

Housing
Executive

HOME IMPROVEMENT GRANTS

Customer Satisfaction
Survey 2020



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*For more information about Home Improvement Grants,
please see the [Housing Executive website](http://www.nihe.gov.uk).*

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Executive Summary

Grant Type

- A total of 584 grant recipients completed a 'Home Improvements Grants Survey' via telephone, resulting in a response rate of 65%. The sample frame consisted of 891 grants customers who had received a home improvement grant in 2019-20 from the NIHE.
- The findings presented in this report are based on the responses of 584 home improvement grant recipients.
- The majority of respondents had received a Disabled Facilities Grant (80%); 12% received Home Repair Assistance grants and eight per cent received renovation grants. Due to factors around the administration of the Scheme, only Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) recipients were asked questions on a number of stages of the process, and some stages did not apply to all applicants.

Characteristics of respondents

- There were more female respondents (56%) than male (44%). The highest proportion (58%) of respondents were aged over 65. Nearly three-tenths (29%) were aged between 45 and 64. Lesser proportions were aged between 18 and 44 (9%) and under 18 (3%).
- Just over a third (36%) of respondents were retired from work and almost four fifths (38%) were permanently sick/disabled. Ten per cent were not working and lesser proportions were working (9%) or had other employment status.
- More than four-fifths (83%) of respondents stated that they or someone in their household had a long term illness or disability that affects their normal day-to-day activities.
- The main benefits received by the Household Reference Person in the applicant's household were State Retirement Pension (47%), Pension Credit (30%) and Disability Living Allowance (23%).
- More than half (53%) of respondents stated that their household religion was Catholic and 27% stated that it was Protestant.

Initial information about the Grants scheme (DFGs only)

- Almost two-thirds (65%) had found out how to apply for a grant through an occupational therapist and 16% had found out through family and friends.
- The majority (89%; 83% in 2017) said they had found the information or advice easy to understand.

Test of resources stage

- Overall, more than three-quarters (76%; 74% in 2017) of respondents said they had found the Test of Resources forms easy to complete.
- The majority (91%; 80% in 2017) of respondents were satisfied with their experience of the Test of Resources stage.

Inspection stage

- High proportions said they had been offered an appointment date and time (86%) and that their appointment had been kept (96%).
- Similar high proportions confirmed that the following aspects of the grants process had taken place:
 - 88% said the grants officer had shown their identification;
 - 84% said the grants officer had explained what the inspection was going to entail;
 - 83% said the grants officer had explained the type of work that might be grant aided; and
 - 79% said the grants officer had explained the next steps in the grants process.
- The vast majority (91%; 95% in 2017) said they were satisfied with the Inspection Stage of the process.

Schedule of works stage

- More than three-quarters (76%; 66% in 2017) of respondents said they had found the formal application forms easy to complete, 10% said they were neither easy nor difficult and 12% said they had found them difficult to complete.
- Nearly one-quarter (24%) of respondents said they had received help from an advice agency such as Radius or Gable at the Schedule of Works stage, and 10% had been assisted by a member of Housing Executive staff. More than one-fifth (21%) said they had been helped by a friend or member of their family and 33% said they had not received any help to complete the forms at this stage of the process¹.
- The majority of respondents (86%; 86% in 2017) said they were satisfied with their experience of submitting the required information during the schedule of works stage of the process.

¹ Respondents could give more than one answer to this question therefore totals will not add to 100%.

Home Improvement Agencies

- More than two-fifths (42%) of respondents had used a Home Improvement Agency during the Grants process; 22% used GABLE and 20% used Radius.
- The majority (89%) of respondents who used a Home Improvement Agency were satisfied with the overall service provided throughout the process.

Approval Stage

- Almost three-quarters of respondents (71%) were satisfied with the length of time from the submission of the documents to the approval of grant aid, while 19% were dissatisfied.
- Two-thirds (67%) of respondents were in contact with the Grants Office regarding the progress of works, with 10% contacting the Housing Executive six times or more.

Payment stage

- More than four-fifths of respondents (84%; 86% in 2017) said they were satisfied with the level of grant awarded to them.
- Overall, more than four-fifths of respondents (82%; 83% in 2017) were satisfied with the time taken by the Housing Executive to complete the payment of their grant.

Builder/Contractor

- More than three-quarters of respondents (76%; 80% in 2017) said they had found it easy to get a builder to carry out the works.
- Very high levels of satisfaction (90%+) were reported regarding the *politeness of the builder* (95%; 94% in 2017) and *quality of materials* (95%; 91% in 2017).
- Overall, a high proportion (92%; 89% in 2017) said they were satisfied with the quality of finished work.
- Overall, a high proportion of respondents (92%; 90% in 2017) said they were satisfied with the service provided by the builders during the work to their property.

Overall satisfaction with the Grants Scheme

- High levels of satisfaction (70%+) were reported across all aspects of the grants process. Respondents were most satisfied with '*knowing who is dealing with your grant*' (88%) while 70% of respondents were satisfied with '*the quick payment of your grant*'.
- The vast majority (97%; 94% in 2017) considered that they had been fairly treated during the grants process.
- More than four-fifths of respondents (86%; 83% in 2017) said they had found the letters and documentation they had received from the Housing Executive regarding their application easy to understand.
- 98% agreed that the work carried out had improved the applicant's quality of life and that of others in the household.
- 97% agreed that the work carried out had made an improvement in the applicant's ability to live independently.
- 97% agreed that the work carried out had fully met the needs of the grant applicant.
- The vast majority (94%; 92% in 2017) of respondents said they were satisfied with the grants scheme overall.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

The 1992 Grants Scheme, which was principally mandatory in nature, is derived from the Housing (NI) Order 1992. Under this scheme the Housing Executive not only had a statutory duty to address the problems of unfit housing in the private sector, but this duty extended to the provision of grant aid where renovation or replacement was both feasible and consistent with policy.

However, under the provisions of the Housing (NI) Order 2003 the Housing Executive's Grants Scheme has changed from being mainly mandatory in nature to being mainly discretionary. The key changes introduced in the Housing (NI) Order 2003 in respect of each type of grant are as follows:

- Renovation/Replacement Grants: These grants are no longer mandatory. The issuing of grants will be at the discretion of the Housing Executive.
- Disabled Facilities Grant: This grant is available to those with a recommendation from an Occupational Therapist and continues to be mandatory.
- Home Repair Assistance Grant: This grant is available to respondents on certain means tested benefits.

At the discretion of the Housing Executive, respondents over 60 or with a disability are not required to be in receipt of the specified means tested benefits.

Due to the reduction in grants funding since 2009, applications for Discretionary Renovation, Replacement and Home Repair Assistance grants are only available in exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances are deemed to exist where there is an imminent and significant risk to the occupier.

The last evaluation of customer satisfaction with the Housing Executive's Home Improvements Grants Scheme took place in 2017. Private Sector Improvement Services have commissioned this new research which is intended as a follow-up to the previous survey (Grants Satisfaction Survey 2017).

This research was concerned solely with the grants scheme which operated for the financial year 2019/20 and administered by five Grants Offices throughout Northern Ireland².

It should be noted that there were changes made to the schemes administrative processes since the last report. Caution is required when comparing figures from previous reports with the figures from this report.

² The number of grants offices has reduced from seven at the time of the previous 2017 report to five in this report (2020). The Belfast grants office and the South grants office have combined into the Belfast grants office and the Omagh and Fermanagh Grants offices have combined to form the West Grants office.

1.2 Research objectives

The main objectives were to evaluate customer satisfaction with the overall scheme:

- Assessing each stage of the grants process;
- Looking at aspects of the grants forms and associated literature; and
- Measuring satisfaction levels by individual grants offices.

Within the overall remit of the main objectives, several areas of study were identified:

- Sources of information on grants;
- Levels of understanding of the grants process;
- Ease/difficulty in completion of grants forms;
- Profile of grant applicant; and
- Overall satisfaction with the process.

These objectives were defined in order to identify any problems in the service and where improvements could be made. In addition, the Housing Executive wished to explore two secondary objectives:

- To identify ways to help respondents acquire documentation and assess their views on this service if it becomes available (for example: acquiring deeds, proofs and approvals); and
- To assess the level of uptake of future survey research through an online method of data collection.

The secondary objectives were intended to identify ways in which the grants (and research) process could be made easier for respondents. The process of acquiring certain documents has been known to be both costly and cumbersome for grant applicants and the Housing Executive wants to assess whether offering a service of this nature would be desirable.

1.3 Survey content

The Housing Executive Research Unit provided a draft telephone survey for this project. The questionnaire was divided into ten sections as set out below:

- Initial information about the Grants Scheme;
- Test of resources stage;
- Inspection stage;
- Schedule of works stage;
- Home Improvement Agencies;
- Approval Stage;
- Payment stage;
- Builder/contractor satisfaction;
- Overall Grants Scheme; and
- Personal information.

