

Survey of Small and Medium Sized Business Customers 2006: Results and Analysis

Research Unit

DATA - INFORMATION - KNOWLEDGE

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Revenue 

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1: Executive Summary

The Revenue Commissioners' Research Unit conducted a postal survey¹ of two thousand small and medium sized businesses² during the period April to July 2006. The focus of the survey was customer satisfaction and perceptions of the organisation. There was a response rate of over 80%. Overall, the results from the survey, outlined in this report, are very positive for Revenue, with high levels of satisfaction being recorded and the majority of respondents expressing confidence in Revenue.

1.1: Key Findings

1.1.1: Customer Service

Customer satisfaction with service delivery both at the overall level and specific to various communication channels is high.

- Almost **84%** of respondents are either *very satisfied* or *satisfied* with overall customer service delivery.
- For each channel of contact used at least **80%** of respondents are either *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with their experience.

1.1.2: Perceptions of Revenue

Revenue is perceived to be fair, efficient, effective in dealing with tax evasion and deserving of public confidence.

- Over **67%** of respondents either *agree* or *strongly agree* that Revenue is fair, while **74%** either *agree* or *strongly agree* that Revenue is efficient.
- At least **67%** of respondents perceive Revenue to be effective in dealing with tax evasion, and **66%** agree that Revenue is deserving of public confidence.

¹ A copy of the survey questionnaire is in Appendix 1

² Case sizes A-F, for an explanatory table of case size see Appendix 3

2: Introduction

The Revenue Commissioners' Research Unit conducted a postal survey of small and medium sized businesses from April to July 2006. Two thousand surveys were issued to VAT registered customers. There was a response rate of over 80%, with an effective sample of 1598 cases. This response rate allows robust conclusions to be drawn about Revenue's small and medium sized business customer base.

2.1: Objectives

The survey was conducted to try to quantify a number of issues relating to small and medium sized businesses. The two broad areas covered by the questions in the survey were '*Customer Service*' and '*Perceptions of Revenue*'. This report focuses on themes that can be explored within these areas with the evidence gathered from the survey. The questions in the survey and the themes developed in this report were derived from Revenue's Statement of Strategy 2005-2007. These themes are:

- Customer satisfaction with the service from and experience of Revenue;
- Communication channels between customers and Revenue;
- Customers' perceptions of Revenue: fairness, efficiency, effectiveness in dealing with tax evasion, and public confidence; and
- Administrative burden on small and medium sized businesses.

There are interrelations between these themes, which are also explored. In addition, information about the customers that replied was also added to the analysis, such as geographic location, case size and economic sector.

2.2: A Note on the Methodology Used in the Survey

2.2.1: Objectivity and Confidentiality of the Survey

As the survey was conducted directly by Revenue, a number of steps were taken to ensure objectivity and assure confidentiality to respondents.

- A covering letter was issued with each survey (see Appendix 2), which invited the customer to participate: the survey was entirely voluntary.
- The covering letter explained the reasons for conducting the survey, explained that the Research Unit of the Revenue Commissioners was conducting it, and that all responses would be treated confidentially. These points were repeated on the survey form itself. The data from respondents was captured and analysed by the Research Unit, and is only accessible to the Unit.
- Contact names and telephone numbers for Research Unit staff members were clearly provided in the covering letter. Respondents were advised to contact the Unit if clarification regarding any aspect of the survey was required.
- The questions were worded in a neutral way so as to minimise bias in the responses of the respondents.
- Where appropriate, the option of giving a ‘No Opinion’ answer was provided. A minority of cases used this option.
- Comment boxes were offered throughout the survey. A minority of respondents took the opportunity to offer comments; often these were frank, lengthy and detailed, suggesting respondents’ confidence in the integrity of the survey.

2.2.2: Target Population

The main objectives of the survey were to measure customer service satisfaction levels and perceptions of Revenue amongst small and medium sized businesses. Therefore, a key consideration of the design of the survey was to maximise the chances of the business owner receiving and completing the survey. To this end, the sample was drawn from businesses that had recently filed a bi-monthly VAT return (VAT3) and who fell within the case size range of A-F (see Appendix 3)³. The resulting sample of 2000 cases represents 160,000 cases of size A-F, i.e. 80% of the registered population of businesses.

In addition, the survey was sent as a single correspondence from the Research Unit, directly to the business address. This sample targeting was successful, in that 86% of respondents were owners of the business.

2.3: A Note on the Results in this Report

The questions asked in the survey often allowed respondents to indicate more than one category as a response. Thus categories are not mutually exclusive in many instances. This needs to be borne in mind when considering percentages and total figures quoted in this report. In addition, most results using percentages have been rounded for clarity.

2.4: Acknowledgement

The Research Unit would like to thank all those who responded to the survey. The information produced will be used to review and improve Revenue's service to its business customers.

³ Case size is computed by taking the average tax liability and/or collection total for VAT for liabilities/ payments/ collections posted in a 24 month period prior to the current period (i.e. period in which the payment is received).

3: Customer Satisfaction with Revenue

Revenue invests considerable resources in maintaining and improving customer service delivery. It is critical that Revenue measures and reviews satisfaction levels with the service and experience it provides to its customers. Thus one of the main focuses of this survey was an attempted quantification of this theme for small and medium sized businesses.

Those surveyed were asked ‘*In general, how would you rate your overall satisfaction with the service you get from Revenue?*’ Almost 84% of those who responded⁴ to the question were either *very satisfied* or *satisfied* with their experience of Revenue. Due to the size of the response, a 99% confidence level with a maximum margin of error of 3.2% can be attached to the percentages of each rating in these results. Additionally we can be 99% confident that 84% (+/- 2.4 %) of small to medium businesses are satisfied with the service that they get from Revenue.

