

WORKERS' COMPENSATION DIVISION SURVEY

Summary of Survey Methodology and Results

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Introduction

The Workers' Compensation Division of the State of Oregon (Workers' Comp) provides a wide variety of essential services to Oregon's citizens. As part of Workers' Comp's efforts to evaluate the quality of its services, they contracted with the Oregon Survey Research Laboratory (OSRL) to conduct a survey on how callers to the Appellate Review Unit (ARU), Benefit Consultation Unit (BCU), and Preferred Worker Program (PWP) assess the quality of automated menus and staff attributes such as attitude, knowledge, and timeliness. Working closely with Workers' Comp, OSRL planned, pre-tested and implemented a telephone survey of 230 respondents. This report summarizes the survey methodology and results.

Survey Methodology

Survey Instrument

The broad goals of the survey were to obtain valid and reliable information from callers to Workers' Comp on the quality of services provided to them during those calls.

In designing the survey instrument, OSRL used a multi-path approach which included: drawing from OSRL's survey archives and professional networks for questions related to Workers' Comp's needs; creating original survey questions with the assistance of Workers' Comp's staff; and pre-testing individual questions and the entire survey instrument with members of the survey population.

The survey instrument was programmed into OSRL's computer-aided telephone interviewing (CATI) system and further pretested. A facsimile of the survey instrument is provided in Section 2 of this documentation. All interviews were completely confidential, and human subjects approval was obtained.

Sample and Data Collection

Interviewer training was conducted on October 28, 1999; see Section 3 for interviewer instructions. Interviewing was conducted from 9:00 AM until 9:00 PM, Monday through Sunday, until the target call unit sample size of 105 was met for the Preferred Worker Program (105), almost achieved for the Benefit Consultation Unit (94), and resolved for the Appellate Review Unit (31). Altogether, OSRL interviewers made 1,405 telephone calls to complete 230 interviews between October 29, 1999 and January 27, 2000. Up to 20 calls were made to each valid telephone number provided to OSRL by Workers' Comp. Callers to Workers' Comp had an equal chance of being selected. The net response rate was 72% and the refusal rate was 3%; see Section 5 for the sample and response rate report. The average length of the interviews was 8 minutes.

Survey sampling errors are calculated to assist data users in assessing how much confidence to place in a particular survey result. Large random samples reduce sampling error, while select samples such as this survey create a larger error margin. Results for survey questions in which there is low variability also have less sampling error; for example, a variable with a 50/50 proportional split has wider confidence intervals than a variable with a 5/95 proportional split. For this study of 230, the sampling error for all call units combined, when the entire population of Oregon adults is used, is ± 6.46 percentage points on a variable with a 50/50 proportional split (at the 95% confidence level). For a variable with a 5/95 proportional split, the sampling is ± 2.82 percentage points. Note, the entire adult population of Oregon is not part of the universe of callers to Workers' Comp and the sampling error is in fact unknown, but much smaller than the figures given here.

Survey Results

The presentation of survey results is organized around the subject areas identified on page 1. Readers of this report may refer to the 37 banner-style tables in Section 6 for more detail. In the banner tables, the contents are cross-tabulated by a wide range of demographic information. The banner data include counts and percentages for each question overall, and counts and percentages for each row and column of the cross-tabulation. See Section 5 for instructions on how to read banner tables.

Overall Caller Satisfaction

Before discussing the importance of and satisfaction with individual call characteristics, it is important to first get a feel for overall call satisfaction. To measure the level of satisfaction, callers were asked to rate their overall experience, telephone service, whether

the telephone service met their expectations, and Workers' Comp's ability to provide assistance.

Through the course of the survey, callers were asked to rate their overall call experience satisfaction. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied." Those results did not vary noticeably by call unit, though the Preferred Worker Program did log the highest percentage of "very satisfied" callers. See Chart 1 below.