1.4 Sample design

The sampling frame for this study was all Home Improvement Grant Scheme applicants (across the five Grant Office areas) who had grant works completed in the 12 months for the financial year 2019/20. This sample was drawn from GRS – the Grants IT System.

A market research company – Perceptive Insight – was commissioned to complete the telephone survey fieldwork on behalf of the Housing Executive. Perceptive Insight provided input into the final questionnaire design. The Housing Executive supplied Perceptive Insight with a database of the 891 grant applicants, across the five offices including names, addresses and telephone numbers.

The aim was to conduct a minimum of 579 interviews (65% of all Grant recipients)³, with a target to complete interviews with 65% of applicants from each of the five Grant Offices. Taking into account the likely response rate, all 891 grant applicants were selected to be approached for interview.

1.5 Participation in the study

An introductory letter was sent to all sample contacts in advance of the telephone survey. This was sent out on Housing Executive headed paper, two weeks prior to the study. The letter outlined the aim of the research, provided reassurances on the confidentiality of response, invited participation in the study, afforded participants the opportunity to opt out and detailed contact information should there be any queries. Participation in this survey was voluntary.

1.6 Survey implementation

The survey was conducted from Perceptive Insight's Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) suite based in Belfast.

The specialised survey software is enabled with a VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) telephone system which allowed for the recording and monitoring of all calls. CATI handled routing by taking interviewers automatically to the next appropriate question, avoiding the interviewer having to interpret complex routing instructions. Using this technology meant that the resultant dataset was cleaner and free from interviewer routing errors. As part of the piloting of the questionnaire, the CATI set-up was also tested.

The Perceptive Insight research team provided an annotated paper copy of the questionnaire, which is identical to the CATI version in terms of logic structure and variable labelling, for detailed checking and approval by the Housing Executive's Project Team before fieldwork commenced. The team also provided an online link to the CATI version, which was used to test the routing of the CATI set up.

³ In the previous survey 100 interviews were conducted per Grant office. For this survey, the approach was changed to a percentage of the contact sample as there were fewer contacts overall, and there was uncertainty of the potential effect that Covid-19 restrictions would have on the response rate.

All telephone interviewing was conducted by Perceptive Insight's executive team of interviewers who are trained and experienced and work to the standards required by the Market Research Society Code of Conduct.

Telephone interviewers were briefed on the study and provided with a copy of the questionnaire, written briefing instructions and copies of the cover letter and contact sheets detailing the respondents they were to contact.

A number of steps were taken to maximise response to the survey, including:

- Sending an advance letter to potential respondents informing them of the study;
- Making at least three attempts to obtain an interview at each issued telephone number;
- Using a concise questionnaire to ensure the interview was of a suitable duration to prevent respondent fatigue and discontinuation of interview;
- Using trained and experienced telephone interviewers to work with respondents;
- Assuring potential respondents of the confidentiality and anonymity of their answers, in line with Perceptive Insight's IQCS-accredited standards;
- Ensuring convenience for respondents by offering flexibility in terms of when the interview is conducted and setting appointments to suit circumstances; and
- Offering information about what would happen to the findings.

Over the fieldwork period (i.e. end of November 2020 - December 2020) Perceptive Insight conducted a total of 584 interviews with grant applicants. Interviews lasted an average of 20-25 minutes. Respondents were assured that information given would be anonymous and confidential and that all data collected would be held in line with GDPR requirements.

1.7 Contact outcomes

In total the Housing Executive provided a database of 891 sample contacts. Calls were made to each contact and a record was kept of the outcome of each of these calls. As can be seen at Table 1, 11 of the contacts were classed as having a 'wrong number', 43 were classed as 'not being in service', one grant applicant was deceased and three applicants did not receive a grant.

This meant that there were a total of 891 contacts from which to achieve the target number of interviews. A response rate of 65%⁴ was achieved, resulting in 584 completed questionnaires. The level of refusals to participate in the survey was low (5%).

The target of 65% completed interviews per grant area was met or exceeded in all five areas.

⁴ This was taken using the potential contact list as the base (891). If the total eligible sample was used the response rate was 70%.

Table 1: Total number of contacts

Grant Office	Total No. of contacts	Wrong No.	Not in service	Deceased	Did not receive grant	Total eligible	Completed interviews	Refusal	No response	Response rate
Belfast	102	1	9	0	1	91	66	5	20	65%
Derry	121	1	4	1	2	113	79	11	23	65%
North East	200	3	15	0	0	182	131	6	45	66%
South	181	0	7	0	0	174	121	5	48	67%
West	287	6	8	0	0	273	187	15	71	65%
Total	891	11	43	1	3	833	584	42	207	66%

1.8 Data preparation

On completion of the survey all data were subject to an extensive range of inter and intra variable logic checks. This included checking bases were correct, that filter questions had been adhered to, ensuring the data for each variable fell within the expected range, and checking outlier data for accuracy. All skipped questions and routed 'not applicable' responses were rigorously checked and validated. Inter-field consistency checks were also conducted. All open-ended string questions were recoded to numeric values. Variables set up to record 'other' responses were recoded and provided as part of the main dataset.

In agreement with the Housing Executive, weighting was not applied because the percentage of interviews achieved across the seven Grant Office areas was largely reflective of the percentage in the sample. This is evidenced at Table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of all applicants and sample by Grants office

Grant Office	% in population	% in sample
Belfast	11%	11%
Derry	14%	14%
North East	22%	22%
South Area	20%	21%
West Area	32%	32%
Total	100%	100%

Secure encrypted electronic data files containing the documented and fully validated dataset were provided to the Housing Executive on project completion.

1.9 Note on reporting:

In 61% of cases the respondent to the survey was also the applicant. Other respondents included partners (12%) or other people (26%). For ease and continuity of reporting, this report will refer only to the respondent except in the case of questions relating to benefits or income which were directed at the Household Reference Person.

For the sake of brevity, this report analyses all sections by individual grants offices in tabular format only. Look-up tables for each grant office are available in the separate excel document; [which is available here](#).

2.0 Characteristics of respondents

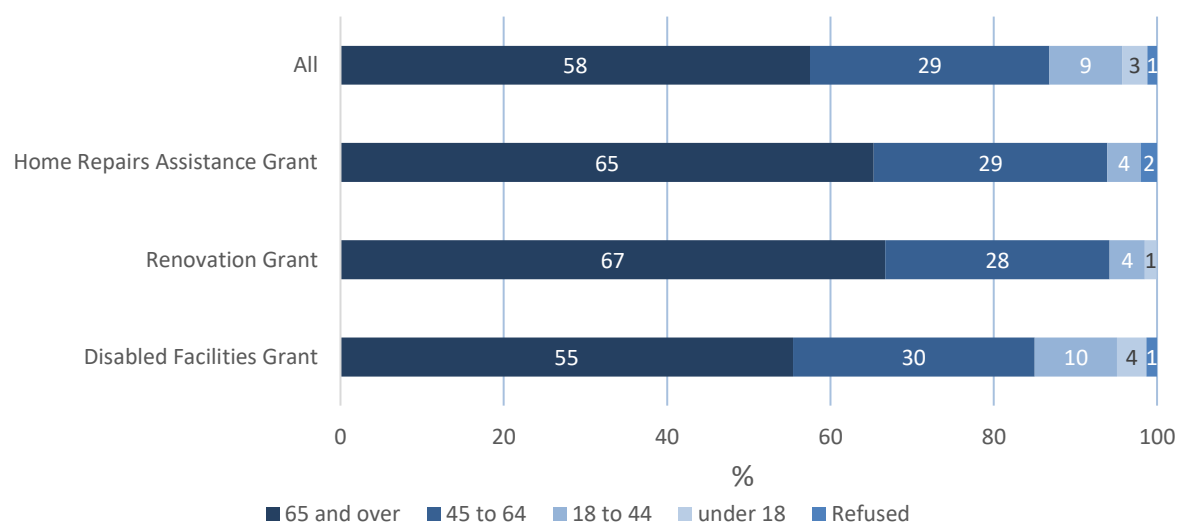
The survey gathered information about the household, including age, gender, employment status, religion and ethnic origin of respondents, and if any household members had a disability.

2.1 Grant type (Appendix table 2.1)

Nearly four in five respondents (79%) had received a Disabled Facilities Grant and 12% had received a Home Repair Assistance Grant. Less than one-tenth (8%) had received a Renovation Grant.

Analysis of Grant type by age of respondent shows that in general nearly three in five respondents (58%) of across all grant types were aged over 65.

Figure 1: Grant type by age of respondent



2.2 Gender and age of respondents (Appendix table 2.2)

There were more female respondents (56%) than male (44%) (Figure 2). The highest proportion (58%) of respondents were aged over 65; nearly three in ten (29%) were aged between 45 and 64. A lesser proportion were aged between 18 and 44 (9%) and three per cent were aged under 18. Figure 3 provides a gender breakdown within each age group (Appendix Table 1.2).