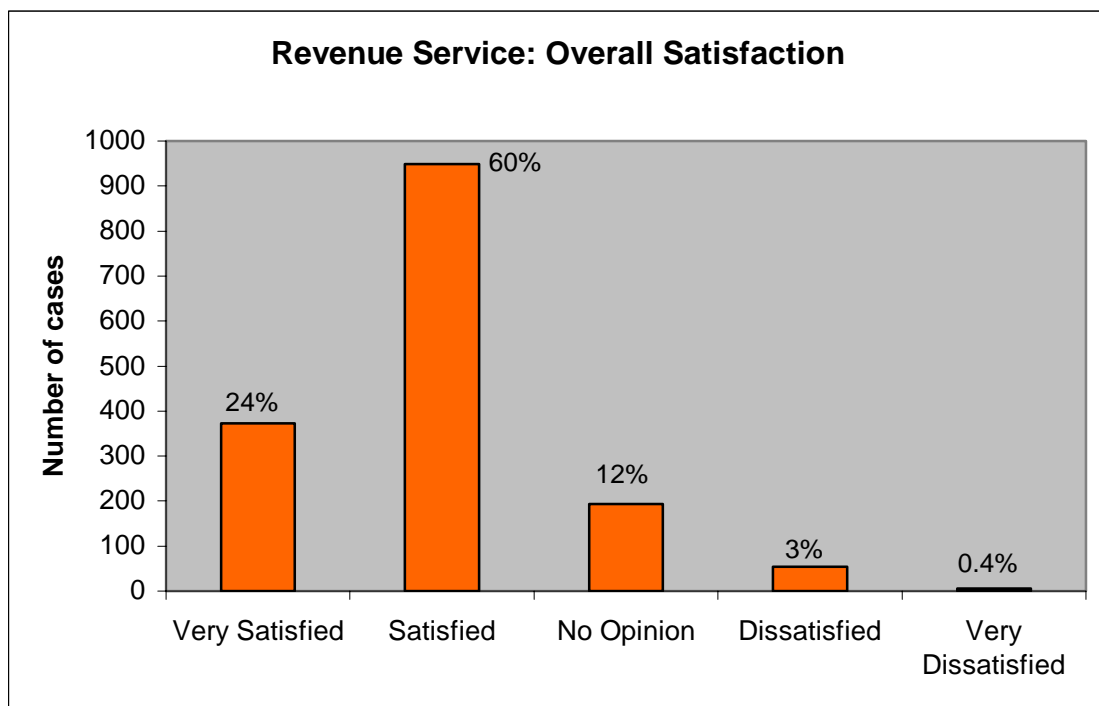


Figure 1: Overall satisfaction ratings of service received from Revenue

⁴ ~98% of respondents answered this question

3.1: Satisfaction Ratings across Geographic, Economic and Case Size Categories

An analysis was conducted to see if there was any variation within the sample regarding satisfaction levels when the sample was split into groups using various factors. This was done using contingency tables and appropriate tests of association⁵. This analysis found that there were no statistically significant differences among the respondents' satisfaction rating when split by *region, district, case size* or *economic sector* (NACE). These results are very encouraging from a customer service point of view. They suggest that Revenue is providing a good service to the clear majority of small and medium sized businesses, regardless of geographic location, economic sector or size of the business.

3.2: 'Dissatisfied' and 'No Opinion' Cases

The categories of respondent who expressed no opinion and those who were dissatisfied represent a minority of the total. Of those 58 cases that were dissatisfied, 39 had comments, which often explained the reasons for their dissatisfaction. These comments included issues relating to poor customer service particularly in relation to obtaining information by telephone and delays in dealing with correspondence/ form processing. In addition, some comments related to perceptions of inflexibility in the operation of the VAT system for small businesses, referring particularly to filing deadlines and cash flow difficulties.

A sizeable minority of 12% of respondents to this question expressed no opinion. A possible reason for this is that they had no direct service experience with Revenue, perhaps where an accountant or other intermediary dealt directly with Revenue on their behalf.

⁵ These tests calculated the chi-square tests of homogeneity or independence and measures of association based on chi-square.

4: Communication Channels between Customers and Revenue

The survey asked questions regarding channels of contact between customers and Revenue. These channels were *telephone*, *letter/ fax*, *email*, *calling in person* and *website*. Questions on preferences, usage rates and satisfaction levels for each channel were asked.

4.1: Preferred Channel of Contact

Respondents were asked to rate the five channels of contact on a scale of 1 to 5 in order of their preference with 1 as most preferred down to 5 as least preferred. Of those who answered this question, a clear majority (over 60%) indicated that using the **telephone** was their preferred method of contact. Very few cases preferred electronic means or calling in person. The following table lists each channel and its mode in terms of the rating given by respondents. The mode is the most commonly occurring rating in each method of contact. Like the mean and median, the mode is a measure of central tendency, which is useful with ordinal data such as the ratings here. Thus, for the telephone, the most commonly occurring rating was 1, which is the mode for that channel.

Preferred Methods of Contact

Modal Rating	Method of Contact
1	Telephone
2	Letter/fax
3	email
4	www.revenue.ie
5	Calling in person

4.2: Usage Rates of Contact Channels

Those surveyed were asked '*How many times have you made personal contact with Revenue during the last year?*' Respondents were given a list of options and asked to tick as many as applicable. The options followed on from the preference question,

with *telephone*, *letter/ fax*, *email*, *calling in person* and *www.revenue.ie* listed as contact channels. For each channel a list of options for number of times used was provided: *none*, *once*, *2 to 3 times*, *4 to 6 times* and *more than 6 times*.

The most commonly occurring method was *telephone*, followed by *letter/ fax*, *www.revenue.ie*, *calling in person* and *email*. This does not follow the exact pattern of the previous question in terms of the type of contact used compared to preference, for example the website featuring in third place here.

