



***Hutt City Council Customer
Service Centre Survey
September 2002***

Presented By



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Background

- Excellence in customer service has been an area of focus for Hutt City Council over a number of years. The Council set up the Customer Services Group to develop a customer service strategy that aims to provide Hutt City residents with excellent service, and to make improvements to continuously enhance the organisation's services to its customers.
- This strategy is outlined in the Council's 2002/2003 Annual Plan, as follows:

Customer Strategy

- treat customers as they would like to be treated
- provide excellent value for money and extraordinary services
- involve and inform customers
- take pride in the services we deliver

Background

- To implement this strategy, Hutt City Council is aiming to encourage a culture where by working as a team, staff gain great satisfaction from looking after customers and putting them first. It has also made the following commitments to its customers:

Commitments to our customers

We will:

- do it right first time, on time, every time
 - make realistic promises and keep them
 - measure ourselves against the best
 - go the extra mile
 - be knowledgeable, accurate and informative
 - be interested, fair, professional and friendly
 - be easy to contact
 - take ownership
- In order to ensure that these commitments to its customers are met, Hutt City Council has implemented a process for measuring its performance against key service dimensions, via independent market research. This is one of a number of initiatives undertaken by the Council to measure and improve the quality of the services it provides.

Business Needs Assessment

Background

- As an indication of the success the Council has achieved in its commitment to customer service, Hutt City Council's Customer Services Group won the local government division of the NZ Performance Excellence Study Awards 2001.
- Following the Customer Services Group's success in 2001, the decision was made to extend the Performance Excellence Criteria across the entire organisation. In 2002, Hutt City Council won the local government category of the NZ Performance Excellence Study Awards 2002 for the work of the Council as a whole.
- In July 2002, the Customer Services Group gained ISO accreditation (ISO 9001:2000), demonstrating a further commitment to the provision of quality services.

Business Needs Assessment

- In September 1999, Hutt City Council conducted research to benchmark customer satisfaction amongst visitors to its Customer Service Centre. This comprises four desks, each dealing with different types of customer enquiries (front reception, approvals, engineering records and payments) and is one of the main points of contacts with customers.
- This report details the findings of the third follow-up measure, conducted annually by ACNielsen.

Business Needs Assessment

Research Objectives

- How well is Hutt City Council performing in terms of its overall standard of customer service?
- How well is Hutt City Council performing on specific aspects of customer service related to the five service dimensions of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles; and to what extent have customer perceptions of Hutt City Council's standard of customer service changed over the course of the surveys?
- Do perceptions of service differ according to the type of enquiry or contact with Hutt City Council staff?
- Which aspects of customer service are most important in driving overall customer satisfaction?
- What are the priorities for Hutt City Council to help improve the standard of customer service it delivers?

Business Needs Assessment

Research Design

- A total of 289 exit interviews were completed at the Hutt City Council Customer Service Centre between 16 and 20 September 2001.
- Interviewers from ACNielsen approached customers as they left one of the four customer service desks within the Customer Service Centre. The interviewers introduced themselves, explained the purpose of the survey and how to fill in the questionnaire and then asked respondents to complete the questionnaire themselves and drop it into a box before they left the Customer Service Centre.*
- When a respondent did not have enough time to complete the survey, they were encouraged to take the survey away and return it to ACNielsen in a reply paid envelope provided.
- Two interviewers were present during each of the 5 days that interviewing took place. One interviewer worked between 8am and 2pm and the other between 11am and 5pm. This ensured that all times of the day as well as the busier lunchtime period were adequately covered.

* When time permitted, interviewers administered the questionnaire themselves, rather than using the self-completion approach, to ensure greater consistency in the way the questionnaire was completed.

Executive Insights



Executive Insights

How well is Hutt City Council performing in terms of its overall standard of customer service?