Figure 2: Gender of respondent by Grant Type

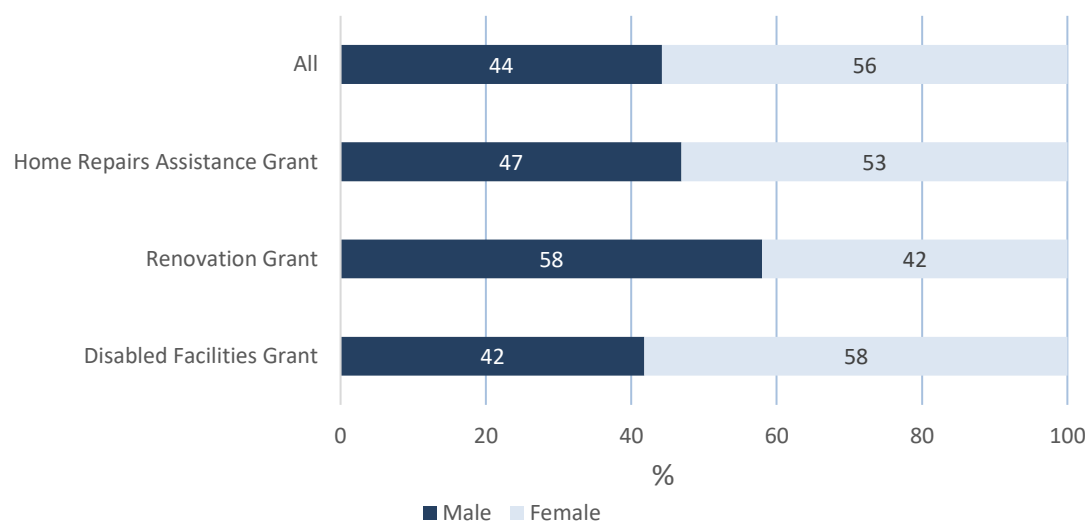
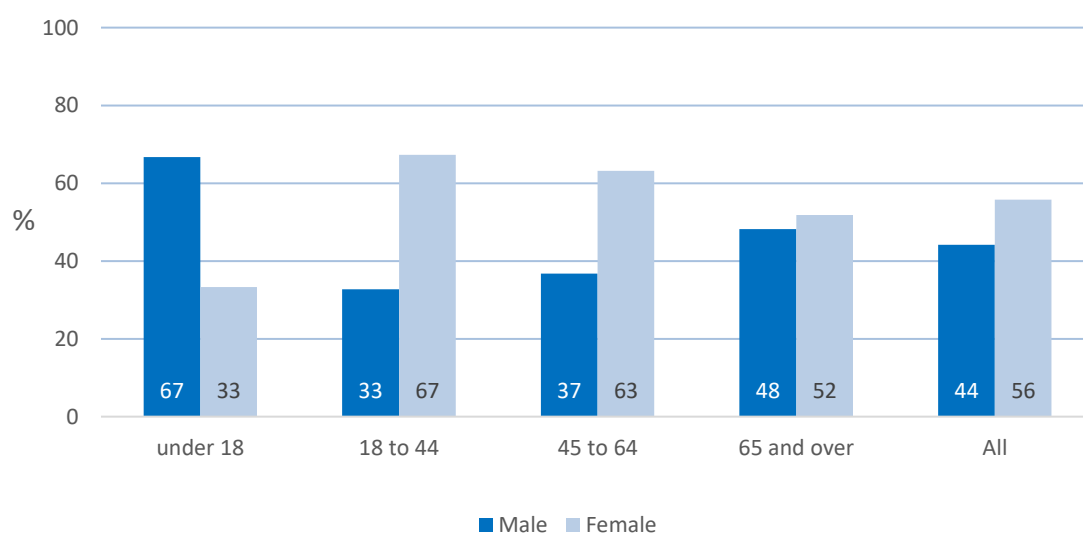


Figure 3: Age of respondent by gender

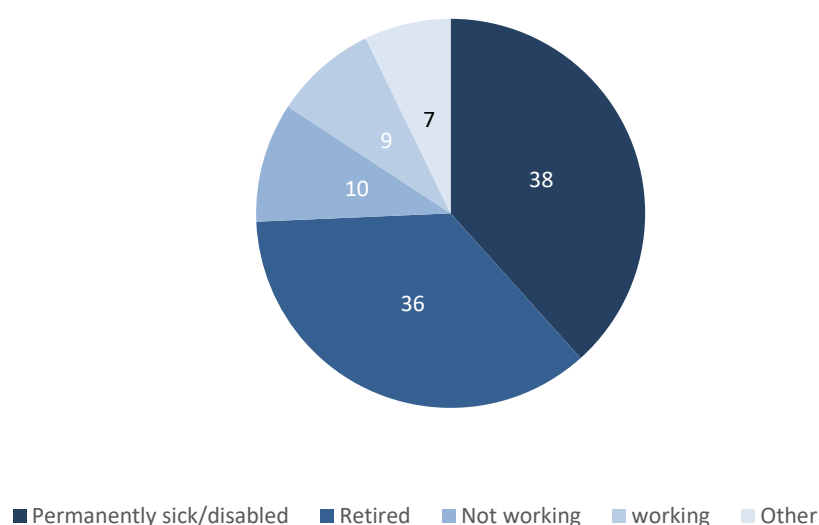


2.3 Employment status (Appendix table 2.4)

Similar proportions of respondents were permanently sick/disabled (38%) and were retired from work (36%).

Ten per cent were working and lesser proportions were not working (9%) or had other status (7%).

Figure 4: Employment status



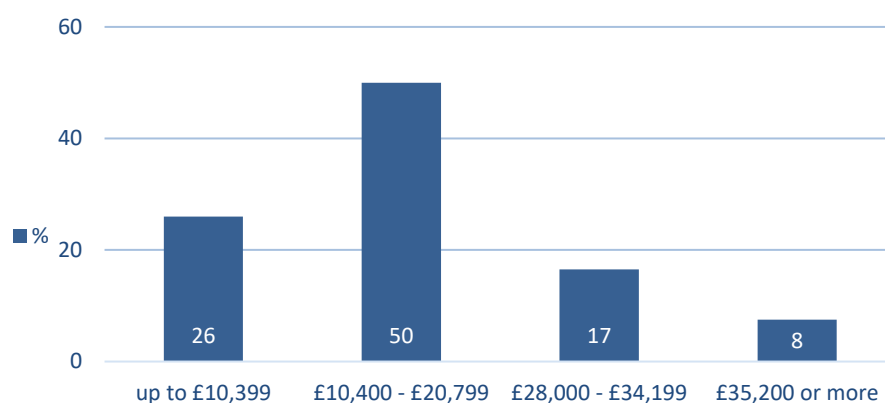
2.4 Annual household income⁵ (Appendix table 2.5)

This survey defines household income as the total annual income before tax for the respondent and partner (if applicable), including all income from savings, employment, benefits or other sources.

One quarter (26%) of respondents said their annual household income was under £10,400 and half (50%) said it was between £10,400 and £20,800. This analysis shows that three-quarters (76%) of total grant aid was to applicants with a household income of up to £20,800. One-tenth (10%) of respondents had an income over £20,800 and 15% either did not know or refused to supply details of household income.

⁵ 200 out of 584 respondents (34%) provided their income information

Figure 5: Annual Household income



2.5 Benefits (Appendix tables 2.6 – 2.7)

The main benefits received in each household by the person who was means tested were State Retirement Pension (47%), Pension Credit (30%) and Disability Living Allowance (23%)

Table 3: Benefits received by the Household Reference Person

	Per cent
<i>Out of work benefits:</i>	
Jobseekers Allowance	<1
Employment and Support Allowance	13
Incapacity Benefit	1
Income Support	3
<i>Disability related benefits:</i>	
Severe Disability Allowance	<1
Disability Living Allowance	23
Personal Independence Payment	20
Attendance Allowance	7
Carer's Allowance	9
<i>Pension:</i>	
State (retirement) Pension	47
Pension Credit	30
<i>Other benefits:</i>	
Housing Benefit	7
Child Benefit	3
Child Tax Credits	4
Working Tax Credit	2

In addition 15% of the HRPs had partners who were in receipt of state (retirement) pension and nine per cent Carer's Allowance.

Table 4: Benefits received by the Household Reference Person's partner (where applicable)

	Per cent
<i>Out of work benefits:</i>	
Jobseekers Allowance	-
Employment and Support Allowance	3
Incapacity Benefit	<1
Income Support	<1
<i>Disability related benefits:</i>	
Severe Disability Allowance	-
Disability Living Allowance	7
Personal Independence Payment	7
Attendance Allowance	1
Carer's Allowance	9
<i>Pension:</i>	
State (retirement) Pension	15
Pension Credit	6
<i>Other benefits:</i>	
Housing Benefit	<1
Child Benefit	2
Child Tax Credit	2
Working Tax Credit	<1

2.6 Long-term illness or disability (Appendix tables 2.8 – 2.9)

At the time of the survey, more than four-fifths (83%) of respondents said they or someone in their household had a disability that affected their normal day-to-day activities. Of these respondents, more than four-fifths (81%) said their household had one disabled member, almost one-fifth (17%) had two disabled members and a small proportion (2%) had three or more disabled members.