Overall Satisfaction

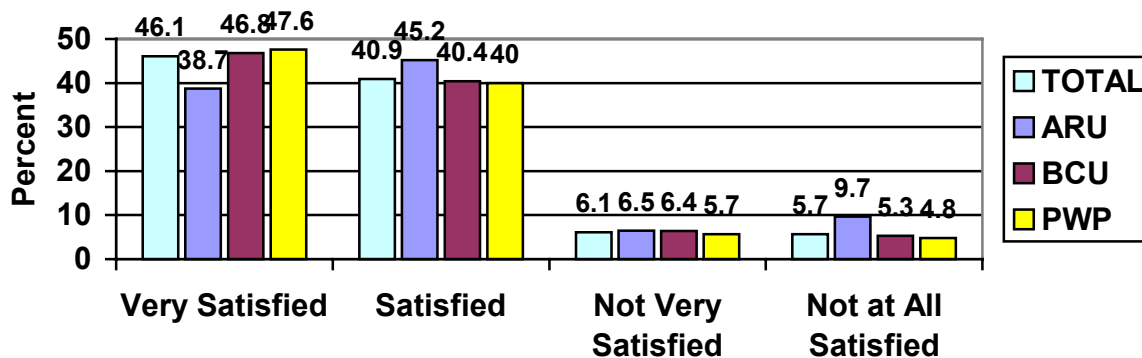


Chart 1

When asked to rate overall satisfaction with the telephone service provided by Workers' Comp, fully 51% of callers responded that it was excellent. These results did vary by which unit callers were accessing: 60% of callers to the Preferred Worker Program (PWP), 48% of Appellate Review Unit (ARU) callers, and 43% of Benefits Consultation Unit (BCU). See Chart 2 below.

Telephone service rating

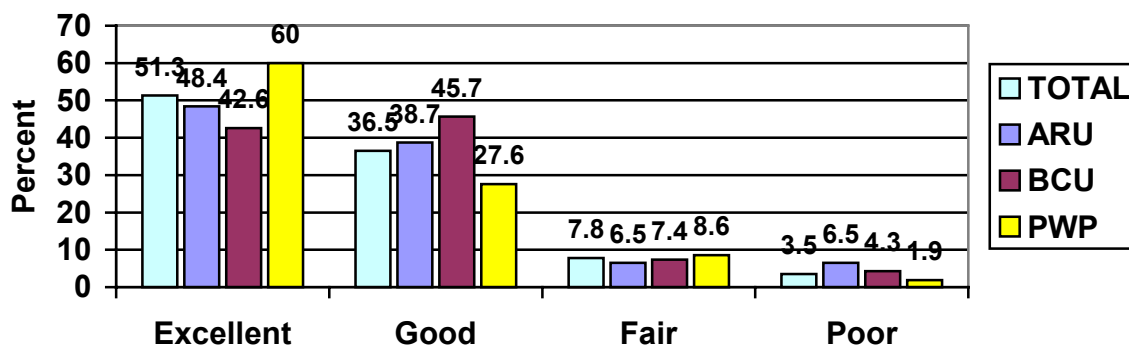


Chart 2

Callers were also asked to judge how well the telephone service met their expectations. Twenty-five percent of all callers, and 30% of those calling the PWP call unit, felt the telephone service exceeded their expectations. Roughly two-thirds of the callers had their

phone service expectations met by the call units. It is important to remember that the content of each caller's expectations is not quantified in this question, and thus is relative to each individual's service needs. See Chart 3 below.