- Six out of ten visitors to the Hutt City Council's Customer Service Centre rated the overall standard of customer service as 'very good'. The 'very good' rating has trended upwards over the last three surveys, and has increased significantly since the 2000 measure (from 48% to 60%)
- Almost nine out of ten rated the Council's overall standard of customer service as 'very good' or 'good'.
- Perceptions of Hutt city Council's overall standard of customer service has also improved significantly amongst those visiting the "approvals" desk. As a result, there is now little difference in perceptions of overall service between each of the four desks.
- Encouragingly, the Council's regular customers (those who have visited the Council at least six times in the last 12 months) tend to be most positive towards the Council, with 92% rating the overall standard of service as 'very good' or 'good'.

How well is Hutt City Council performing on specific aspects of service and to what extent have perceptions of service improved since last year's measure?

- Hutt City Council's customers are most likely to agree that the Council has staff who:
 - Act in a professional way (85% agree)
 - Are always courteous with customers (84% agree)
 - Are always easy to approach for assistance (84% agree)
- Hutt City Council customers are least likely to agree that:
 - Hutt City Council will perform services right the first time (61% agree)
 - They can feel confident that when instructing Hutt City Council to make any changes to their records the correct changes will be made the first time (55% agree)
 - When Hutt City Council promises to do something by a certain time, it will do it by that time (52% agree)
- There has been little change since last year's measure, in the rating of specific aspects of service.
- Overall scores for each of the five service dimensions have shown an increase in 'very good' ratings since last year.

Which aspects of customer service are most important in driving overall customer satisfaction?

- The most important drivers of customer satisfaction are:
 - Having staff who show a sincere interest in solving customers' problems
 - Having staff who are always easy to approach for assistance
 - Performing services right the first time
 - Having staff who are courteous with customers
 - Telling customers when they can expect services to be performed and then delivering in the time promised

Executive Insights

What are the priorities for Hutt City Council to help improve the standard of customer service it delivers?

- By comparing the importance of individual aspects of customer service with how well Hutt City Council performs on those aspects of service, the research has identified two key areas to focus on for improvement (high importance, lower performance). These are:
 - When it promises to do something by a certain time will do it by that time
 - Performs the service right the first time
- The research has also identified one further aspect of customer service for improvement. This is less important to customers and hence a lower priority for improvement:
 - Customers can feel confident that when instructing Hutt City Council to make changes to their records (e.g. change of name, address) the correct changes will be made first time

