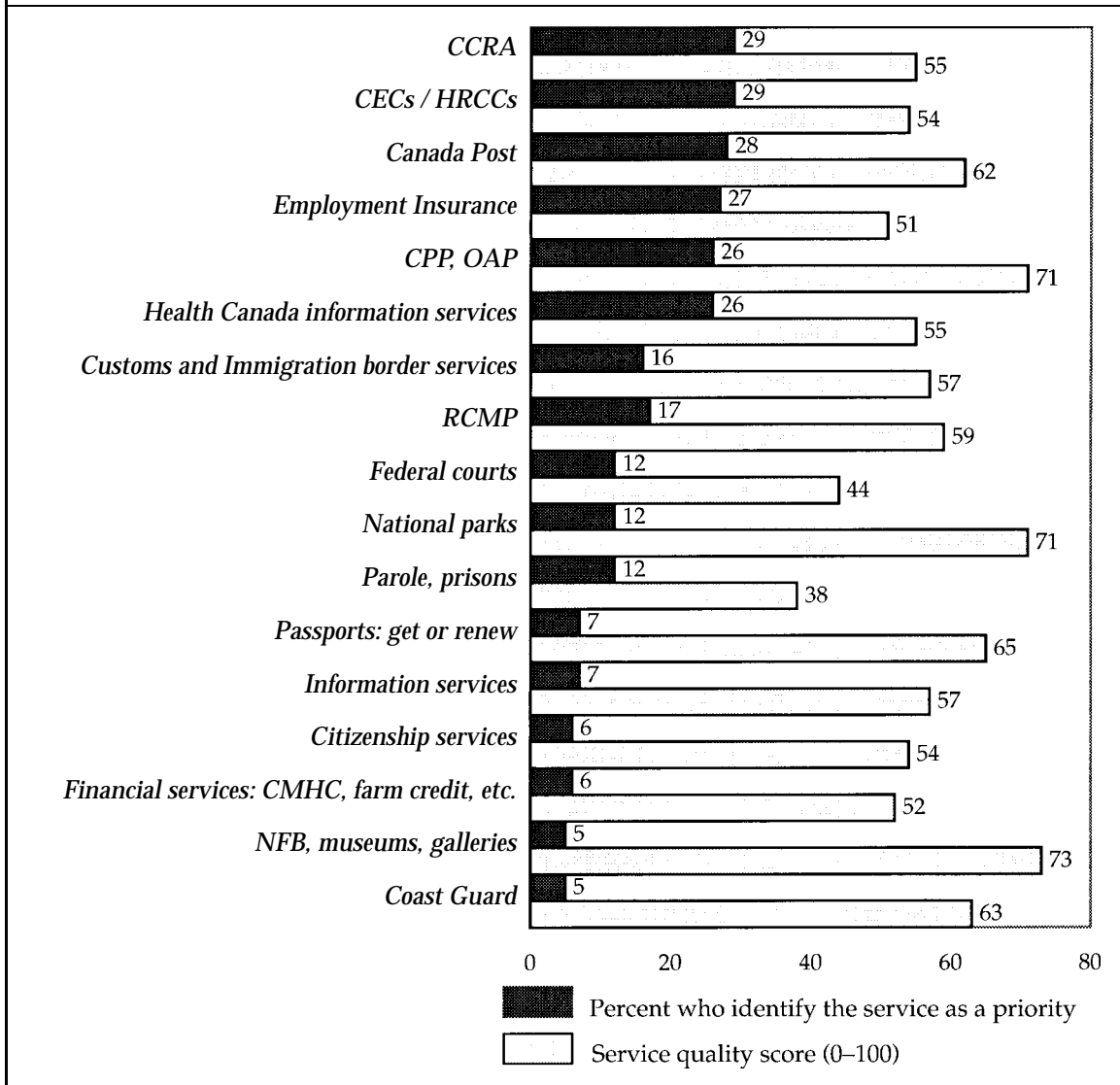
Figure 48
Priorities for improvement in provincial government services.
Citizens First 2000.



From a set of twenty provincial services listed, 75 percent of all respondents in 2000 rated hospitals as a top priority (the figure was 73 percent in 1998). The next most-chosen service was “health other than hospitals,” identified as a priority by 36 percent.

This result is consistent across every province. In every instance, “hospitals” ranked

Figure 49
Priorities for improvement in federal government services.
Citizens First 2000.



first, being chosen as a priority by 70 percent or more of the respondents, and “health other than hospitals” ranked second, being chosen by 25 percent or more.

FEDERAL SERVICES

Unlike the provincial and municipal areas, there is no single federal service among the seventeen services that stands out as a priority for improvement. Six federal services in Figure 49 each enjoy a similar ranking.

10. *CITIZENS FIRST 2000:* FROM VISION TO RESULTS

BUILDING ON THE MOMENTUM

The evidence is clear: citizen-centred government service is becoming a reality. The silos that once seemed to be inevitable structures of government are rapidly disappearing. This change has developed from several sources:

- outstanding leadership and commitment to citizen-centred service delivery
- research from *Citizens First* and related work/tools provides an intellectual foundation for attaining results
- significant achievements in reorganizing service-delivery systems around citizens' needs
- partnering with private and not-for-profit sectors to deliver integrated, accessible services
- strategic use of technology - computers and the Internet - to link services that were once separated geographically and institutionally
- an accumulation of experience and "best practices" that now appears to have reached critical mass

The next few years will be exciting for government service providers and citizens alike.