How well phone service met expectations

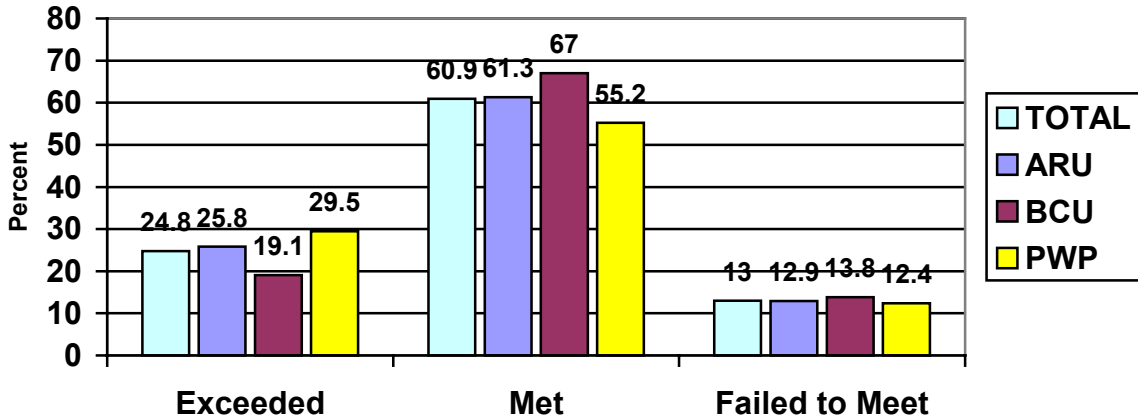


Chart 3

The last overall satisfaction question measured any change in callers' opinions of Workers' Comp's ability to provide them assistance. Again, the PWP was most successful in changing people's opinions for the better, with over 1/3 of their callers expressing an improved opinion of PWP's ability to provide assistance. The BCU was least successful at changing opinions for the better. However, they were the best at holding opinions steady and the least likely to cause opinions to decrease. See Chart 4 below.

Change in opinion of Workers' Comp's ability to provide assistance

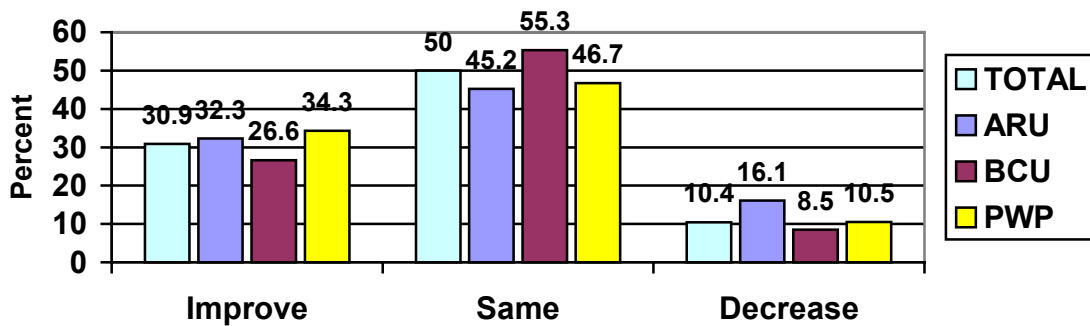


Chart 4

Itemized Importance/Satisfaction Attributes

To better understand what importance callers place on staff and call characteristics, and how Workers' Comp is performing on those items, six sets of importance/satisfaction questions were asked. There were question sets covering customer service characteristics, staff knowledge, helpfulness, timeliness, the automated call system, and general issues. The survey was programmed so each question was tailored to reference the particular call unit accessed.

Customer Service

When asked to identify the most important customer service characteristic, from a list of five choices, the results were somewhat evenly distributed. The characteristic most important to the greatest percentage of callers (28.3%) was that staff members displayed a genuine interest in their issues. Least frequently cited by callers as most important (7.8%) was staff members taking personal responsibility for their call. See Chart 5 below.

Importance - Customer Service Characteristics

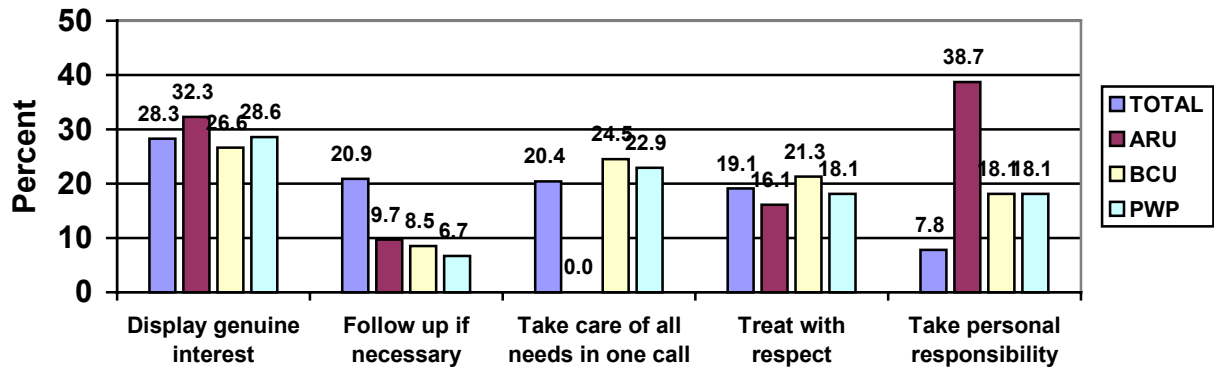


Chart 5

Callers were then asked to rate their satisfaction with the characteristic they felt was most important. Of all callers, 86.9% responded that they were either “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the customer service characteristic they ranked most important. When broken down by characteristic, it is revealed that the most important characteristic to the greatest number of callers also had the highest level of satisfaction. Conversely, the least important characteristic had the lowest (relatively speaking) satisfaction level. Thus, Workers' Comp call units seemed to be successfully matching performance with importance when addressing their clients' customer satisfaction needs. See Chart 6 below.