Executive Insights

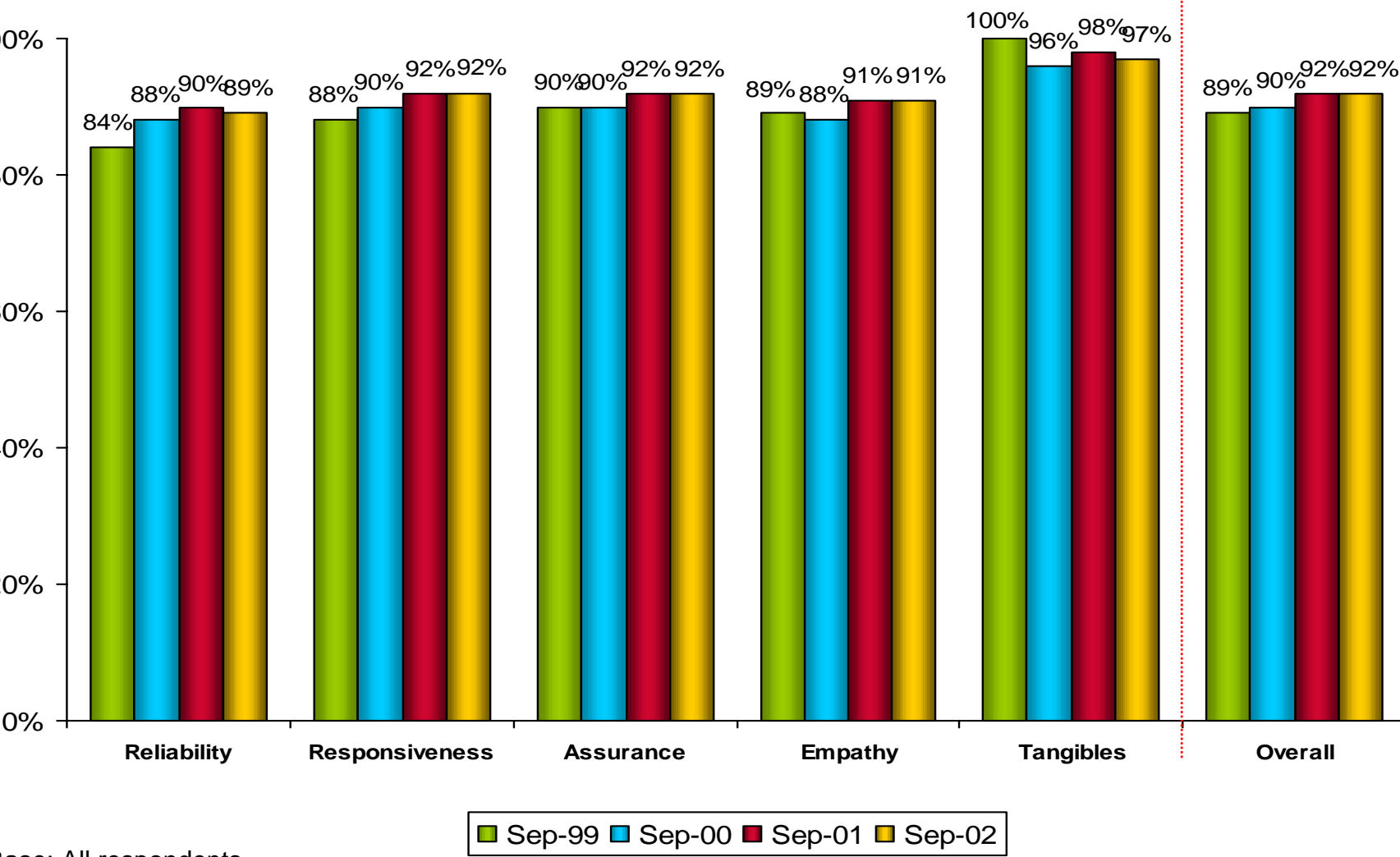
Conclusions/Recommended Actions

- Despite there having been no significant improvements in individual aspects of service for this year's measure, the results are still extremely positive. In particular:
 - The proportion of customers rating the Council as 'very good' continues to improve and has increased significantly from 48% to 60% in the space of two years
 - Improvements to perceptions of overall service amongst those visiting the approvals desk means that perceptions of service are now at parity between each of the four desks.
 - Your regular customers tend to rate the overall standard of service most positively.
- When ratings improve (as has been the case over the last three measures), it can be difficult to maintain these improvements. To an extent, the Council has educated its customers to expect a high level of customer service, and Council needs to ensure that it maintains the current high standards of service in order to continue to receive such positive performance ratings.
- To achieve further gains, the main focus for improvement over the next 12 months continues to be demonstrating to customers that requests for service will be resolved within the timeframe promised by staff, and that these requests will be performed right the first time.
- Attention should also be given to those aspects of service that verge on being priorities for improvement (such as 'staff keeping customers informed when necessary and 'staff prepared to go the extra mile for customers') to ensure that they do not become priorities for improvement in the future.