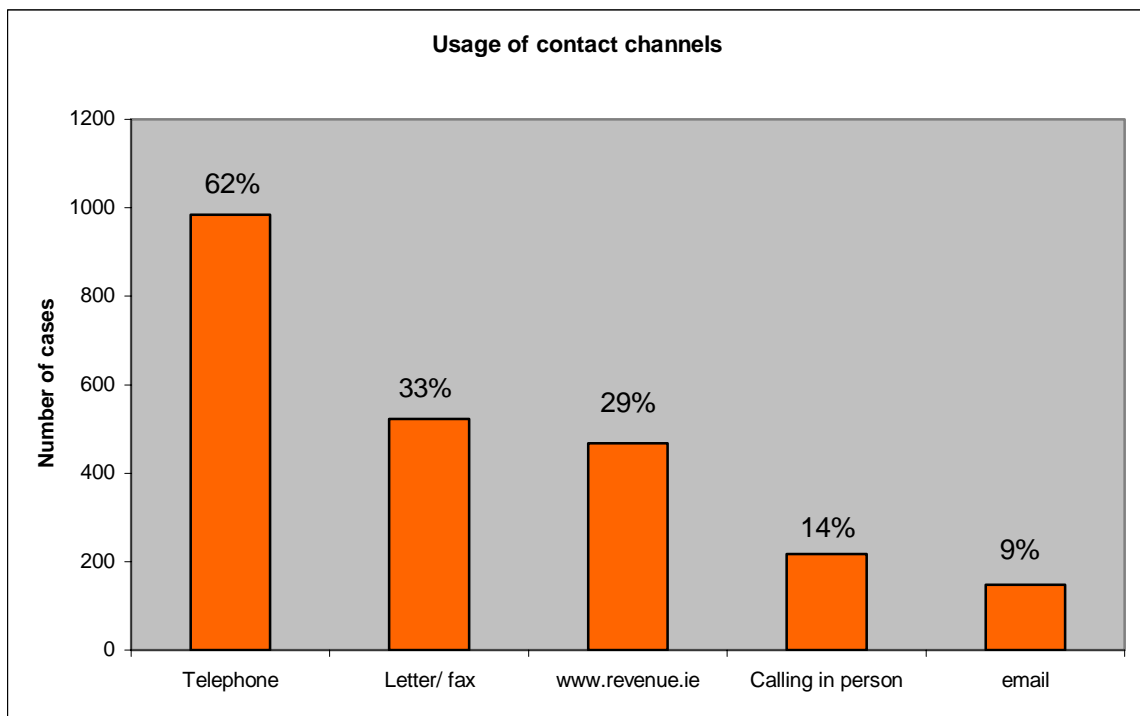


Figure 2: Number of cases per contact channel used once or more in last year⁶

In terms of the number of times that each method was used, the mode for telephone letter/ fax and website method is *2 to 3 times* in the last year for each method, while the mode for email and calling in person is *once*⁷. It is clear therefore that the telephone is not only the preferred method of contact, but also the most commonly used channel. There is thus a clear demand and requirement to provide this service to

⁶ Percentages are based on each channel as proportion of total respondents (1598 cases). Respondents could choose more than one channel in response.

⁷ When cases that failed to answer the question or indicated a usage rate of 'None' are eliminated. If cases that indicated 'None' are included, then this is the mode for all channels.

business customers. The low rating of email may be worth further investigation, as to why it is the least used method of contact, and whether this should/could be improved.

As a channel of contact the website is considerably less resource intensive for Revenue than other channels. In addition, promotion of its usage is a key element of Revenue's e-Business Strategy. However, the survey results indicate relatively low preference and usage rates for this channel.

When contact types and usage rates are compared between those who use an accountant and those who do not, a statistically significant pattern is discernable. As expected, those who use an accountant contact Revenue less than those who don't, and when they do so it is less frequently.

Indicative studies of customer contact volumes, using the data from the survey, suggest that for the ~1100 respondents that made contact with Revenue in the last twelve months, a minimum of 4943 contact events occurred⁸. This level of contact by business customers has implications for Revenue, in terms of managing customer service demand and delivery. While the survey did not ask for details concerning the reason/s for contacting Revenue, other studies⁹ suggest that these contacts are primarily related to seeking information.

⁸ Excluding contact via the website.

⁹ *Irish Civil Service Customer Satisfaction Business Survey, 2006: Ipsos MORI Report to Dept. of the Taoiseach; Paragraph 4.1.4, 'Nature of Most Recent Contact'.*

4.3: Satisfaction with Channels of Contact

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction levels with channels of contact used. In all channels a high percentage of respondents expressed satisfaction with the service that they received. For each channel of contact there are at least **80%** of cases either *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with their experience. This is a positive result for Revenue. The following graph shows a breakdown of the results for each channel:

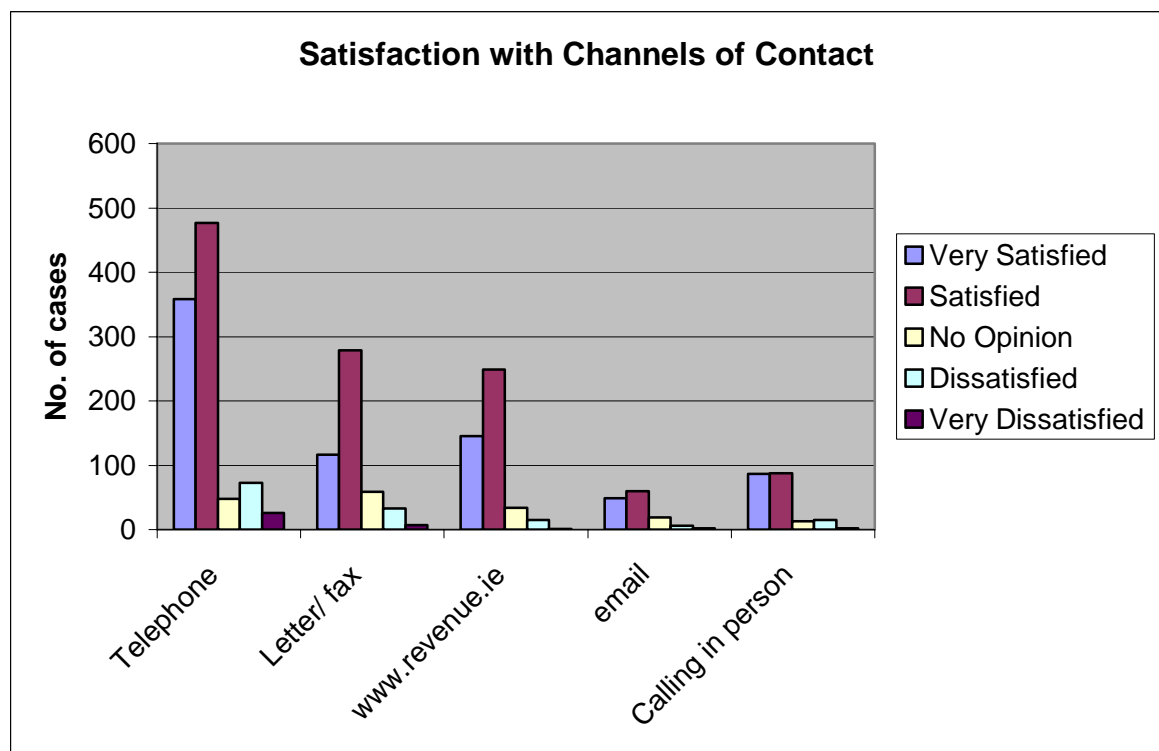


Figure 3: Satisfaction with channels of contact

A small number of cases in each question indicated a degree of dissatisfaction with the channel used. The comments provided by these respondents shed some light on the cause for dissatisfaction. The majority of negative comments arose in relation to the telephone service. The message from the comments appears to be that a number of respondents have experienced difficulties in getting through to staff and difficulties in getting the information sought. In particular, a number of comments indicate that there is a preference for a dedicated contact person to deal with queries.

4.4: Sources of Information on Revenue Obligations

The survey asked ‘Which of the following sources of information do you use to keep up with your Revenue obligations?’ Respondents were given a list of options and asked to tick as many as applied to them. The following graph shows the results for those who responded to this question:

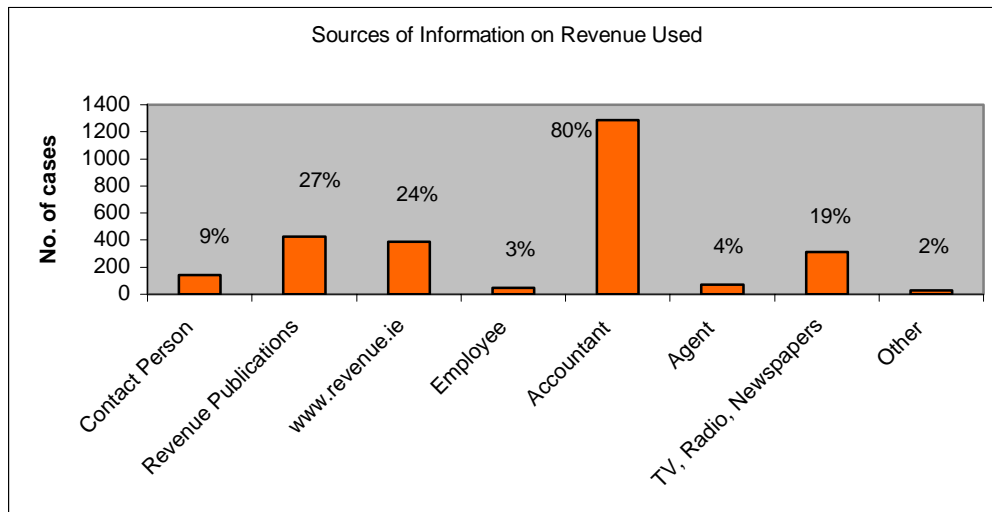


Figure 4: Sources of information on Revenue obligations used by respondents

The dominance of accountants/ agents (~84% of cases) as sources of information to customers about their obligations to Revenue is apparent. Revenue publications, Revenue’s website and the media also feature but to a lesser degree. This indicates that small/ medium sized businesses are currently getting information about Revenue from third parties in the majority of cases. The numbers using electronic information sources are relatively low.

Correlating this information with other results indicates that those who use an accountant to maintain their records also tended to use them as a source of information on Revenue. Those who don’t use accountants tend to use contact persons, Revenue publications and the website. They also tended to call Revenue directly more often.

4.4.1: Satisfaction Levels Correlated with Sources of Information Used

When compared with the overall satisfaction ratings, it emerges that there are some correlations between satisfaction levels and the sources of information on Revenue. Respondents using Revenue publications and/or the website tended to be more satisfied overall. Where respondents used a contact person in Revenue, they tended to have a higher overall satisfaction rating. However, the number of these cases is small and therefore the results must be treated with caution. These findings suggest that promotion of the use of Revenue publications, the website and the provision of dedicated contact persons has potential for positive expansion of customer services, based on the current satisfaction of customers who use these sources of information.

4.5: Suggested Improvements to Revenue's Services

Respondents were invited to suggest potential improvements to Revenue's services. There were 533 responses to this question, equating to 33% of all replies to the survey. Of those who commented, over 12% were satisfied with the service they receive from Revenue, and a further 21% couldn't suggest any improvement at the time of their response. However, 16% asked for an improved telephone service, 13% asked for an improved web service and over 10% asked for better forms/leaflets¹⁰. In relation to the telephone service, it was suggested that expertise to deal with enquiries is needed with this service channel. It must be remembered however, that respondents whose comments were negative were a minority of respondents overall. Additionally, the respondents who suggested improvements were not necessarily dissatisfied with the service in question, for example of those who suggested improving the telephone service nearly half (48%) were satisfied with the service received by telephone.

