

**COMPLAINANTS**

**TOP-LINE RESULTS**

MORI interviewed 1,007 complainants (excluding 104 booster interviews with complainants from ethnic minorities), by telephone, between 12 April to 1 May. This is a paper representation of the Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) script that was used for all interviewing. As such it gives all answer precodes that were originally used in the interview. For questions with a large number of "other" responses, extra categories were added and these can be seen in full in the full set of computer tabulations.

All figures given are percentages, and are based on all main sample respondents (1,007), except where otherwise specified. Where percentages do not add to 100 this is due to computer rounding or multiple response. An asterisk ("\*\*") indicates a percentage greater than zero but less than 0.5.

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Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is . . . . from MORI, the opinion research and polling organisation. We are carrying out some research among people who have made a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman about their local council, and we are interested in your views on the service provided by the Local Government Ombudsman. I would like to start by reassuring you that this interview is completely confidential. The information you give us in completing this questionnaire will only be seen by MORI and not by anyone else.

INTERVIEWER CHECK

Q1. **Can I just check, how many separate complaints have you made to the Local Government Ombudsman? WRITE IN ANSWER**

One - 83%; Two - 11%; Three - 4%; Four - 1%; Five or more - 2%

IF MORE THAN ONE: **For this interview, please answer the following questions about your complaint about ..... Council and . . . . , that the Ombudsman wrote to you with their decision on .....**

**MAKING COMPLAINT**

ASK ALL

Q2. **I'd like to start by asking how you found out about the Ombudsman? PROBE AND CODE. PROMPT IF NECESSARY. MULTICODE OK**

Council	20
Councillor	8
Citizen's Advice Bureau	7
Other advice centre	7
MP	5
Solicitor	4
Local tenant/resident association	3
Friend/relative/neighbour	19
Radio/TV	1
Council publication	1
LGO Website	*
BIOA (British & Irish Ombudsman Association) Website	0
Thompson's Directory	1
Newspaper	5
Somewhere else (WRITE IN)	see tables

Don't know/can't remember | 7

Q3. **And did you see a poster or get a booklet about the Ombudsman? MULTICODE OK**

Saw an Ombudsman poster	6
saw an Ombudsman booklet	58
Neither of these	35
Don't know/can't remember	3

Q4. **Where did you get an Ombudsman booklet/see an Ombudsman poster?**  
 PROBE AND CODE. PROMPT IF NECESSARY. MULTICODE OK

Council office	34
Councillor	4
Citizen's Advice Bureau	10
Other advice centre	6
Library	6
MP	3
Solicitor	2
LGO website	1
Somewhere else (WRITE IN) (includes: sent by ombudsman)	see tables 20

Base: 617 Don't know/can't remember | 9

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Q5. ASK ALL  
**Could you please tell me a brief summary of what your complaint to the Ombudsman was about.** PROBE: **What was the outcome of your complaint?**  
 DO NOT TRY TO RECORD VERBATIM BUT WRITE IN SUMMARY

ANSWER (WRITE IN)

Q6. **Did you contact anyone at the Council or anyone else before contacting the Ombudsman?**

IF YES: **Who did you contact? Did you contact ....** READ OUT:  
 MULTICODE OK

<b>Yes:</b>	
Council:	
complaints department	28
department/service concerned	49
chief executive	22
social worker/social services	4
local councillor	21
Citizen's Advice Bureau	6
Other advice agency	4
Local MP	9
TV, radio or newsletter	2
Solicitor	7
Other (WRITE IN)	2

<b>No</b>	7
Don't know/can't remember	1

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PROBE AND CODE. DO NOT PROMPT. MULTICODE OK

No-one else who could help/last resort	24
Wasn't getting anywhere/not satisfied with council	68
Provide an independent service	4
Deal with problems on a confidential basis	*
Provide expert advice	2
Someone recommended them to me	5
Council told/advised me to	5
Solicitor told/advised me to	3
Maladministration by council	9
Other (WRITE IN)	3