Overall Results

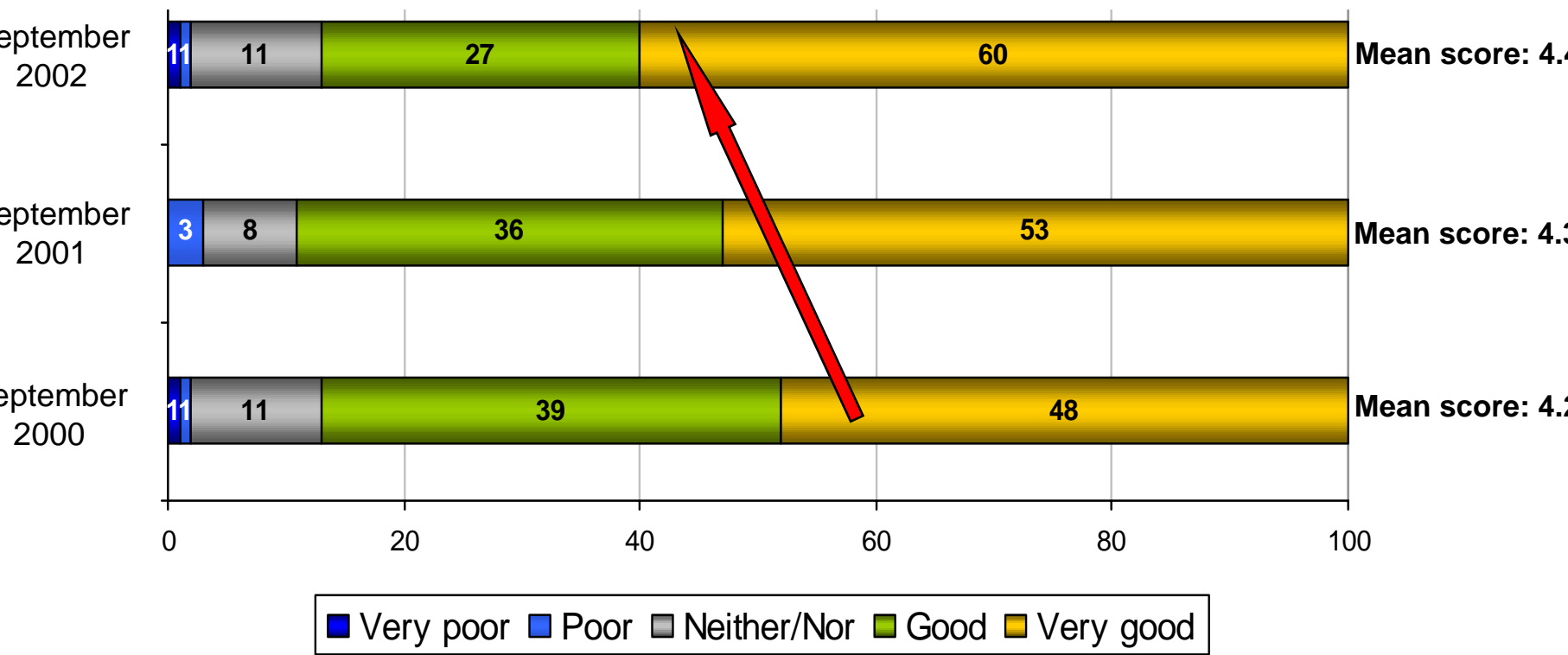


Perceptions of Hutt City Council's standard of customer service closely matches what customers would expect from an excellent organisation



Most 9 out of 10 visitors to the Hutt City Council Customer Service Centre rated the overall standard of customer service as 'very good' or 'good', with 6 in 10 rating it as 'very good'. The 'very good' rating continues to trend upwards and has increased significantly since the 2000 measure (from 48% to 60%)