Satisfaction - Customer Service

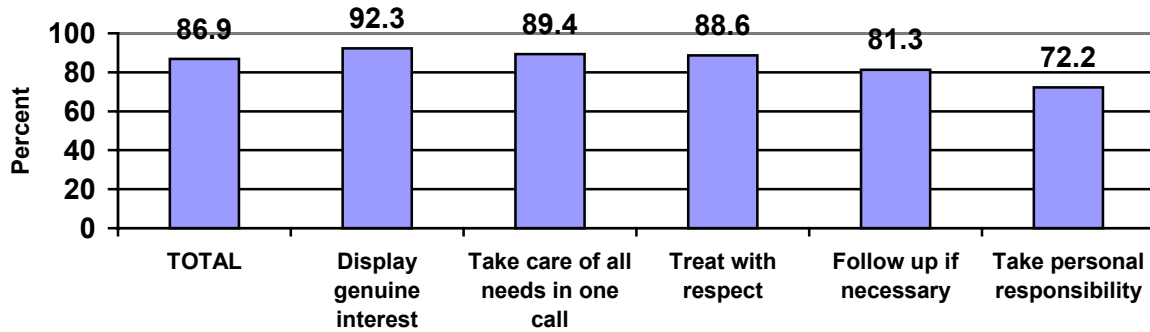


Chart 6

Knowledge

The next group of staff characteristics callers were asked to rate related to staff knowledge. Over 40% of all callers listed staff’s ability to answer their questions, or refer them to someone who could, as most important. There was no differentiation in ranked importance by call unit. See Chart 7 below.

Importance - Knowledge

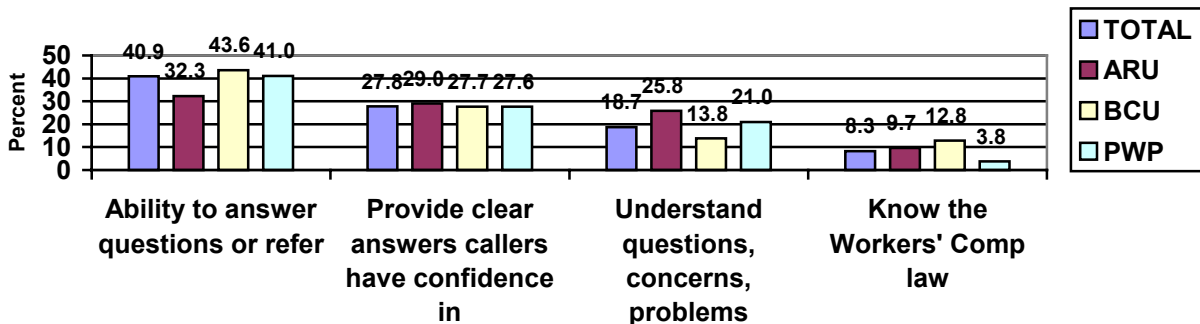


Chart 7

When asked how satisfied they were with Workers’ Comp’s performance on their most important knowledge characteristic, 87% of callers responded “very satisfied” or “satisfied.” Variability between characteristics was fairly small, though staff providing “clear answers callers have confidence in” did fall off almost 6% from the next lowest. Since that characteristic is most important to 27% (second overall) of the callers, Workers’ Comp may need to address that mild shortfall. See Chart 8 below.