Don't know/can't remember | \*

Q8. **Thinking back to the time when you made your complaint to the Ombudsman, can you tell me what you thought would happen as a result of making a complaint?** PROBE AND CODE. DO NOT PROMPT. MULTICODE OK

Prevent the same thing happening again to someone else	7
Get money I was due/service I was eligible for	11
Get the council to undo what it did wrongly	34
Get compensation	8
Get an apology	3
Get an explanation	10
Make the council improve the service	21
Vent anger/frustration/tell the council what I thought of it	2
Get the council's decision changed	22
Other (WRITE IN)	see tables

Don't know | 4

Q9. **Did you get any advice from the Ombudsman's office before making your complaint in writing to them?**

Yes	16
No	81
Don't know	2

ASK IF YES (CODE 1) AT Q9

Q10. **How did you contact the Ombudsman's office to get advice? Did you ..... READ OUT.** MULTICODE OK

<b>telephone</b>	63
<b>write</b>	39
<b>or go in person</b>	4
Other (WRITE IN & CODE '4')	2

Base: 166      Don't know/can't remember | 1

ASK IF TELEPHONE (CODE 1) AT Q10

Q11. **Do you know if you were put through to the Adviceline service?** SINGLE CODE ONLY

Yes, put through to Adviceline	28
No, not put through to Adviceline	37
Base: 105      Don't know/can't remember	35

Q12. **How easy or difficult was it to obtain this advice?** READ OUT

	<b>Very easy</b>	52
	<b>Fairly easy</b>	38
	<b>Neither easy nor difficult</b>	7
	<b>Fairly difficult</b>	3
	<b>Very difficult</b>	0
Base: 29	<b>Don't know</b>	0

Q13. **And how helpful was this advice?** READ OUT

	<b>Very helpful</b>	55
	<b>Fairly helpful</b>	34
	<b>Not very helpful</b>	7
	<b>Not at all helpful</b>	3
Base: 29	<b>Don't know</b>	0

**CONTACT**

ASK ALL

Q14. **Thinking about when you first contacted the Ombudsman's office, did they explain how they would deal with your complaint, either on the telephone or by sending you information in writing?**

	Yes	75
	No	20
	Don't know/can't remember	4

Q15. **Were you given the name and telephone number of the member of Ombudsman staff - the investigating officer - who was handling your complaint?**

	Yes	86
	No	9
	Don't know/can't remember	5

ASK IF YES (CODE 1) AT Q 15. OTHERS GO TO Q18

Q16. **How soon after contacting the Ombudsman were you given the investigating officer's name? IF UNSURE, PROBE FOR BEST ESTIMATE**

	Within 1 week	38
	1-2 weeks	26
	2-4 weeks	16
	4+ weeks	8
Base: 869	Don't know/can't remember	12

Q17. **And was getting hold of that person initially . . . . ?** READ OUT

	<b>Easy</b>	69
	<b>Difficult</b>	12
	Did not try to contact named person/they contacted me	16
Base: 869	Don't know/can't remember	2

Q10. **In which of these ways did you personally have contact with the Ombudsman's office while your complaint was being processed?** READ OUT. MULTICODE OK

ASK IF MORE THAN ONE CODED AT Q18

Q19. **By which method would you say you had most contact?** SINGLE CODE ONLY

	Q18 Contact	Q18/Q19 Most
<b>Telephone</b>	63	31
<b>Written (letters and/or reports)</b>	83	60
<b>Face-to-face meeting/s</b>	14	4
Not applicable/no contact	1	3
Don't know/can't remember	*	2

ASK ALL

Q20. **And what would have been your preferred method of contact?** SINGLE CODE ONLY