2.7 Household religion (Appendix table 2.10)

More than half (53%) of respondents said their household religion was Catholic and 27% said it was Protestant. A further 19% said their household was mixed religion, no religion, another religion, or refused to state their household religion.

2.8 Ethnic group of respondents (Appendix table 2.11)

Almost all (98%) of respondents said they were white and one per cent said they were from other ethnic groups.

2.9 Internet access and future online survey methods (Appendix tables 2.12 – 2.13)

More than seven in ten respondents (71%; 50% in 2017) said they had internet access in their home. Those respondents with internet access were asked whether they would have completed the grants satisfaction survey online, if it had been possible.

Seven in ten (70%) of these respondents said they would not have done so, while less than one in ten (7%) did not rule it out. Table 5 shows that the highest proportion of respondents who would not have completed a survey online said they preferred the telephone methodology.

Table 5: If it had been possible to complete the survey online, would you have done so?

	Per cent
Yes	23
Maybe	7
No – prefer the phone	59
No – not comfortable with online forms	9
No – other reasons	3

3.0 Initial information about the Grants scheme⁶

Respondents who had received a Disabled Facilities Grant were asked questions about the sources of initial information they had received on how to apply to the Grants scheme and how easy or difficult this information had been to understand.

3.1 Finding out how to apply (Appendix Table 3.1)

Nearly two-thirds (65%) of respondents said they had found out how to apply for a grant through an Occupational Therapist and almost one-fifth (16%) had found out through family and friends. This was similar to the findings in the 2017 Grants Satisfaction Survey, when more than three-fifths (61%) had found out how to apply through Occupational Therapists and 18% had found out through family and friends.

3.2 Advice from occupational therapist (Appendix Table 3.2)

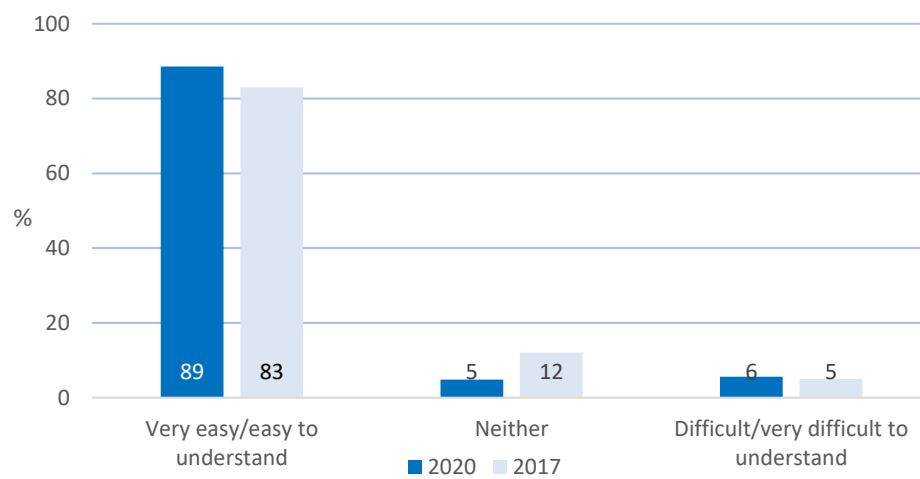
The vast majority (91%) of respondents who had received a disabled facilities grant said they had received information or advice from the Occupational Therapist about how the grant system operates.

3.3 Understanding of information or advice received (Appendix Tables 3.3 – 3.4)

Overall 89% of respondents assessed the information or advice they had received as either very easy or easy to understand (compared to 83% in 2017). Only 6% of respondents said the advice or information they had received had been difficult or very difficult to understand, with most of these respondents saying they found the wording too complex.

⁶ The Disabled Facilities Grant is aimed at helping people adapt their homes to meet the needs of someone within their household who has a disability. The award of a grant and the work carried out is based on the recommendation(s) of an Occupational Therapist. This section is only applicable to people who received this grant. More information about the Disabled Facilities Grant is available on the [Housing Executive website](#).

Figure 6: Assessment of initial information received



4.0 The Test of Resources Stage⁷

The Home Improvement Grants system aims to target resources to those who can least afford to pay for work to their home. Grant applicants are therefore means tested to ascertain whether they should make a financial contribution towards the 'approved cost' of the work; this process is called the 'Test of Resources'.

Respondents who had received a home improvement grant were asked about their experience of the Test of Resources stage of the Grants process.

4.1 Completion of test of resources forms (Appendix Tables 4.1 – 4.2)

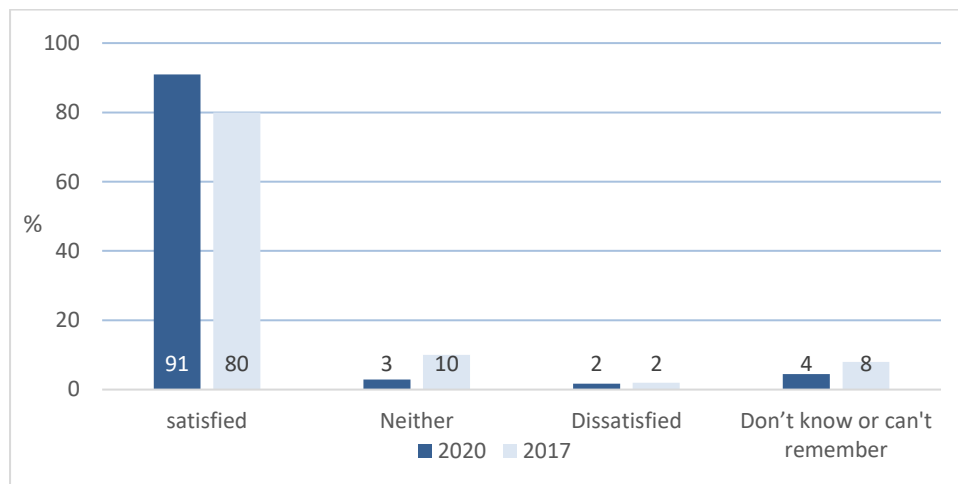
Overall, more than three-quarters (76%; 74% in 2017) of respondents said they had found the Test of Resources forms easy to complete. Less than one-tenth (7%) said they had found the forms neither easy nor difficult and 12% said they had found completion of these forms difficult. The main reasons cited by respondents who found the forms difficult was 'complicated/jargon used' and 'concerned about filling in form the wrong way'. A further 5% of respondents said they did not know or could not remember how easy or difficult it was completing the form.

4.2 Satisfaction with test of resources stage (Appendix Table 4.3)

The majority of respondents (91%; 80% in 2017) were satisfied with their experience of the Test of Resources stage, three per cent were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and a very small proportion (2%) of respondents was dissatisfied. A further 4% of respondents said they did not know or could not remember this stage of the process (Figure 7). Reasons for dissatisfaction were varied and the number of cases involved was too low to report on.

⁷ Home Repair Assistance Grant applicants and Renovation Grant applicants were asked Test of Resources questions as this stage is necessary for these grant types. Where a Disabled Facilities Grant application is for adaptations to help a dependent child (for which the claimant must be in receipt of Child Benefit), parents/guardians are not means tested. However, they may still have to make a contribution if the cost of the work is greater than the amount available through grant aid. More information on the test of resources is available on the [Housing Executive website](#).

Figure 7: Satisfaction with Test of Resources stage



5.0 Inspection Stage

Respondents who had received a home improvement grant were asked a number of questions about the inspection stage, when a Housing Executive Grants officer visits the property to make an initial assessment of the living arrangements and the need for grant-aided work to meet the requirements of the applicant.

5.1 Appointments (Appendix Tables 5.1 - 5.5)

The vast majority (97%) of respondents said the grants officer had made an appointment for an inspection. Of these:

- 86% had been offered an appointment date and time;
- 96% said their appointment had been kept; and
- Only 11% said they would have preferred an appointment outside normal office hours.