THE PATH FORWARD

The results of *Citizens First 2000* are based on the perceptions and direct experiences of a representative cross-section of Canadians and speak to critical service-delivery challenges at all three levels of government. With these results in hand, governments can undertake a focused and concerted plan of action that will help build the momentum for positive change and create service-delivery systems that are truly responsive and citizen-centred.

A focus on six critical areas of citizen-centred service will accelerate the momentum:

1. Changing the face of government:

- Sustain top leadership and commitment to citizen-centred service throughout the public service.
- Use *Citizens First* results as the intellectual foundation for innovative policy and practice.
- Overcome destructive myths and stereotypes by communicating accurate information about government excellence to the public.
- Use *Citizens First* findings to improve staff confidence and build competencies.
- Provide training and tools to increase staff knowledge and competence and to empower service providers to “go the extra mile.”
- Continue to foster advanced research as a basis for improving service delivery.

2. Access, Access, Access:

- Foster a proactive, go-the-extra-mile approach to the access of government services at the institutional and technological levels as well as in all direct, personal interaction with citizens.
- Focus improvement on the telephone, the “people’s channel,” currently the most frustrating point of access and yet the most commonly used channel.
- Streamline multiple channels into cost-effective, citizen-centred single gateways to service; ensure there is “no wrong door” for the citizen to access service.

3. Focus on the five drivers of citizen satisfaction in high-priority service areas:

- Incorporate the five drivers of citizen satisfaction into every line of government business.
- Integrate regular measurement of service drivers and service standards and give staff feedback on their performance.
- Determine drivers of satisfaction for specific programs (e.g., drivers for Revenue Canada may differ from those for a library or for a health information site on the Internet).
- Organize, measure and refine services based on citizens’ priorities.

4. Make seamless service the norm:

- Break down silos of service delivery between and inside governments to provide seamless service.
- Forge partnerships and collaborate with other governments and the private, voluntary and academic sectors to develop optimal delivery systems.

- Establish a Canadian Centre for Citizen Centred Service outside government to foster interjurisdictional, intersectoral and international citizen-centred research, innovation and service.

5. Deliver e-government intelligently:

- Harness new technology so that it is user-friendly and responsive to the citizen.
- Ground development and improvement of channels (e.g., telephone, Internet) in the specific drivers and service standards identified by *Citizens First*.
- Ensure citizens have a choice of channels and provide consistent information across all channels.

6. Lead by vision and manage by results:

- Establish clear, measurable objectives and criteria for service-quality improvement and citizen-centred service.
- Ensure accountability for results in performance /service-delivery agreements.
- Identify, share and showcase best practices.
- Establish awards for best innovators and on-the-ground practitioners in important categories:
 1. Access
 2. Drivers of satisfaction
 3. Single gateway service
 4. Seamless service delivery
 5. Citizen-centred technological solutions

The next frontier in citizen-centred research will be to survey internal service providers and to integrate these findings into pan-government service-delivery strategies.

Notes

- 1 ICM Research, *Citizen's Charter Customer Survey: Research Report* (March/April 1993).
- 2 Thomas I. Miller and Michelle A. Miller, "Standards of excellence: U.S. residents' evaluations of local government services," *Public Administration Review* 51, no. 6 (November/December 1991), pp. 503- 13.
- 3 Service-quality research (like research in any branch of the social sciences) never explains 100 percent of the variance in a situation. Individuals differ in what they consider to be good service, and their ratings of a service experience vary as a consequence, creating unexplained variance. Individuals may also interpret survey questions differently, further increasing the unexplained variance. Research that accounts for more than 75 percent of the variance is rare indeed, and much excellent research reaches only 20 or 30 percent.
- 4 Surveys typically state the margin of error associated with their results. A 5 percent maximum is typical (i.e., results are accurate 19 times out of 20). This means that the result is considered "statistically significant" when there is less than a 5 percent probability that it could have occurred by chance. This error rate applies to *each individual test* that is performed. If two tests are performed, the error rate is 5 percent for each or $5 + 5 = 10$ percent for the two together. In examining the present data on the permissible number of telephone options, several factors were tested - age, gender, region, and size of community. *Each of these tests* has a 5 percent probability of error, and so the cumulative probability of error is 4 times 5 percent, or 20 percent. This is unacceptably high. What to do? A simple correction is known as the Bonferroni method. If four tests are performed on the data, then using a value of $.05 \div 4 = .0125$ for *each test* will give an error level of .05 for the set of 4 tests as a whole. We are therefore assured that our overall conclusion about the appropriate number of telephone options has less than a 5 percent probability of error. All analyses in *Citizens First 2000* employ this correction.

- 5 Statistical significance and meaningfulness are only distantly related. Significance is a technical construct – a test is significant if the probability of a false result is less than 5 percent (or one percent, or whatever number has been defined as the criterion). A result may be statistically significant yet not very meaningful in a practical sense. This often happens in large surveys, where the number of respondents is more than a few hundred. In general, as the number of respondents goes up, the precision of measurement increases too - and smaller and smaller effects become statistically significant. With 6,000 respondents to *Citizens First*, differences that account for a fraction of one percent of the variance in response can be statistically significant. Such small differences have little practical consequence: one would never design a service strategy around such minuscule differences.