Telephone	18
Written	25
Meeting/s	40
Don't know	16
No preference	1

TELEPHONE

ASK IF TELEPHONE (CODE 1) AT Q 18. OTHERS GO TO Q29

Q21. **Did you have any trouble getting through to the switchboard?**

	Yes	6	ASK Q22
	No	89	GO TO
Base: 636	Don't know/can't remember	4	Q23

ASK IF YES (CODE 1) AT Q21. OTHERS GO TO Q23

Q22. **When you had trouble getting through to the switchboard, would you have minded having a recorded message with various options available by pressing different keys on your telephone?**

	Yes	32
	No	63
Base: 41	Don't know	5

ASK IF TELEPHONE (CODE 1) AT Q18

Q23. **In general, when you telephoned, were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the speed with which the telephone was usually answered?**

	Satisfied	83
	Dissatisfied	6
	Not applicable	5
Base: 636	Don't know/can't remember	6

Q24. **If you had been unable to speak to the investigating officer handling your complaint at any time, would you have preferred to .....?** READ OUT (a) AND (b). SINGLE CODE ONLY

a)	leave message on an answerphone (voicemail)	27
b)	or speak to another person?	57
	Not applicable	13
Base: 636	Don't know	4

or dissatisfied with the promptness of investigators returning calls when you left a message?

	Satisfied	64
	Dissatisfied	11
	Call not returned	2
	Not applicable/did not leave message/s	20
Base: 636	Don't know/can't remember	3

Q26. **Did you generally find the investigator/s you dealt with by telephone . . . . ?**  
READ OUT

Q27. **And did you generally find other staff at the Ombudsman's office you dealt with by telephone . . . . ?** READ OUT

		Q26	Q27
		Investigator/s	Other staff
or	<b>Polite</b>	90	78
	<b>Impolite</b>	3	1
	Neither/don't know/can't remember	7	21
or	<b>Helpful</b>	70	68
	<b>Unhelpful</b>	18	10
	Neither/don't know/can't remember	12	23
or	<b>Efficient</b>	66	65
	<b>Inefficient</b>	19	9
	Neither/don't know/can't remember	14	25
or	ASK ONLY FOR INVESTIGATOR/S		
	<b>Interested in your complaint</b>	60	
	<b>Uninterested in your complaint</b>	26	
Base: 636	Neither/don't know/can't remember	14	

Q28. **Would you say that the amount of contact you had with the Ombudsman's Office by telephone was too much, too little or about right?**

	Too much	5
	Too little	22
	About right	69
Base: 636	Don't know	3

WRITTEN

ASK ALL

Q29. **Overall, would you rate the letters and/or reports that you were sent by the Ombudsman .... READ OUT (a) T0 (g)? Is that very or fairly good/poor?**  
SINGLE CODE ONLY

		Very good	Fairly good	Neither nor	Fairly poor	Very poor	Don't know	Not written in English
a)	<b>Written in plain English</b>	43	42	6	5	3	1	0
b)	<b>Ease of understanding</b>	46	41	4	4	4	1	
c)	<b>Amount of information</b>	28	33	10	16	11	2	
d)	<b>Clarity of information</b>	32	39	7	12	8	3	
e)	<b>Accuracy</b>	28	31	11	11	12	7	
f)	<b>Fairness of conclusion/s</b>	15	16	8	16	41	5	
g)	<b>Logic of conclusion/s</b>	14	17	8	17	38	5	

Q30. In general, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the letter/s and/or reports sent by the Ombudsman's office? READ OUT

Very satisfied	21
Fairly satisfied	27
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	7
Fairly dissatisfied	12
Very dissatisfied	31
No opinion	3

ASK IF VERY/FAIRLY DISSATISFIED (CODES 4-5) AT Q30

Q31. Why do you say this? PROBE AND CODE. DO NOT PROMPT. MULTICODE OK

Standard letters	5	
Unclear	11	
Too short	4	
Too long	3	
Patronising in tone	5	
Terminated the investigation	15	
Did not answer my queries	40	
Gave wrong/misleading information	16	
No explanation given	16	
They were not interested	17	
Other (WRITE IN)	see tables	
(including: unfair/biased)	8)	
Base: 438	Don't know/can't remember	1

ASK ALL

Q32. Do you think it is necessary for the Ombudsman's office to send you an acknowledgement card in reply to every letter you send them?