5.2 Aspects of the inspection stage (Appendix Tables 5.6 – 5.15)

Respondents were asked a series of questions in relation to their inspection to ascertain if the grants officer had explained the grants process. The vast majority of all respondents (76%+) confirmed the following aspects of the grants process:

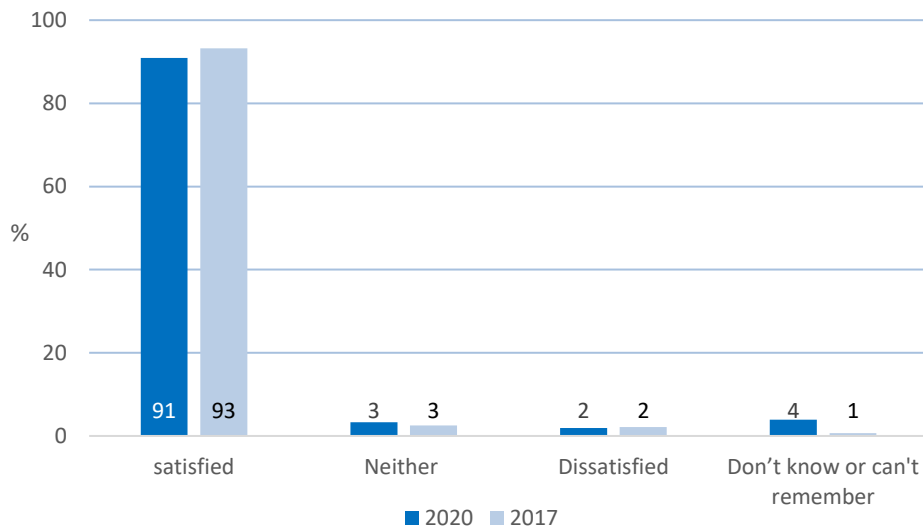
- 88% said the grants officer had shown their identification;
- 82% said the grants officer had explained what the inspection was going to entail;
- 83% said the grants officer had explained the type of work that might be grant aided; and
- 79% said the grants officer had explained the next steps in the grants process.

5.3 Satisfaction with the inspection stage (Appendix Table 5.16)

Respondents were asked how satisfied they were overall with their experience of the Inspection Stage of the process. The vast majority (91%; 95% in 2017) said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with this stage of the process. Two per cent (2% in 2017) were dissatisfied/very dissatisfied (Figure 8).

The main reasons for dissatisfaction were not reported due to the numbers being too small.

Figure 8: Satisfaction with inspection stage



6.0 Schedule of Works Stage

After the initial inspection (where applicable), the Grants Office provides all applicants with a detailed list of the works to be grant aided – the *Schedule of Works*. At this stage, applicants are asked to provide the Housing Executive with a range of documents required to process the grant application, which can include proof of ownership, a builder's estimate, plans, and any necessary approvals. Respondents were asked a series of questions relating specifically to the work they had done and the forms and documentation they had to acquire for this stage.

6.1 Occupational Therapist recommendation for work (Appendix Table 6.1)

All respondents in receipt of disabled facilities grants were asked if the Occupational Therapist had recommended all the work the applicant had considered necessary. More than 9 out of 10 respondents (94%) said this had been the case.

6.2 Completion of formal application forms (Appendix Tables 6.2 – 6.3)

Two-thirds of respondents (76%; 66% in 2017) said they had found the formal application forms either easy or very easy to complete, 10% said the forms were neither easy nor difficult and 12% said they had found the forms difficult to complete. The most common reason cited by nearly three-fifths (58%) of respondents who had experienced difficulty was that they 'Needed Help'.

6.3 Obtaining schedule of works documents (Appendix Table 6.4)

More than half (53%) of respondents said they had received help to obtain the necessary documents at this stage of the process.

6.4 Proof of ownership (Appendix Table 6.5)

More than four-fifths (82%) of respondents said they had not found proof of ownership documentation difficult to obtain and 6% said it had been difficult.

6.5 Builder's estimate (Appendix Table 6.6)

Four-fifths (80%) of respondents had not experienced difficulty in obtaining a builder's estimate, while 9% said it had been either difficult or very difficult.

6.6 Building control approval (Appendix Table 6.7)

More than four-fifths (82%) of respondents had not experienced difficulty in obtaining building control approval and 6% said it had been either difficult or very difficult.

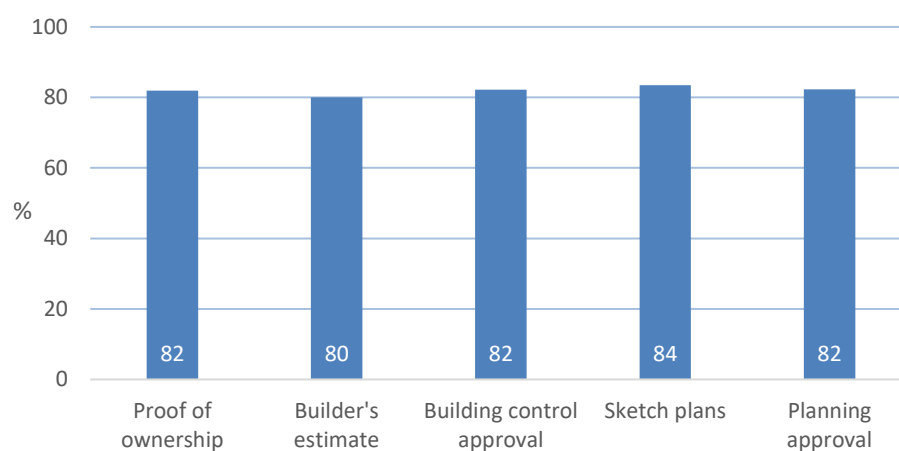
6.7 Sketch plans (Appendix Table 6.8)

More than four-fifths (84%) of respondents had not experienced difficulty in obtaining sketch plans and 6% said it had been either difficult or very difficult.

6.8 Planning approval (Appendix Table 6.9)

More than four-fifths (82%) of respondents had not experienced difficulty in obtaining planning approval and 7% said it had been difficult.

Figure 9: Forms and documentation requested easy to obtain



6.9 Sources of help completing forms (Appendix Table 6.10)

Respondents were asked if they had received any help to complete the required information at this stage of the process. Respondents could give more than one answer to this question therefore totals will not add to 100%. Almost one-quarter (24%) of respondents said they had received help from an advice agency such as Radius or Gable and more than one-fifth (21%) said they had been helped by a friend or member of their family. One-tenth (10%) said they had received assistance from a member of Housing Executive staff and 33% said they had not received any help to complete the forms at this stage of the process.

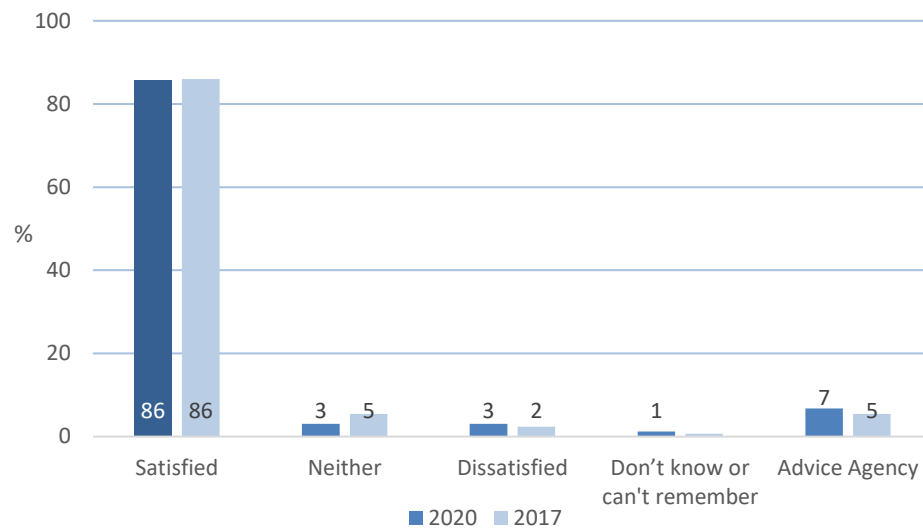
6.10 Housing Executive help obtaining schedule of works stage Documents (Appendix Table 6.11)

Nearly two-thirds (65%; 50% in 2017) of respondents said they thought it would be helpful if the Housing Executive could obtain the necessary Schedule of Works documentation on their behalf. Nearly one-third (31%) thought it would not be helpful and 4% did not know.

6.11 Satisfaction with experience of the schedule of works stage (Appendix Table 6.12)

The majority of respondents (86%; 86% in 2017) said they were either very satisfied or satisfied with their experience of submitting the required information during the schedule of works stage of the process. Smaller proportions were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (3%) or were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied (3%) or said that Radius/Gable managed this stage on their behalf (7%) (Figure 10). The most common reason for dissatisfaction with this stage of the process was that it was very slow.