¹⁰ As some individual comments contained multiple suggestions the categories for improvement suggested are not mutually exclusive.

4.6: Revenue On-line Service uptake by Respondents

Respondents were asked in a separate question about their usage of the Revenue On-line Service (ROS). The purpose of this question was to gather information on the reasons why some customers are not availing of ROS. ~98% of respondents answered this question, and 33.5% of these said that they had used ROS in the last year. The results for ROS usage rates were compared with data provided by the Collector General's Division, which suggested that 29% of cases with case size A-F had filed returns for the period May 2005 to May 2006 through ROS.

When asked to state the reason for *not* using ROS (624 offered an explanation), ~33% of respondents stated that their accountant used it on their behalf, and therefore they had no need to use the service themselves. Others stated that they did not have Internet access (11.5%), a compatible computer (~8%), that they did not possess IT skills (~6%), or combinations of these reasons.

5: Perceptions of Revenue: Fairness, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Public Confidence in Revenue

5.1: Introduction

Revenue recognises that the task of collecting taxes and duties in a fair, efficient and effective manner is central to the well being of the State¹¹. Revenue must strive to be efficient in supporting those who comply voluntarily with their tax and duty responsibilities, and effective in dealing with those who don't. Fairness is at the heart of public expectations of Revenue. Citizens rightly expect to see equity and fairness in the administration of the system. Public confidence in Revenue needs to be built upon and constantly maintained.

This survey attempts to quantify the perceptions of small and medium businesses about these key areas of fairness, efficiency, effectiveness and confidence. Thus the following four statements were presented to those surveyed, and they were invited to indicate their level of agreement with each one:

1. 'Revenue's approach to administering taxes and duties is fair.'
2. 'Revenue's approach to administering taxes and duties is efficient.'
3. 'Revenue is effective in dealing with tax evasion.'
4. 'Public confidence in Revenue is justified.'

Five answer options were available on a scale as follows: *Strongly Agree, Agree, No Opinion, Disagree* and *Strongly Disagree*. Nearly all respondents answered these questions, thus robust conclusions can be drawn on the basis of these responses about how Revenue is perceived by small and medium business.

¹¹ Elements of this paragraph taken from Statement of Strategy 2005-2007, pages 3-5

5.2: Results

The responses to these statements are summarised in the graph below. At least 66% of respondents perceive Revenue to be fair, efficient, effective in dealing with tax evasion, and deserving of public confidence. This is a very positive result for Revenue. However, sizable minorities offered 'No Opinion' especially for the latter two statements. Some related comments suggest that respondents did not feel 'qualified' to offer an opinion on the statements.

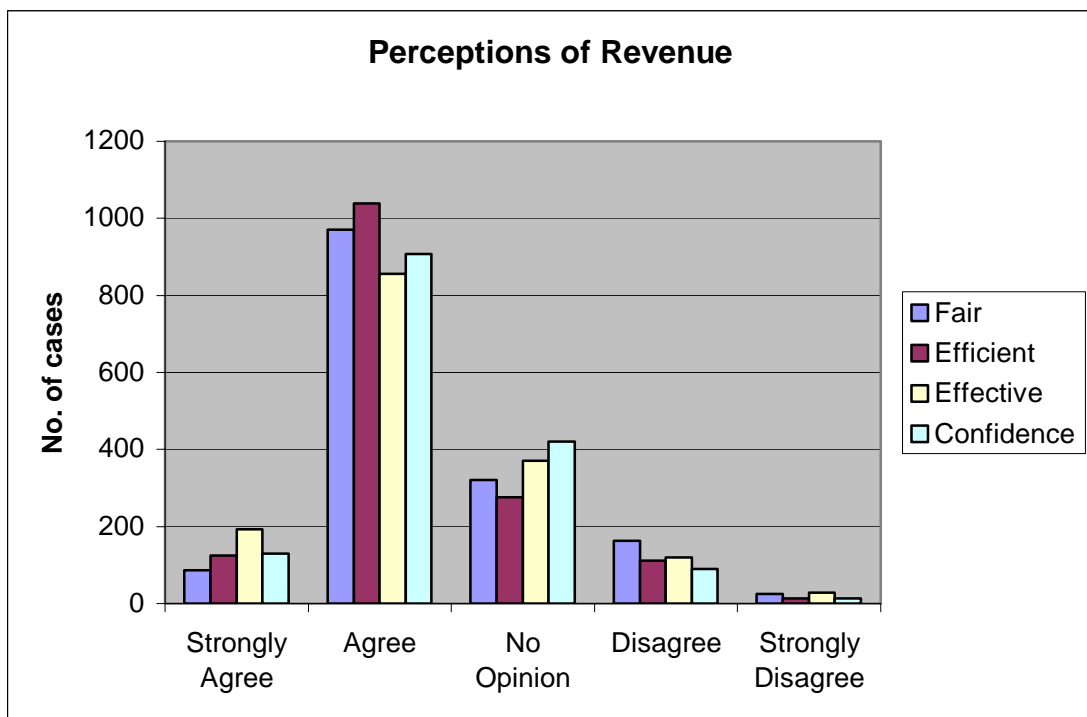


Figure 5: Overall results for perceptions of Revenue

A summary breakdown of the results to the four statement questions follows.

5.2.1: 'Revenue's approach to administering taxes and duties is fair.'

Over 67% either agree or strongly agree that Revenue is fair. A large minority of 20% indicated that they had 'No Opinion'. Over 12% of respondents felt that Revenue was not fair in its approach to administering taxes and duties. Of these, comments included perceptions that there is limited flexibility with regard to payment dates and deadlines for small businesses.