Satisfaction - Knowledge

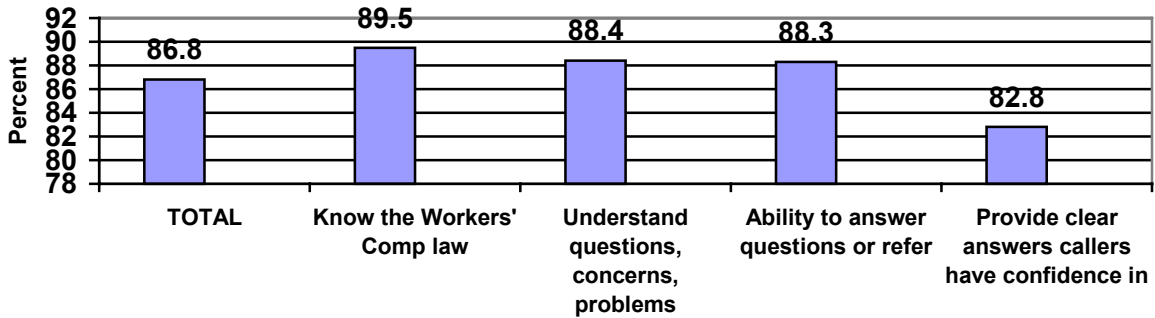


Chart 8

Helpfulness

The third bank of characteristics related to actual help given by staff. Again, callers were asked to identify the characteristic most important to them. In this set of options, 40% chose staff ability to provide clear answers they had confidence in. It is interesting to note that the same characteristic was tested in the “knowledge” group, with only 27% choosing it as most important. It is also interesting to note the large group of ARU callers (32.3%, remembering that ARU had the smallest sample size) who ranked staff’s ability to stay impartial and non-judgmental as most important. See Chart 9 below.

Importance - Helpfulness

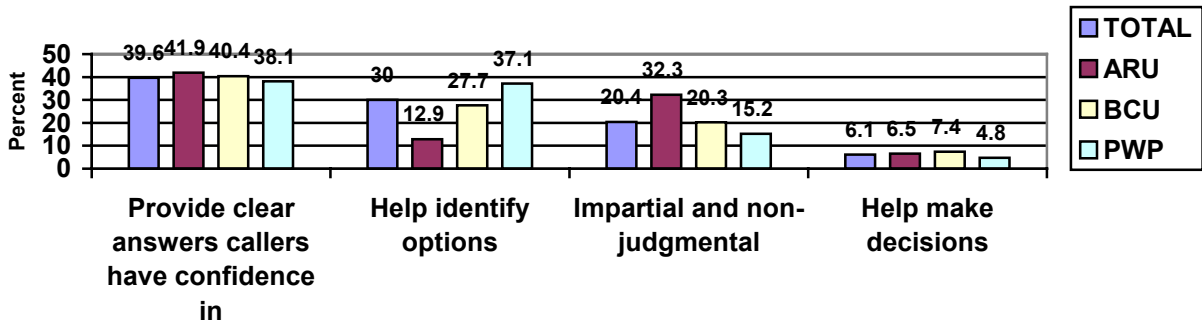


Chart 9

When asked to rate their satisfaction level for this bank of issues, callers were most satisfied with staff’s ability to stay impartial and non-judgmental. They were least satisfied with staff’s help identifying options. Workers’ Comp may need to bolster their service in this area, as it is the most important help 30% of the callers needed, with the lowest relative satisfaction. See Chart 10 below.

Satisfaction - Helpfulness

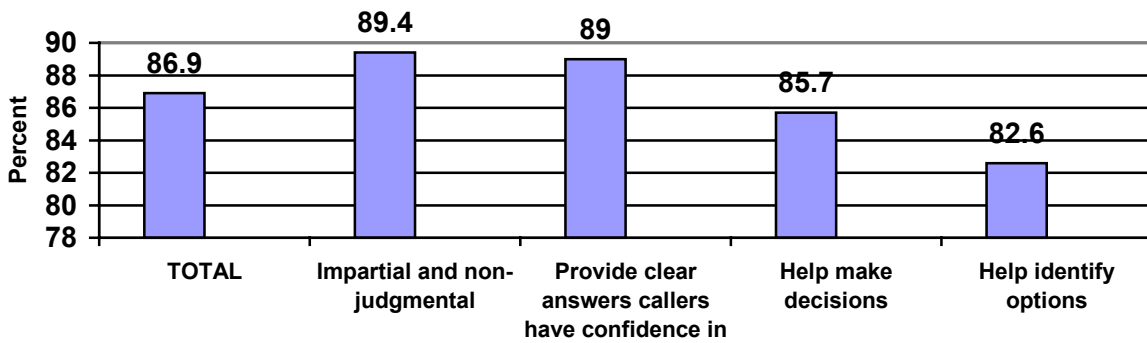


Chart 10

Timeliness

The fourth bank of characteristics that Workers’ Comp was interested in testing dealt with the timeliness of service on the telephone. Approximately one-third (32.2%) of all callers found access to a live person on demand to be the most important piece of timely call management. That trend held true across all call units. The only major blip in the rankings came from the ARU call unit, where 23% of callers, almost 9% more than the overall sample figure, ranked “receiving a prompt call-back if needed” as most important.