Figure 10: Satisfaction with the Schedule of Works stage



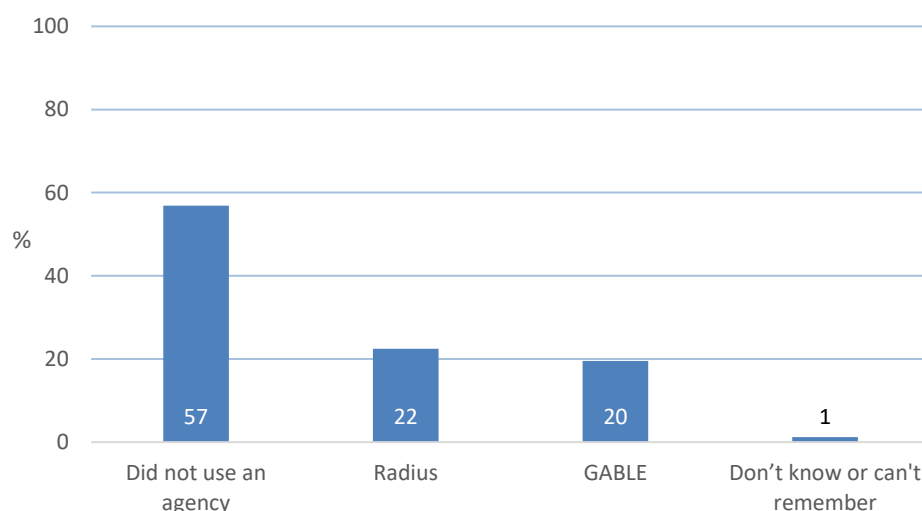
7.0 Home Improvement Agencies

In Northern Ireland, Shelter ([GABLE](#)) and [Radius](#) are funded to provide customers with assistance through the application process, appointment of a contractor and completion of required works for adaptations (including Disabled Facilities Grants) in privately owned or privately rented property. Respondents were asked a series of questions relating specifically to the help they had received from these 'Home Improvement Agencies'.

7.1 Agency used (Appendix Table 7.1)

More than two-fifths (42%) of respondents used a Home Improvement Agency (22% used Radius and 20% used GABLE) and nearly three-fifths (57%) did not use a Home Improvement Agency (HIA).

Figure 11: Home Improvement Agency involvement in application



7.2 Satisfaction with the initial contact with the agency (Appendix Table 7.2)

The vast majority (90%) of respondents said they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the initial contact with the agency. Smaller proportions were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (4%) or were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied (3%) with the initial contact with the agency.

7.3 Completion of the first visit by the agency representative (Appendix Table 7.3)

The majority (90%) of respondents had the first visit by the agency representative within three weeks of the initial contact compared to 7% of respondents who did not have the first visit within three weeks.

7.4 Details of the service provided (Appendix Table 7.4)

The vast majority (94%) of respondents had all the details of the service provided by the agency explained to them at the initial visit; only three per cent did not have all the details explained to them at the initial meeting.

7.5 Contact details provided (Appendix Table 7.5)

The vast majority (94%) of respondents had contact details provided to them compared to three per cent who did not have all the details provided to them at the initial meeting.

7.6 Completion of the form (Appendix Table 7.6)

The majority (91%) of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with the service the Agency representative provided completing the form. Smaller proportions were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (4%) or were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied (2%).

7.7 Submission of the form (Appendix Table 7.7)

The majority (91%) of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with the service the Agency representative provided submitting the form. Smaller proportions were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (4%) or were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied (3%).

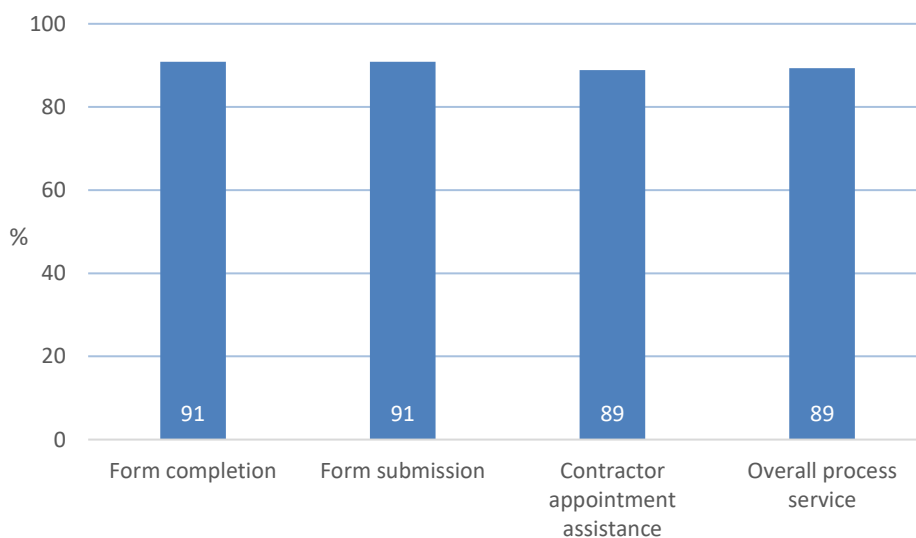
7.8 Assistance with appointment of the contractor (Appendix Table 7.8)

The majority (89%) of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with the service the Agency representative provided in assisting with the contractor appointment. Smaller proportions were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (6%) or were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied (3%).

7.9 Overall service throughout the process (Appendix Table 7.9)

The majority (89%) of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with the overall service the Agency representative provided throughout the process. Smaller proportions were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (4%) or were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied (4%).

Figure 12: Satisfaction with aspects of the service provided by the Agency representative



8.0 Approval Stage

The applicant is responsible for providing documentation for consideration which will lead to approval for the grant aid. The Schedule of Works pack advises them of the documentation which is required for approval to be given. This process is referred to as *Approval stage*. Respondents were asked a series of questions relating specifically to the submission of documents for approval of grant aid.

8.1 Satisfaction with the length of time from submission of documents to approval of grant aid (Appendix Table 8.1)

The majority (71%) of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with the length of time from submission of documents to approval of grant aid; while nearly one-fifth (19%) were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

8.2 Responsibilities of applicant (Appendix Table 8.2)

The majority (84%) of respondents found it either very easy or easy to understand the responsibilities of the applicant when it came to providing the documents needed for approval, while less than one-tenth (8%) found it either difficult or very difficult to understand this aspect of the approval documentation.

8.3 Timeframes for work commencement (Appendix Table 8.3)

The majority (85%) of respondents found it either very easy or easy to understand the timeframes for work commencement set out in the approval documentation, while less than one-tenth (7%) found it either difficult or very difficult to understand the timeframes for work commencement.

8.4 Timeframes for work completion (Appendix Table 8.4)

The majority (86%) of respondents found it either very easy or easy to understand the timeframes for work commencement set out in the approval documents; less than one-tenth (8%) found it either difficult or very difficult understanding the timeframes for work commencement.

8.5 Progress of works (Appendix Table 8.5)

The majority (87%) of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with the level of contact with the Grants office regarding progress of work after the Grant approval; eight per cent were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

8.6 Contact with the Grants Office (Appendix Table 8.6)

More than two-thirds (67%) of respondents were in contact with the Grants Office regarding progress of works, with 32% contacting the Grants Office one to two times, 26% contacting the Grants Office three to five times and 10% contacting the Grants office six times or more. Three-tenths (30%) did not contact the Grants Office regarding progress of works.

9.0 Payment Stage

Respondents were asked about their experience of the Payment stage of the Grant process.

9.1 Satisfaction with level of grant awarded (Appendix Tables 9.1 – 9.2)

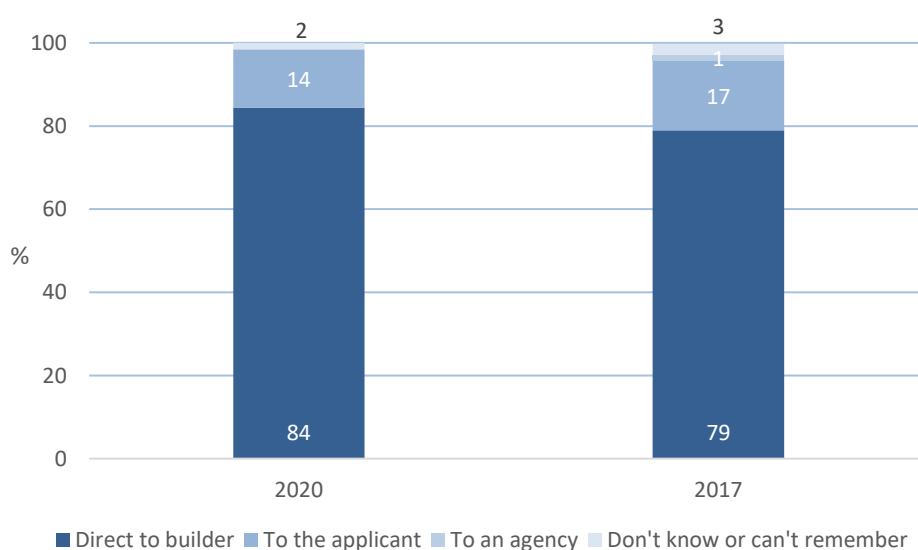
More than four-fifths (84%: 86% in 2017) of respondents said they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the level of grant awarded to them, four per cent were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 11% were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. The main reason cited by the majority of dissatisfied respondents was that there wasn't enough money in the grant to cover the works.

9.2 Grants payment by recipient (Appendix Table 9.3)

More than four-fifths (84%) of respondents said the Housing Executive had made payment directly to the builder/contractor and 14 per cent said it had been to the applicant. Two per cent could not remember or did not know to whom the Housing Executive made payment (Figure 13).