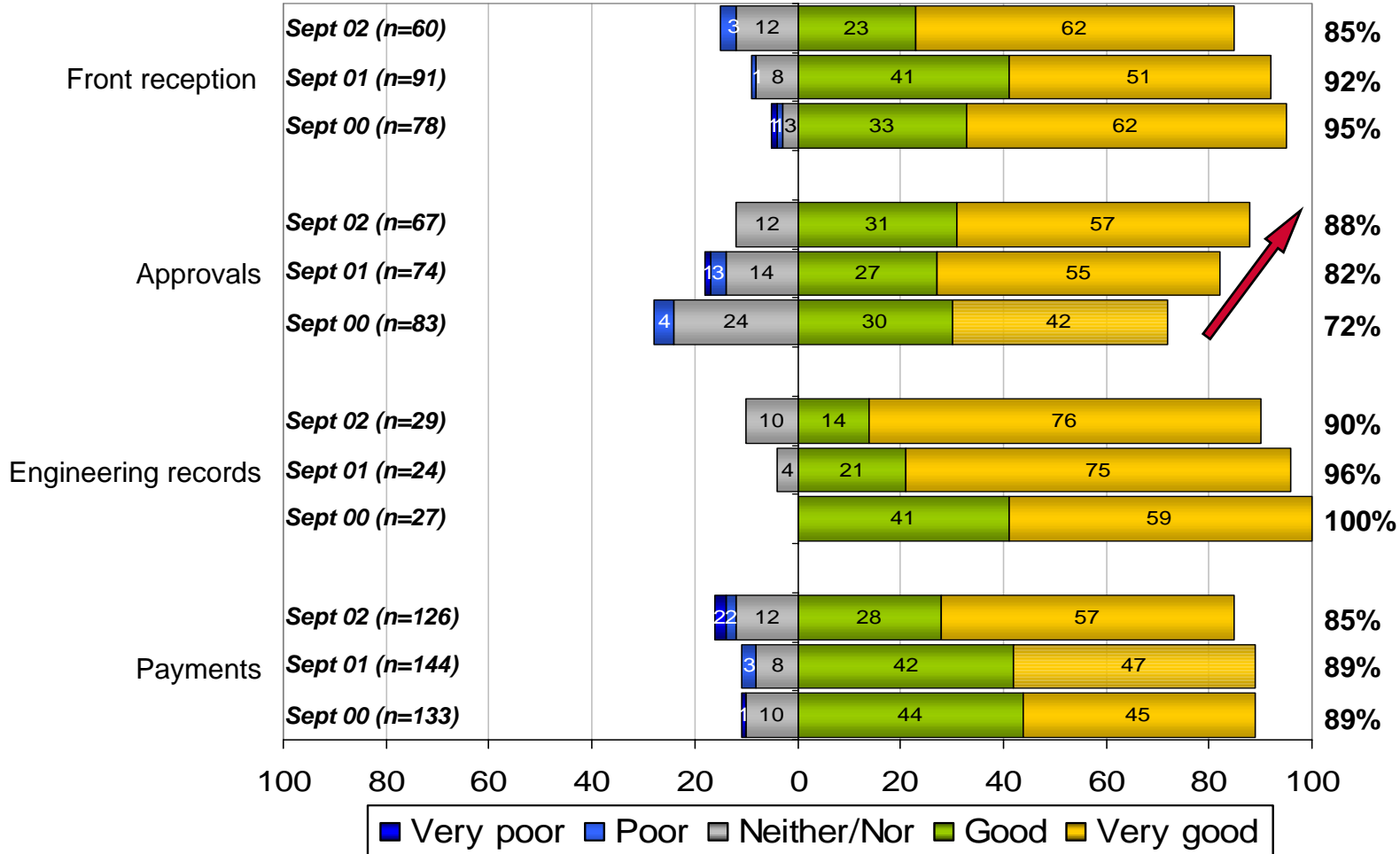
Overall Opinion of Hutt City Council's Standard of Customer Service



Source: All respondents: Sept 02 (n=289), Sept 01 (n=316), Sept 00 (n=322)

...very good and good ratings for the approvals desk continue to trend upwards, and have increased significantly since the 2000 measure (from 72% to 88%). As a result there is now little difference in perceptions of Council's standard of service between visitors to each of the four desks.