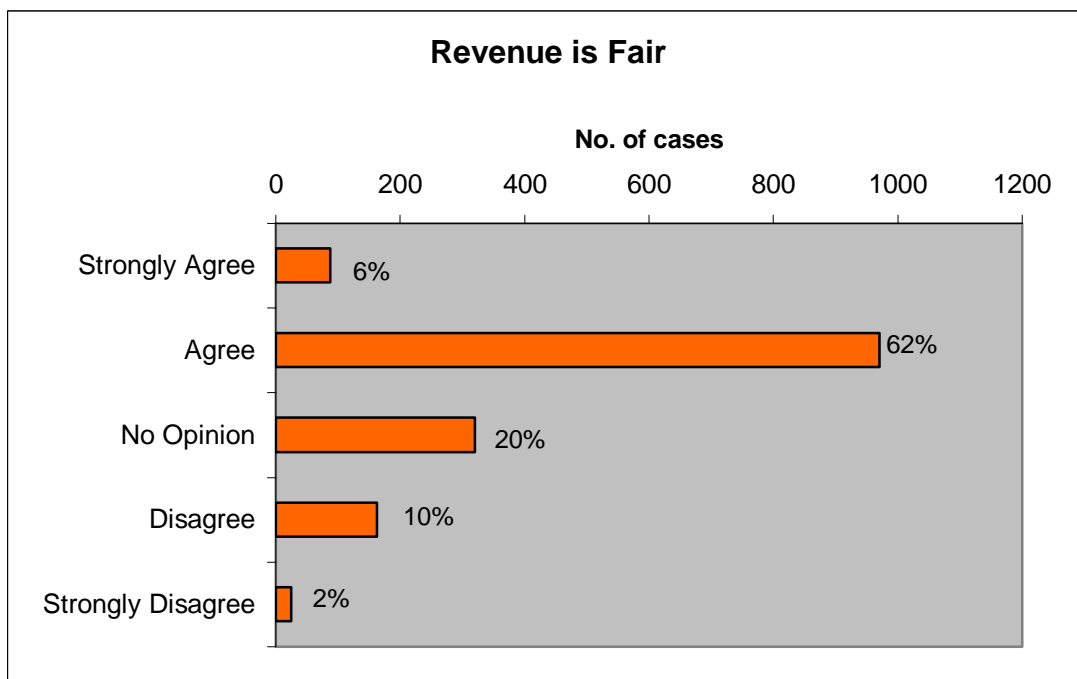


Figure 6: Perceptions of Revenue: Fairness

5.2.2: ‘Revenue’s approach to administering taxes and duties is efficient.’

74% either agree or strongly agree that Revenue is efficient. Once again a large minority of ~18% indicated that they had ‘No Opinion’. Slightly less than 8% of respondents felt that Revenue was not efficient in its approach to administering taxes and duties. Some of these cases commented negatively on aspects of customer service delivery, which had informed their view of Revenue’s efficiency.

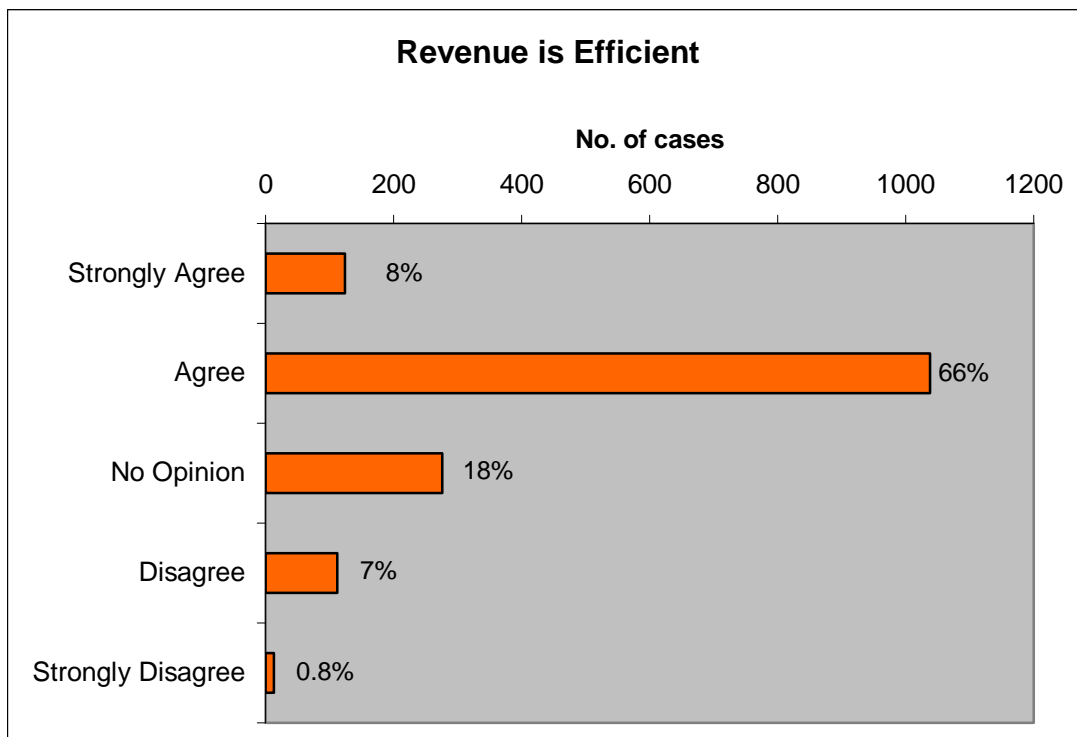


Figure 7: Perceptions of Revenue: Efficiency

5.2.3: 'Revenue is effective in dealing with tax evasion.'