Figure 9.1 shows the breakdown of grants payment by recipient compared with 2017. This survey shows that most grants payments are directly to the builder or contractor.

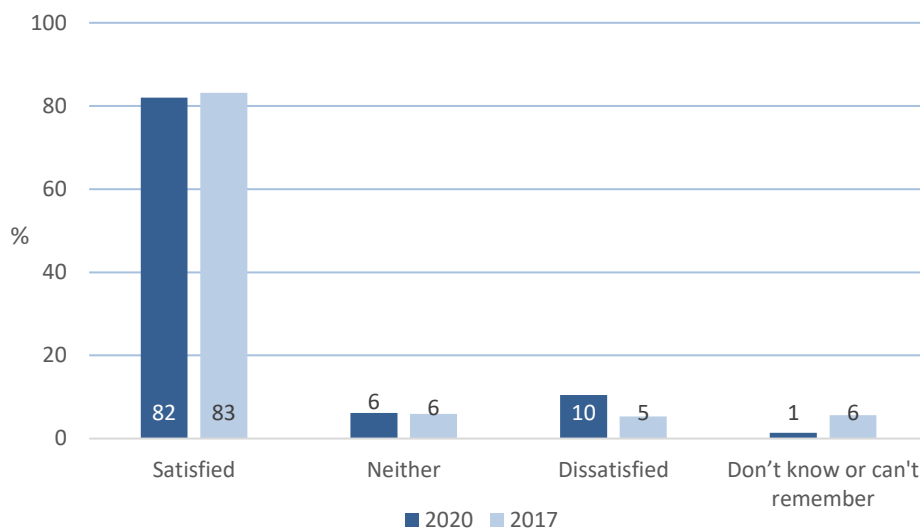
Figure 13: Grant payment by recipient



9.3 Satisfaction with time taken to complete payment (Appendix Tables 9.4 – 9.5)

Overall, more than four-fifths (82%; 83% in 2017) of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with the time taken by the Housing Executive to complete the payment of their grant; one-tenth (10%) were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied and six per cent neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. The main reason respondents were dissatisfied was that *'it took too long'*.

Figure 14: Satisfaction with time taken to complete payment (compared with 2017)



10.0 Builder Satisfaction

Respondents were asked a series of questions to ascertain their experiences of the builder/contractor who had carried out the works.

10.1 Ease of finding a builder (Appendix Table 10.1)

More than three-quarters (76%; 80% in 2017) of respondents said they had found it either very easy or easy to find a builder to carry out the works, but 19% had found it either difficult or very difficult.

10.2 Builders warranty scheme (Appendix Tables 10.2 – 10.3)

More than half (53%) of respondents were aware of the builders warranty scheme, while 47% were not. Of the respondents who were aware of the scheme, nearly three-fifths (56%) stated the scheme was a factor in their choice of builder; however, for more than two-fifths (44%) it was not a factor.

10.3 Satisfaction with aspects of builder/contractor performance (Appendix Tables 10.4 - 10.7)

Respondents were asked about various aspects of builder performance and service. High levels (90%+) of satisfaction were reported, with the highest levels of satisfaction due to *the politeness of the builder* and *the quality of the materials* (95% respectively) (Table 6)

Table 6: Satisfaction with aspects of builder performance, 2017 and 2020

	2020 Satisfaction	2017 Satisfaction
Speed	92%	91%
Quality of materials	95%	91%
Tidiness	94%	92%
Politeness	95%	94%

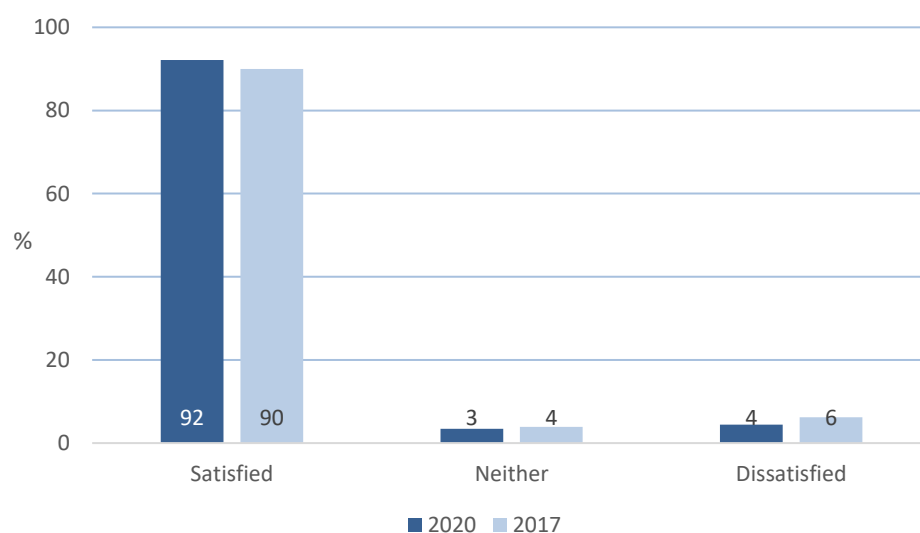
10.4 Satisfaction with quality of finished work (Appendix Tables 10.8 - 10.9)

Respondents were also asked how satisfied they were with the quality of finished work. Overall, a high proportion (92%; 89% in 2017) said they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the quality of finished work and three per cent were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. The main reason cited by dissatisfied respondents was that the standard of work was very poor.

10.5 Satisfaction with the overall service provided by the builder/contractor (Appendix Tables 10.10 – 10.12).

Overall, a high proportion of respondents (92%; 90% in 2017) said they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the service provided by the builders during the work to their property and four per cent were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied (Figure 15). The main reason for dissatisfaction cited by respondents was that the standard of work was very poor.

Figure 15: Satisfaction with the service provided by the builder



Six of the 26 respondents who were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the overall service provided by the Builder/contractor said they had made contact with the warrantied builders' scheme management company, but the majority had not.

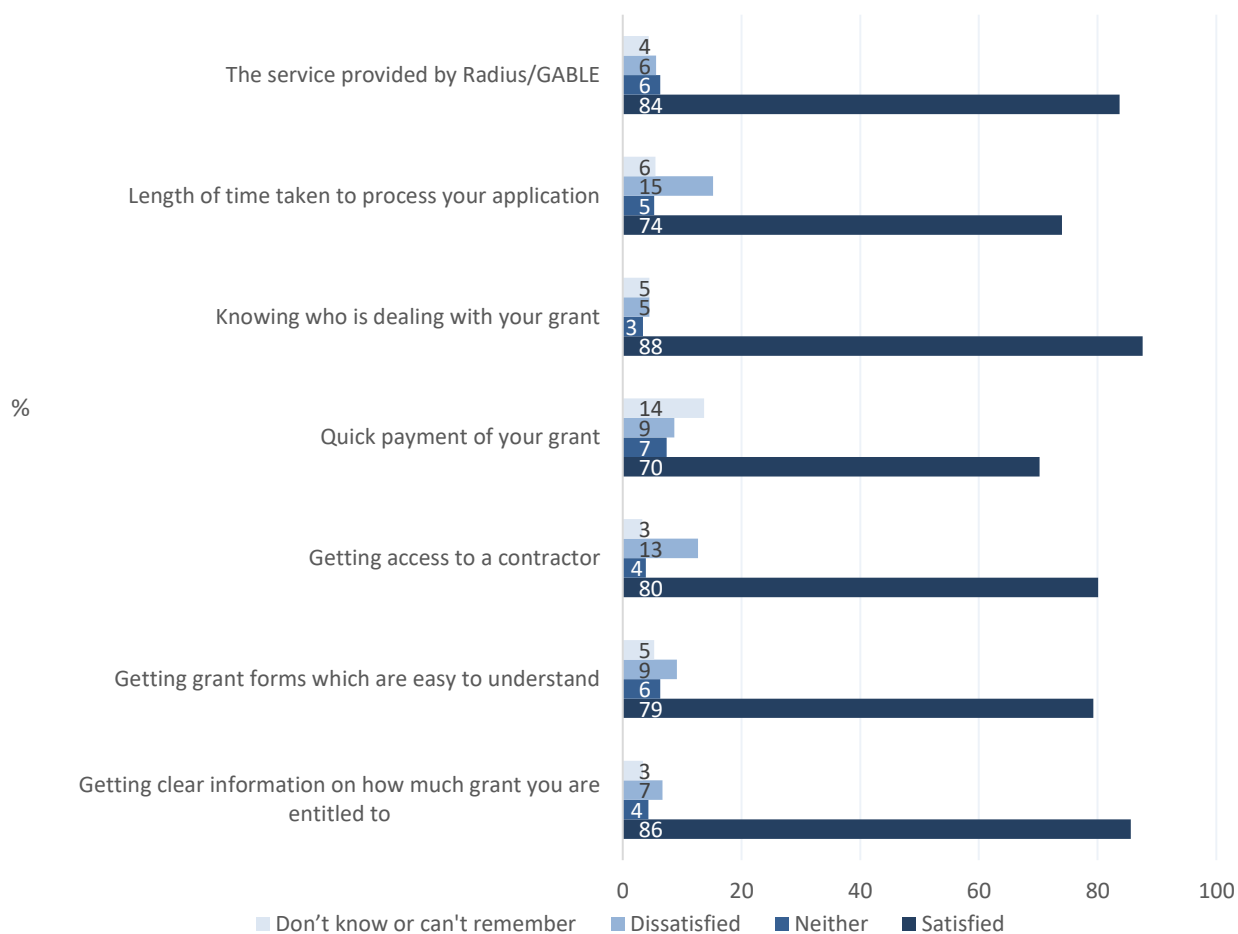
11.0 The Grants Scheme Overall

Respondents were asked about their experiences of the Grants Scheme overall, the letters and documentation they had received and whether the help (if any) they had received had been adequate. This section also contained questions that enabled a more thorough analysis of reasons for dissatisfaction with the Grants scheme.