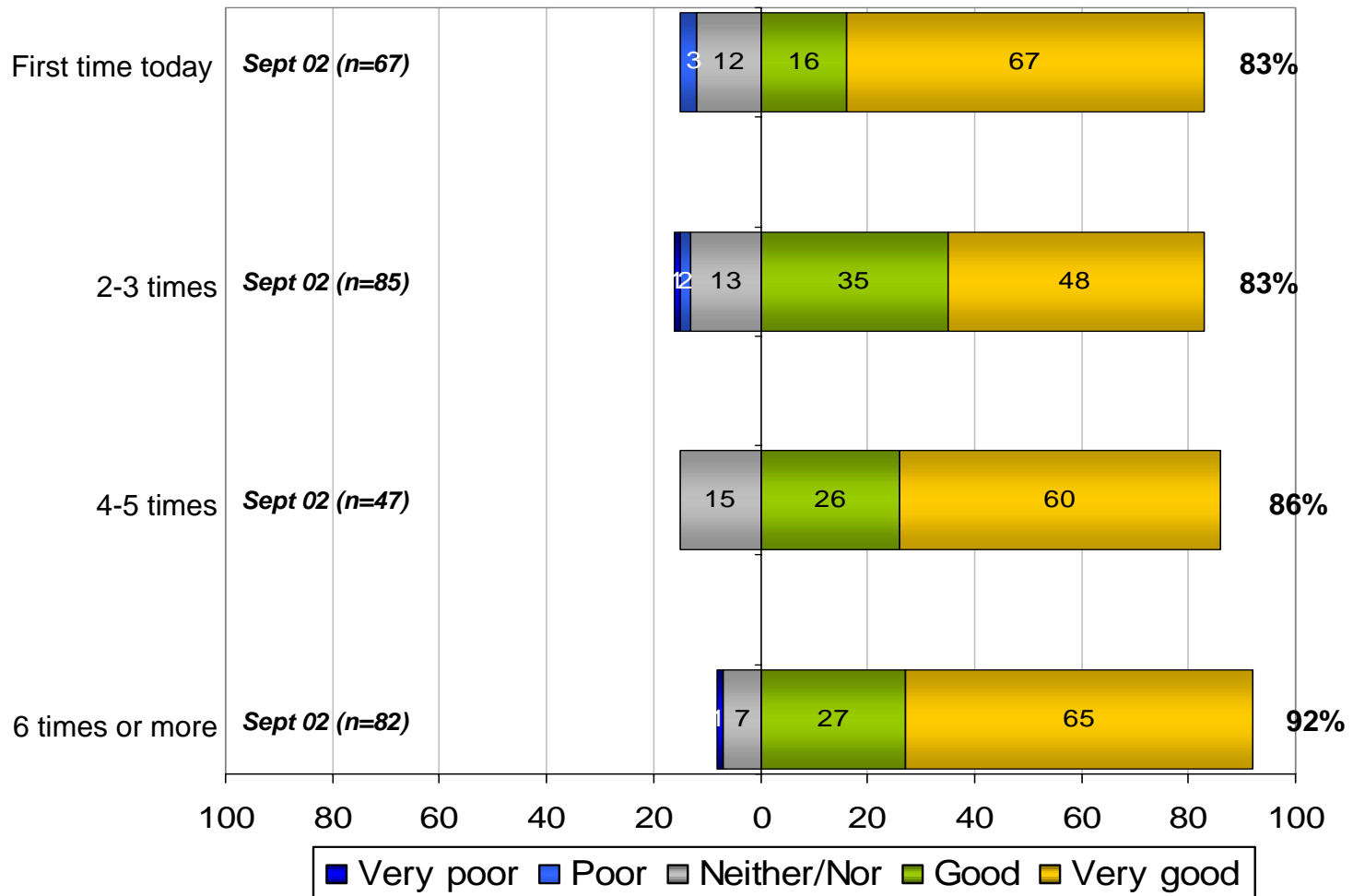
Overall Opinion of Hutt City Council's Standard of Customer Service by Desk Visited