Importance - Timeliness

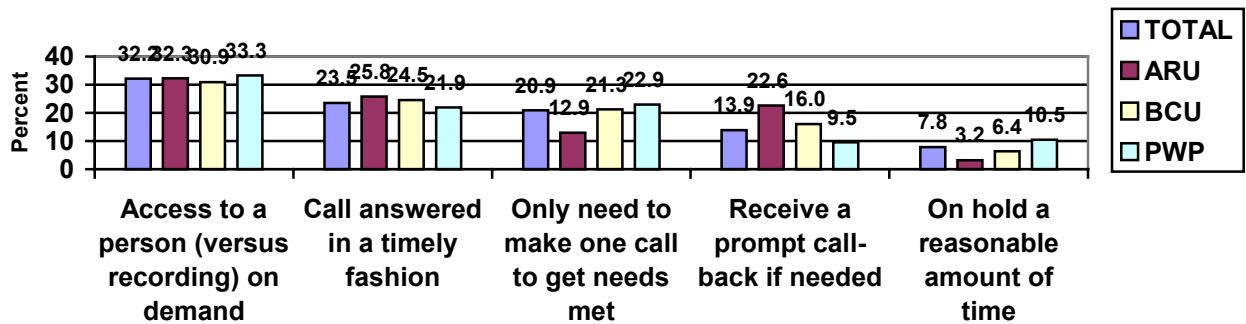


Chart 11

Overall satisfaction for this bank of questions was higher than for any other set of characteristics (93.4%). Callers seemed most pleased with Workers’ Comp’s prompt phone answering (96.3%). However, once on the line, only 83.3% of all callers were satisfied with the length of time they were left on hold. When viewing the gap between importance and satisfaction, however, Workers’ Comp seems to be doing fine on a relatively unimportant issue. Workers’ Comp is doing incredibly well at providing satisfactory timeliness on the two most important issues. See Chart 12 below.

Satisfaction - Timeliness

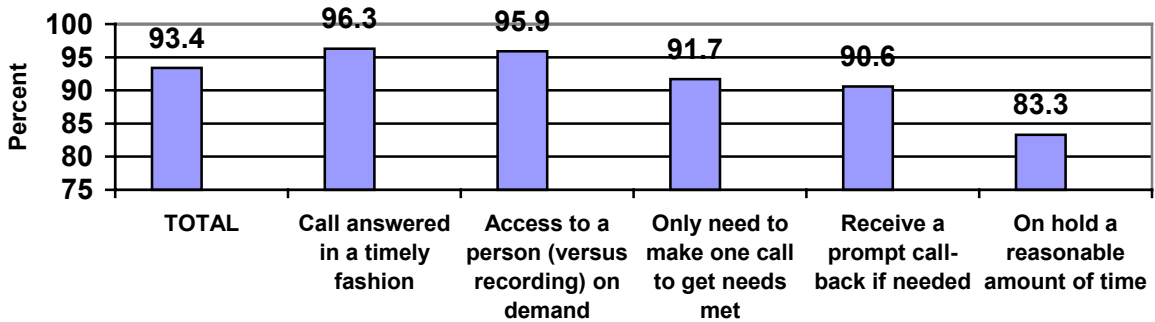


Chart 12

Automated Call System

The fifth category tested by Workers' Comp judged importance of and satisfaction with automated call system characteristics. Of the five options presented, almost half the callers (49.1%) chose the ability to use a toll-free number as the most important call system component. There was no variation between call units on this point. See Chart 13 below.