11.1 Satisfaction with aspects of the grant process (Appendix Tables 11.1 - 11.7)

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with various aspects of the grants process. High levels (70%+) of satisfaction were reported across all aspects of the grants process. Figure 16 shows that respondents were most satisfied with *knowing who is dealing with your grant* (88%) compared to 70% satisfaction with the *quick payment of your grant*

Figure 16: Satisfaction with aspects of the Grants process



11.2 Treatment during the Grants process (Appendix Table 11.8)

The vast majority (97%; 94% in 2017) considered that they had been fairly treated during the Grants process, although three per cent did not consider this to be the case.

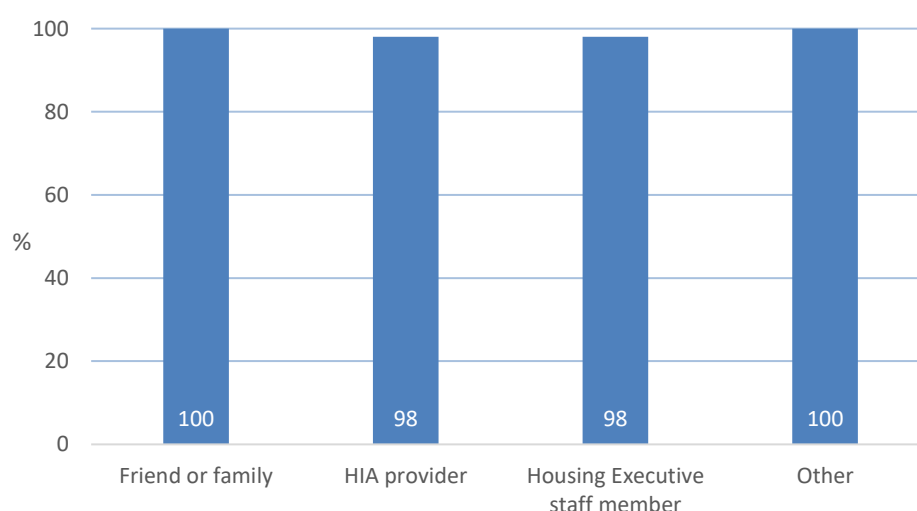
11.3 Understanding letters and documentation (Appendix Tables 11.9 – 11.10)

More than four-fifths (86%; 83% in 2017) of respondents said they had found the letters and documentation they had received from the Housing Executive regarding their application either very easy or easy to understand. Five per cent answered 'neither easy nor difficult' compared to 14% in 2017. A higher proportion (9%) found the letters and documentation either difficult or very difficult to understand compared to respondents in 2017 (2%).

11.4 Help completing the forms (Appendix Tables 11.11 – 11.17)

More than half (53%) of respondents said they had received help completing any of the forms required by the Grants office, while 45% did not. The main sources of help for respondents who had received help were *a friend or family* (37%) and a *HIA provider* (36%). Similar proportions of respondents who received help from a HIA provider received help from GABLE (51%) and Radius (49%). Nearly all of respondents who received help with the forms found the help adequate (98%+) .

Figure 17: Was the help received adequate?



11.5 Impact of the grant-aided work (Appendix Tables 11.18 – 11.20)

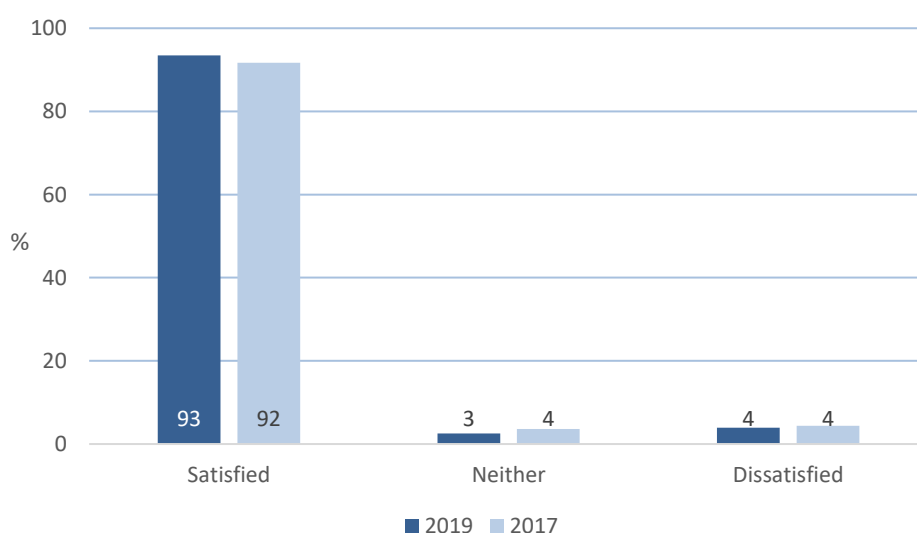
The vast majority of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statements about the grant-aided work:

- The work carried out improved my quality of life and that of others in the household (98%);
- The work carried out has fully met the needs of the grant applicant (97%); and
- The work carried out has made an improvement in my ability to live independently⁸ (97%).

11.6 Satisfaction with the Grants scheme overall (Appendix Tables 11.21).

The vast majority (94%; 92% in 2017) of respondents said they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the Grants scheme overall, while (4%) were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Of the small number (31) of dissatisfied respondents, the main reasons cited were ‘too much red tape’ and ‘difficulty getting a builder’.

Figure 18: Overall satisfaction with the Grants scheme (compared to 2017)



⁸ Applies to Disabled Facilities Grant applicants only

11.7 Driver flow analysis (see Appendix A for more information)

A *driver flow* analysis of the data was used to look at how the different parts of the Grants process (e.g. length of time to process the grant) affected the respondents' overall satisfaction with the scheme, or a certain part of the process (e.g. service provided by the Housing Improvement Agency). The different elements of the Grants process are referred to as 'drivers' for the purposes of this analysis, in recognition of their potential influence on overall satisfaction.

When 'overall satisfaction with the Grants scheme' was analysed, it showed that the '*quality of the finished work*' driver scored highly on performance and had a high impact on the overall satisfaction score; therefore the Grants Offices should concentrate on maintaining the '*quality of the finished work*'.

Four drivers were identified where an improvement in the performance score could, in turn, improve the overall satisfaction level. They were:

- '*Submission of documents*';
- '*Level of contact with the office following approval*';
- '*Time taken to make payment*'; and
- '*Level of grant award*'.

However, it is important to note that some aspects of the process, such as the level of grant awarded, are features of the rules and regulations of the Scheme, and outside the control of the Housing Executive.

Appendix A: Driver flow analysis

Driver analysis is a technique used to examine the relationship between potential *drivers* of satisfaction (or behaviour) and the overall level of satisfaction with a product or service. Surveys such as the Grants Customer Satisfaction survey, which capture respondents' satisfaction with a range of aspects of the process as well as their *overall* satisfaction with the process, are well suited to this type of analysis.

Driver analysis measures:

- The **impact** of the driver on the overall satisfaction; and
- The **performance gap** between the actual performance score and the 'perfect' score (every respondent stating they were very satisfied).

As a result the drivers will fall into four main categories:

<i>Maintain</i>	These drivers have high performance scores and a high impact on overall satisfaction. It is important that these drivers' scores are maintained.
<i>Priority</i>	These drivers have low performance scores, and a high impact on overall satisfaction. By focusing on improving these drivers the overall satisfaction score can be improved.
<i>2nd priority</i>	These drivers have low performance scores, but also have a lower impact on overall satisfaction.
<i>Low priority</i>	These drivers have high performance scores, but have a low impact on overall satisfaction.

This report can be found on the Housing Executive website: **www.nihe.gov.uk**

For any information on the Home Improvement Grants Customer Satisfaction Survey 2020 report, please contact:

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