Base: All respondents who answered the question

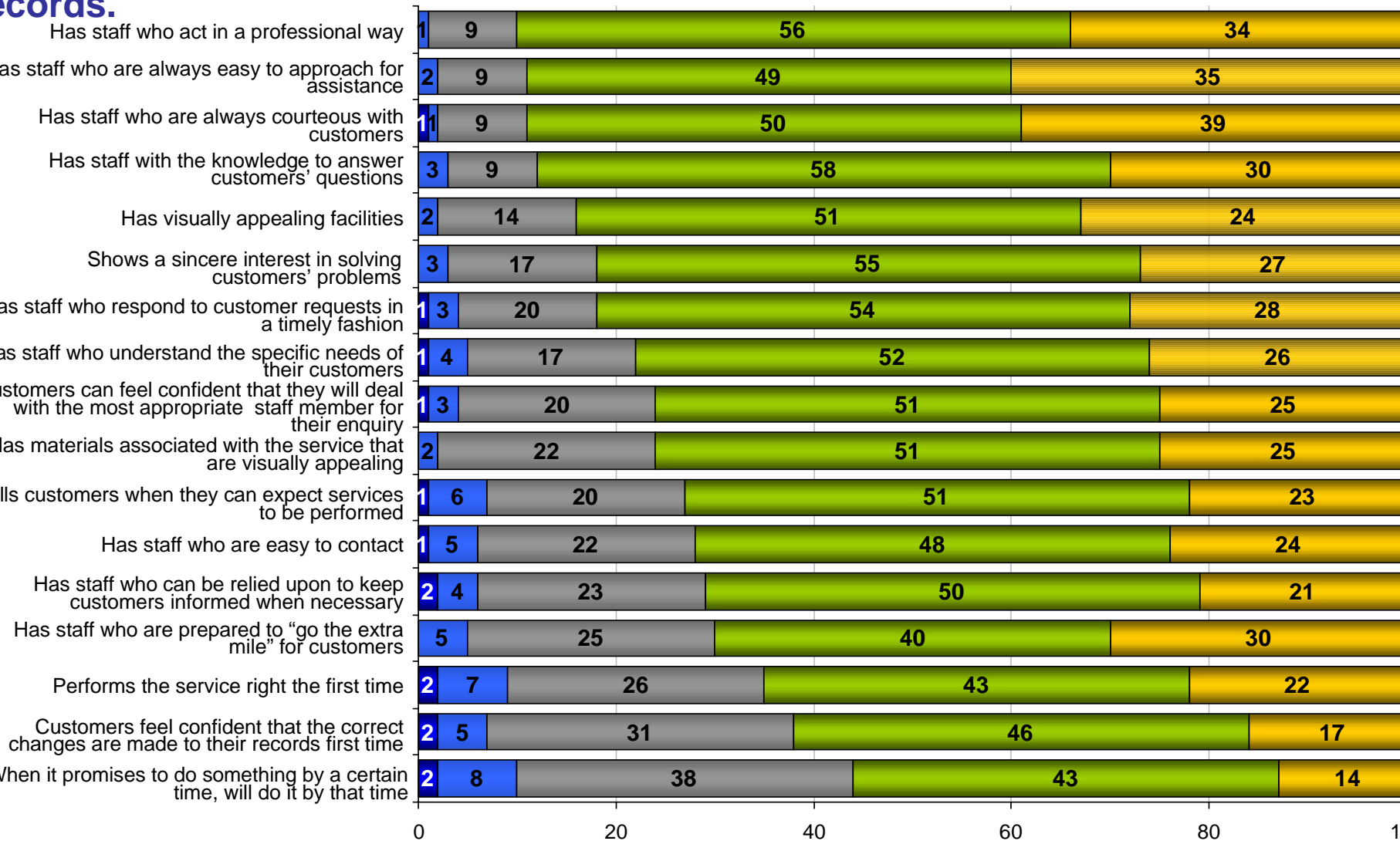
The results of this year's survey have also been analysed by the number of times each respondent has visited the Council in the last 12 months. Encouragingly, 'very good' and 'good' ratings were highest amongst those who were more frequent visitors to Council offices.

Overall Opinion of Hutt City Council's Standard of Customer Service by Frequency of Visits



Base: All respondents who answered the question

erican, customers are most likely to agree that HCC staff are professional, approachable and courteous. Customers are least likely to agree that HCC will perform a service within a promised timeframe or make correct changes to their records.




Base: All respondents (n=289)

■ Strongly disagree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Neither/nor
 ■ Agree
 ■ Strongly agree

Derived Importance: Standard of Service Statements

Most
important



Shows a sincere interest in solving customers problems
Has staff who are always easy to approach for assistance
Performs the service right the first time
Has staff who are always courteous with customers
When it promises to do something by a certain time, will do it by that time
Tells customers when they can expect services to be performed
Has staff who respond to customer requests in a timely fashion
Has staff who understand the specific needs of their customers
Has staff who are easy to contact
Has visually appealing facilities
Has staff who are prepared to go the extra mile for customers
Has materials (such as pamphlets or letters) that are visually appealing
Has staff who act in professional way
Has staff with the knowledge to answer customer questions
Customers can feel confident that requests to make changes to their records will be correct first time
Has staff who can be relied upon to keep customers informed when necessary
Customers can feel confident they will deal with most appropriate staff member for their enquiry

Least
important