Importance - Automated Call System

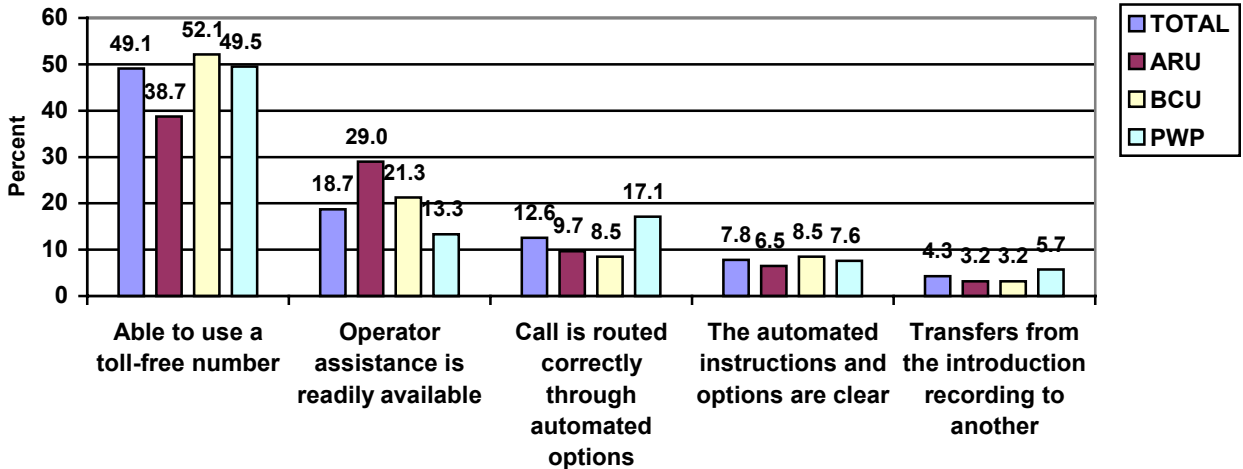


Chart 13

Satisfaction with call system features was basically inversely related to the percentage of callers who ranked it as most important. Thus, the lowest percentage of callers was satisfied with their ability to use a toll-free number, the most important call system characteristic. However, even the “lowest” satisfaction isn’t bad, with more than 92% of those who rated this issue at least “satisfied.” See Chart 14 below.

Satisfaction - Automated Call System

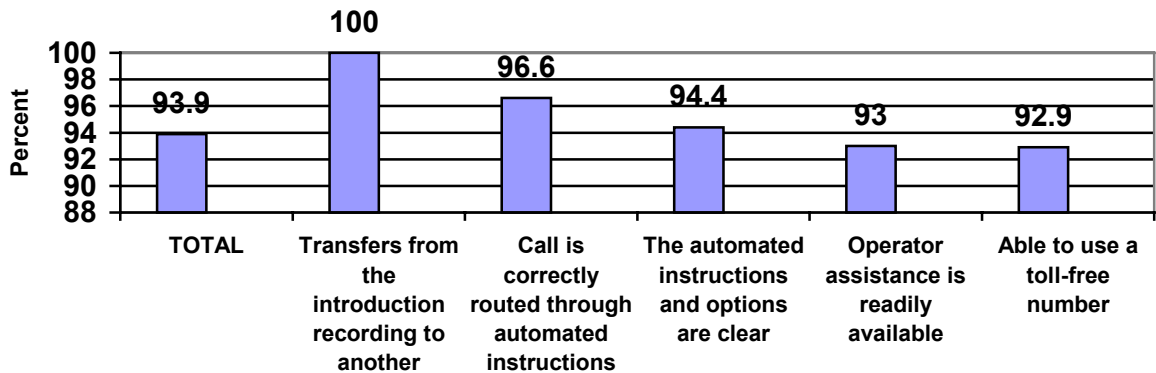


Chart 14

General Issues

The final bank of importance/satisfaction options touched on more abstract concepts. Overall, 42% of the callers ranked getting the information they wanted or needed as most important. Over half of the BCU callers (56.4%) ranked this concept highest. The lowest percentage of callers (12.2% overall) ranked being treated respectfully most important, though BCU callers outpaced the other call units here as well (14.9%). See Chart 15 below.