Respondents were asked about their perception of Revenue's effectiveness in dealing with tax evasion. Once again most respondents (~67%) agreed with this statement. Slightly less than 10% disagreed with the statement. Some of these cases commented that evaders had an unfair advantage by not being compliant. Nearly 24% had no opinion.

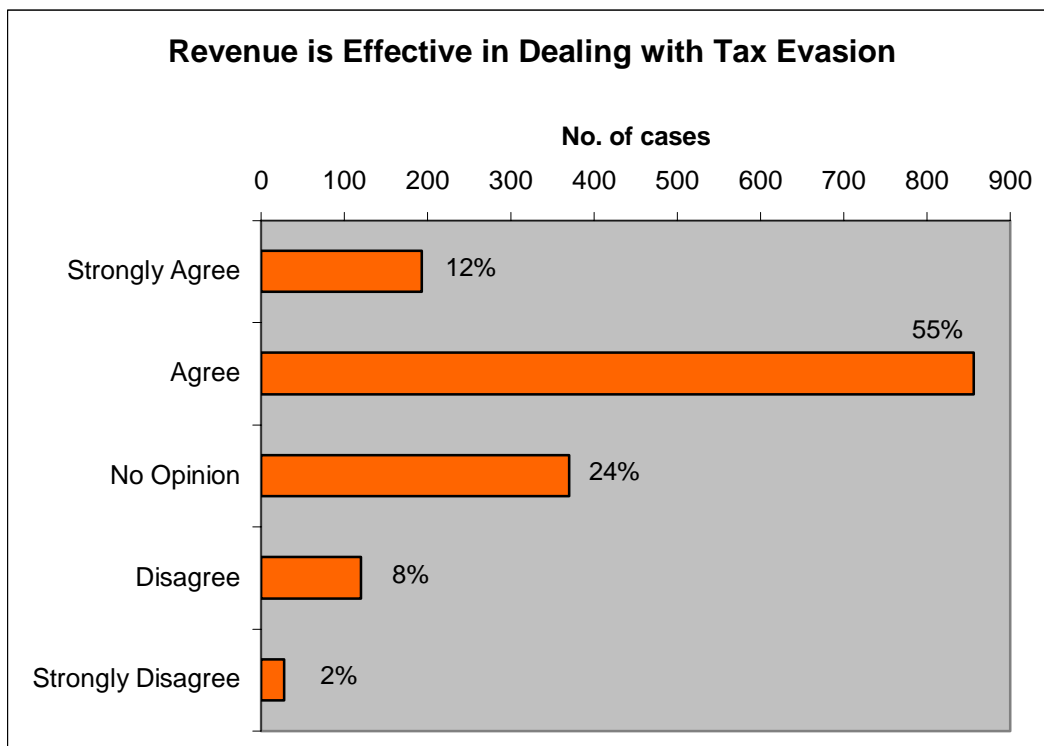


Figure 8: Perceptions of Revenue: Effectiveness in dealing with tax evasion

5.2.4: 'Public confidence in Revenue is justified.'

There was a large degree of uncertainty/inability/reluctance¹² to answer the question on public confidence with ~27% having no opinion. Once again the largest group of respondents agreed with the statement, with 66% agreeing overall. Very few, ~7%, disagreed with the statement.

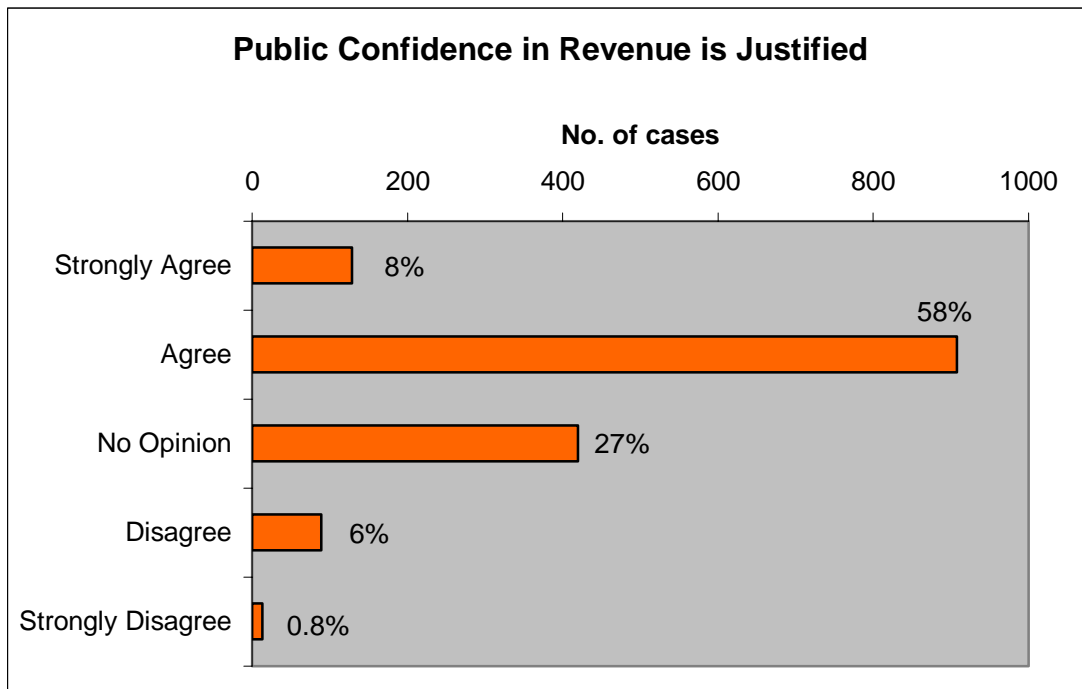


Figure 9: Perceptions of Revenue: Public Confidence

¹² As indicated by accompanying comments

5.3: Themes Emerging from Comments Linked to Perceptions

After the four perception statements, respondents were invited to offer comments on the perception statements or any overall comments. In total 192 respondents offered comments. While this represents only 12% of all respondents, the themes that emerge from these comments are worth noting. Many of the comments were lengthy and detailed and often contained more than one theme. The comments can be grouped into the following categories, which are not mutually exclusive:

- The perceived ‘unfairness of the system’ (56 respondents);
- The shadow economy (33 respondents);
- Customer service levels (27 respondents);
- A perception that Revenue targets the ‘small guy’ more than larger offenders (25 respondents); and
- Positive comments about Revenue (28 respondents).