Yes	70
No	28
Don't know	2

Q33. Would you say that the amount of contact you had with the Ombudsman's office in writing was too much, too little or about right?

Too much	4
Too little	21
About right	72
Don't know	3

MEETING/S

ASK IF NOT MEETING/S (NOT CODE 3) AT Q18. OTHERS GO TO FILTER AT Q36

Q34. Would you have liked to have had a face-to-face meeting with the investigating officer?

Yes	73	
No	25	
Base: 863	Don't know	2

Q35. **Why would you have liked to have had a meeting with the investigating officer?** PROBE AND CODE. DO NOT PROMPT. MULTICODE OK

To have face-to-face explanations	34
More personal	13
Find it easier to explain in person	49
So they could see the situation for themselves	29
Help to clarify complaint	30
Other (WRITE IN)	see tables
No particular reason	*
Don't know	1

Base: 630

ASK IF MEETING/S (CODE 3) AT Q18. OTHERS GO TO Q43

Q36. **How many face-to-face meetings did you have with the investigating officer?** IF UNSURE, PROBE FOR BEST ESTIMATE

1	78
2	9
3+	11

Base: 144

Don't know/can't remember 2

Q37. **Where did the meeting/s take place?** READ OUT. MULTICODE OK

Q38. **And where would you have preferred the meeting/s to take place?** READ OUT. MULTICODE OK

	Q37 Where	Q38 Preferred
<b>At your home</b>	83	84
<b>At the Ombudsman's office</b>	5	4
<b>At the Council's offices</b>	3	4
<b>Elsewhere (WRITE IN)</b>	see tables	see tables

Base: 144

Don't know/can't remember

1

2

Q39. **At the meeting/s, would you say that the investigating officer was . . . ?** READ OUT

or	<b>Professional</b>	83
	<b>Unprofessional</b>	8
	Neither/don't know/can't remember	8
or	<b>Polite</b>	92
	<b>Impolite</b>	2
	Neither/don't know/can't remember	6
or	<b>Thorough</b>	72
	<b>Not thorough</b>	15
	Neither/don't know/can't remember	13

Base: 144

Q40. **Overall, how useful did you find the meeting/s?** READ OUT

<b>Very useful</b>	46
<b>Fairly useful</b>	19
<b>Not very useful</b>	16
<b>Not at all useful</b>	17

Base: 144

Don't know/can't remember

1

Q41. **Why do you say that you found the meeting/s useful?** PROBE AND CODE. DO NOT PROMPT. MULTICODE OK

Achieved better result than writing/telephoning would	22
More personal	23
Was able to explain better face-to-face	50
They could see the situation for themselves	43
More time to cover everything	12
Other (WRITE IN)	5

Base: 94 Don't know/can't remember | 1

ASK IF NOT USEFUL (CODES 3-4) AT Q40, OTHERS GO TO Q43

Q42. **Why do you say that you did not find the meeting/s useful?** PROBE AND CODE. DO NOT PROMPT. MULTICODE OK

Did not produce any new information	25
Waste of time/money	40
Unsympathetic attitude	25
Too late to change council decision/action	13
Other (WRITE IN)	25

Base: 48 Don't know/can't remember | 0

<b>FINAL OUTCOME</b>
----------------------

ASK ALL

Q43. **Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the final outcome of your complaint - I mean just the actual final outcome of your complaint, and not the overall way in which your complaint was dealt with by the Ombudsman?**

READ OUT

<b>Very satisfied</b>	13
<b>Fairly satisfied</b>	9
<b>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</b>	3
<b>Fairly dissatisfied</b>	12
<b>Very dissatisfied</b>	61
No opinion	2