Importance - General Issues

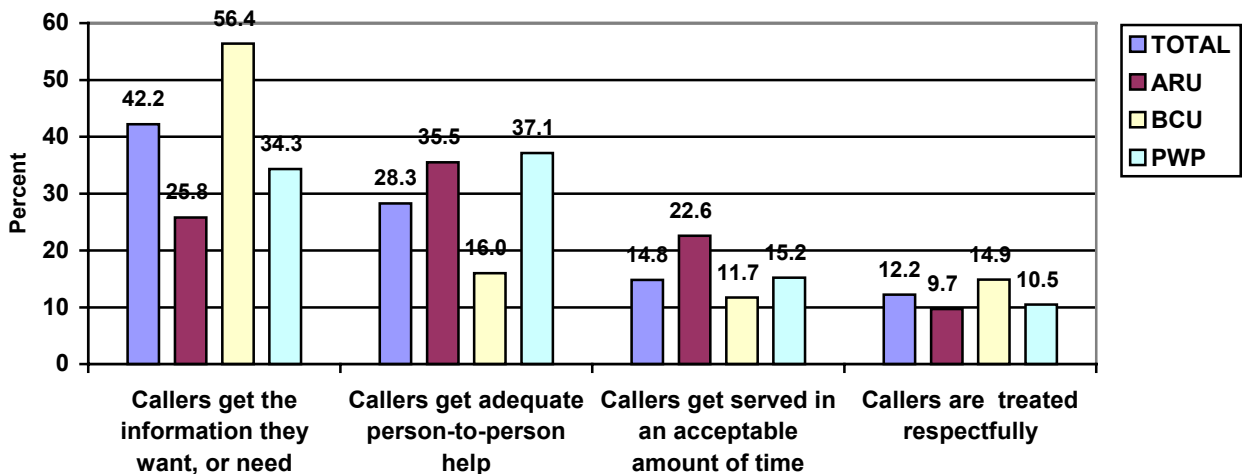


Chart 15

Caller satisfaction in getting the information they wanted or needed did not match the importance level placed on it. Most important by a large margin (13.9% overall), the concept ranked a distant third in satisfaction, with less than 90% “very satisfied” or

“satisfied.” The concept most important to the fewest callers garnered the highest relative satisfaction. See Chart 16 below.

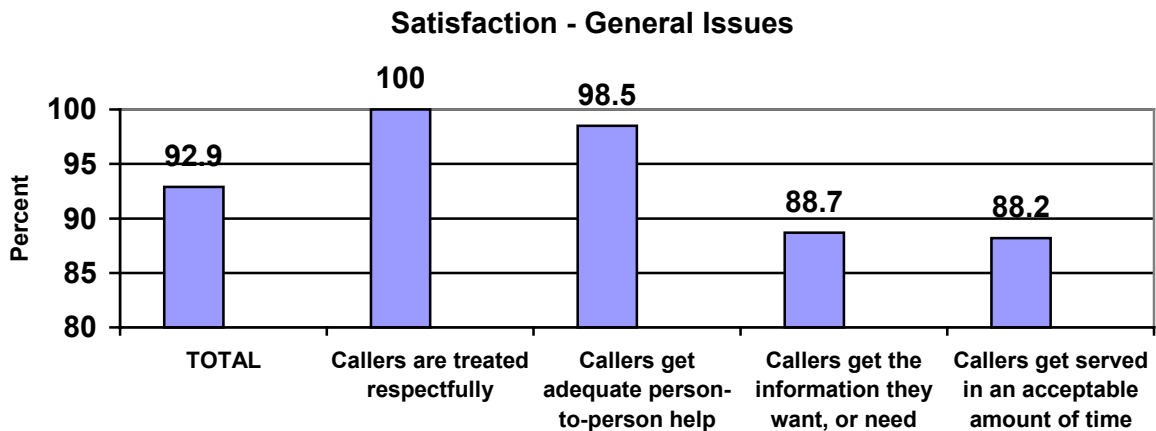


Chart 16

Conclusions

The results show callers to Workers’ Comp are generally satisfied with the service and services they receive. However, as noted in the Automated Call System and General Issues issue banks, Workers’ Comp needs to make sure service improvements are mapped to areas that callers deem important. Otherwise, resources will be wasted by oversatisfying relatively unimportant needs.

Results may be further tailored to meet the needs of callers to different call units. For example, ARU callers seem to have a relatively greater need for non-judgmental, helpful, live operator interactions where those operators take personal responsibility for the call. That need is being met fairly well, but may be improved upon. BCU callers are apparently more “information” driven – providing them clear, concise advice and direction will go a long way to meeting their needs. PWP callers, like the ARU callers, require person-to-person help. However, unlike ARU callers, PWP callers appear driven by a desire to get the necessary information in a timely manner, to avoid the need for further calls. To meet these needs, Workers’ Comp should maximize operator effectiveness in routing calls, referrals, and fully answering questions the first time through.