ASK IF DISSATISFIED (CODES 4-5) AT Q43. OTHERS GO TO Q45

Q44. **Why were you dissatisfied with the final outcome of your complaint?** PROBE AND CODE. DO NOT PROMPT. MULTICODE OK

Didn't do what I wanted/get what I was looking for	36
Didn't understand the decision reached by Ombudsman	9
Nothing was done	33
Ineffective/problem not solved	34
Same problem has occurred again	4
Unhelpful/wrong advice	9
Ombudsman found in favour of Council	18
Compensation too low	3
Process took too long	3
Ombudsman remedy not acted on by Council	1
Did not receive apology	1
Felt there was a "cover-up"	3
Ombudsman not independent/on Council's side	12
Other (WRITE IN)	see tables

Base: 734 Don't know | 1

Q45. **Now thinking about the final decision letter or report, overall how well would you say it explained the reasons for the decision? READ OUT**

<b>Very well</b>	24
<b>Fairly well</b>	29
<b>Not very well</b>	17
<b>Not at all well</b>	24
Don't know/can't remember	6

ASK IF NOT WELL (CODES 3-4) AT Q45

Q46. **Why do you say that? PROBE AND CODE. DO NOT PROMPT. MULTICODE OK**

Not enough information	22
Did not understand explanation	17
Did not take my views into account	23
Did not decide to investigate any further	21
Did not believe my version of events	5
Did not explain how conclusions were reached	18
Did not explain anything	20
Useless exercise	9
They could have done more/inadequate	12
Favouritism to council	12
They did not ask any more questions	4
Other (WRITE IN)	see tables

Base: 418

Don't know | \*

ASK ALL

Q47. **How much did the outcome of your complaint differ from what you expected the outcome would be, before you made your complaint to the Ombudsman? READ OUT**

<b>A great deal</b>	52
<b>A fair amount</b>	14
<b>Just a little</b>	8
<b>Not at all</b>	15
Did not know what to expect	8
Don't know/no opinion	4

ASK IF GREAT DEAL/FAIR AMOUNT/LITTLE (CODES 1-3) AT Q47. OTHERS GO TO Q49

Q48. **Why do you say this? PROBE AND CODE. DO NOT PROMPT. MULTICODE OK**

Thought they could make the council do things	27
Thought they would be on my side/act for me	22
Ombudsman was on the council's side	15
Thought they had more powers	15
Thought they would be more effective	28
Needed deeper investigation	17
Thought they would pay me a visit	5
Useless exercise/achieved nothing	14
Thought I would get more compensation	4
They achieved more than we expected	3
Other (WRITE IN)	see tables

Base: 739

Don't know | 2

## OVERVIEW

ASK ALL

Q49. **Overall, while your complaint was being investigated, how well informed would you say the Ombudsman's office kept you about the progress of the investigation?**

READ OUT

<b>Kept me very well informed</b>	30
<b>Kept me fairly well informed</b>	28
<b>Gave me only a limited amount of information</b>	14
<b>Didn't tell me much at all about what was going on</b>	24
<b>No opinion/don't know</b>	3

Q50. **Would you say that the overall amount of contact you had with the Ombudsman's office was too much, too little or about right?**

Too much	3
Too little	32
About right	62
Don't know	2

Q51. **How well would you say the Ombudsman understood your complaint . . . . READ OUT (a) TO (c) of the process? Is that very, fairly, not very or not at all?**

		Very well	Fairly well	Not very well	Not at all well	Don't know
a)	<b>At the beginning</b>	34	27	16	17	6
b)	<b>In the middle</b>	31	28	15	17	9
c)	<b>By the end</b>	33	20	16	23	8

Q52. **How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with having the chance for your comments to be taken into account before a final decision was made? READ OUT**

<b>Very satisfied</b>	18
<b>Fairly satisfied</b>	24
<b>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</b>	5
<b>Fairly dissatisfied</b>	11
<b>Very dissatisfied</b>	33
<b>No opinion</b>	9

ASK IF DISSATISFIED (CODES 4-5) AT Q52

Q53. **Why do you say that?**

Comments not taken into account	83
Not given long enough	8
Other (WRITE IN & CODE "")	see tables

Base: 441 Don't know | 1

ASK ALL

Q54. **Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the way in which your complaint was dealt with by the Ombudsman - I mean the overall way in which your complaint was dealt with, and not just the actual final outcome of your complaint? READ OUT**

<b>Very satisfied</b>	23
<b>Fairly satisfied</b>	27
<b>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</b>	7
<b>Fairly dissatisfied</b>	10
<b>Very dissatisfied</b>	31
<b>No opinion</b>	2

Q why were you dissatisfied with the way your complaint was dealt with? PROBE AND CODE.  
 55. DO NOT PROMPT. MULTICODE OK

Rude/didn't like the way I was treated by Ombudsman	8
Didn't explain/clarify the situation	25
Should go into things/investigate properly	46
Ombudsman has insufficient powers	14
Someone should have come to see me/wanted meeting	16
Took too long	9
Felt there was a "cover-up"	13
Didn't agree with me/came to the wrong conclusions	17
Other (WRITE IN)	6

Base: 411 Don't know | 1

ASK ALL

Q56. Did you feel your complaint was investigated fairly or unfairly by the Ombudsman?

Fairly	45
Unfairly	43
Don't know	13

Q57. How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the time it took the Ombudsman to deal with your complaint? READ OUT

Very satisfied	23
Fairly satisfied	38
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	6
Fairly dissatisfied	10
Very dissatisfied	20
No opinion	4

Q58. If you had another complaint about your local council, would you go to the Ombudsman again?

Yes	54
No	39
Don't know	7

ASK IF NO (CODE 2) AT Q58. OTHERS GO TO Q60

Q59. Why do you say that? PROBE AND CODE. DO NOT PROMPT. MULTICODE OK

Waste of money	7
Waste of time	60
Would not achieve anything	33
Ombudsman has no power to change things	15
Would not act on my behalf	10
Always takes council's side/not impartial/biased	21
Unfair	11
Takes too long	6
Too much trouble	3
Can't be bothered	1
Other (WRITE IN)	6

Don't know | \*

Q60. **What do you think would encourage more people to use the Ombudsman if they have a complaint about their Council?**

PROBE AND CODE. DO NOT PROMPT. MULTICODE OK

More powers	15
Better publicity/advertising	29
Greater public awareness	26
More leaflets in CABs	2
More articles in local newspapers	4
Make it easier to get in contact	7
Have local offices	5
More information on what they can do	11
More support for complainants	9
Investigate complaints better	11
Give a fair hearing/decision	9
Faster investigation/speed up process	3
Be fairer/have less bias/more independent	12
Better results	5
Other (WRITE IN)	see tables

Don't know | 10

Q61. **Which two or three of these do you think are the most important aspects of the Ombudsman when dealing with complaints?** READ OUT. CODE UP TO THREE ONLY

Q62. **And which one is the single most important?** READ OUT. SINGLE CODE ONLY

	Q61 Important	Q62 Single
<b>Attitude of staff</b>	17	5
<b>Keeping you informed</b>	30	8
<b>Investigation being dealt with fairly</b>	59	40
<b>Time taken to deal with complaint</b>	23	4
<b>Clarity of information in letters and reports</b>	20	3
<b>Understanding the complaint</b>	42	21
<b>Taking your comments into account</b>	35	11
None of these	2	3
Don't know	3	4

ASK ALL EXCEPT DON'T KNOW/NONE OF THESE AT Q62

Q63. **Why do you think this is the single most important?** PROBE AND WRITE IN

see tables

ASK ALL

Q64. **Finally, what single measure do you think would most improve the Local Government Ombudsman service?** PROBE AND WRITE IN

see tables

**THANK RESPONDENT, COMPLETE FRONT PAGES**

**AND CLOSE**