Generally, the comments about the perceived unfairness of the system were concerned with aspects of the administration of the tax system, particularly the deadlines for filing returns and payment of tax. Examples of the comments are given below:

- *‘A little more leeway should be given on dates of collection of VAT + PRSI before interest + penalties are charged.’*
- *‘The returning of VAT returns by 19th of month after VAT period is a hard deadline to meet. Sometimes, not all invoices would be received [by then].’*
- *‘Revenue procedures with dealing with (i) late filing returns (ii) late payment are totally excessive.’*
- *‘If I over pay my prelim tax, I will be refunded but interest will not be paid by Revenue. (Unfair). If I under-pay my prelim tax, I will pay interest on the shortfall amount. (Unfair).’*

The ‘system is unfair’ comments therefore had a common theme in that some small businesses are finding it difficult to keep up with their obligations and felt that the

penalties for failing to do so were out of proportion to the errors made. Others felt that preliminary tax was unfairly charged before payment for services had been received by the business. Some felt obliged to hire the services of accountants to ensure they were compliant.

33 respondents commented on various aspects of the shadow economy. For example, there was a strong theme in these comments that while the respondent was compliant they felt that others were not, particularly in the construction sector. Some examples illustrate the point:

- *‘In our case we are almost forced out of our small business by people offering a similar service at a lower rate because they are not registered and doing no tax returns.’*
- *‘I think Revenue completely ignore the cash based construction industry. We built a house and everyone requested cash, plumber, electrician, builder, the lot.’*
- *‘Revenue pay too much attention to those who already are paying their taxes and not nearly enough to those who ignore them altogether. I pay a lot of taxes each year in my small family business and hate seeing many more in the same business paying nothing.’*
- *‘There are still far too many people operating in the black economy (i.e. cash and no documentation). More effort needs to be made to cut this out - so that our taxes can remain reasonably small. The building and allied services industries are rampant in this regard.’*

27 respondents offered comments on customer service. These comments focussed on a perceived need to improve the telephone service, improve response times to queries and correspondence and a perception that some cases were dealt with harshly, or that queries were handled badly/ with indifference. A need to *improve* general customer service therefore emerged as a broad overall message. For example:

- *‘In our dealings with Revenue we feel there is a lack of communication between departments within the system.’*

-
- *'Administration made difficult by problems contacting Revenue and then getting accurate and consistent replies.'*
 - *'Despite attempting to pay taxes in full I find it annoying to get threatening demands for taxes without first getting at least a simple reminder that the tax is due. The approach I find is heavy handed and threatening.'*
 - *'Very slow in sending VAT return cheques. Hard to get in touch by phone.'*

25 respondents commented on the perception that there is one law for the 'small guy' and a different law for larger cases. For example:

- *'I would feel that there is still a perception amongst the public that the wealthiest people pay the least taxes. Also, there is a huge amount of 'black economy' activity, which is not being picked up by Revenue. In an equitable society, the rules of Revenue should be applied fairly and consistently to everyone.'*
- *'Revenue is very efficient collecting from small honest business, but is not very efficient collecting from multi-millionaires and, others wishing to avoid tax, which is disconcerting for honest business.'*
- *'The richest people are avoiding/evading tax. Too many loopholes. They should be closed.'*

Finally, it is worth noting that 28 respondents made positive comments. Samples of these are included below:

- *'Revenue is by far the most efficient branch of the public sector. It is a little out of touch in some areas but broadly doing a good job.'*
- *'I think Revenue are at the forefront in the Public Service of trying to improve service to the public. Don't go all online, someone to talk to is essential in certain situations and mail service while consistent is a bit slow.'*
- *'Government needs to give Revenue more resources to tackle evasion. Thank you for asking for my views. I would like to add I think Revenue staff are excellent, very high quality and responsive to problems.'*

5.4: Correlations of Perceptions with Other Results

In an additional analysis, the answers to the perception statements were cross-referenced extensively with other aspects of respondents' answers and their profile. When compared to overall satisfaction ratings, those who agreed with the perception statements often expressed satisfaction with Revenue. This correlation is as expected, with large majorities of cases in both instances making a relationship likely between overall satisfaction ratings and agreeing to the statements. To allow further analysis the responses to the four perception statements were re-categorised into the following categories: *Agree*, *No Opinion* and *Disagree*. Similarly, the overall satisfaction rating was condensed into *Satisfied*, *No Opinion* and *Dissatisfied*. This allowed more robust tests¹³ to be carried out using these questions. The result from these tests is that there is a statistically significant relationship between respondents indicating that they were satisfied with services from Revenue and agreement by them with the perception statements. Due to the size of the response, it can be stated with some certainty that the majority of respondents view Revenue in a favourable light.

Similar analyses showed that there was no statistically significant difference in the responses to the perception statements between those who use an accountant and those who do not use an accountant, between regions and when split by case size. This suggests that the results are universal across the range of small and medium size businesses in Ireland.

¹³ Chi-square tests of homogeneity or independence and measures of association based on chi-square

6: Administrative Burden on Small and Medium Businesses

The survey asked respondents about who maintains the records required for Revenue purposes, and how many hours per week they spend maintaining those records.

6.1: Who Maintains the Records?

The results show that in the majority of cases, either an accountant or the person themselves maintain the records, with over 58% of respondents claiming that they use the services of an accountant, and ~ 49% doing it themselves¹⁴.

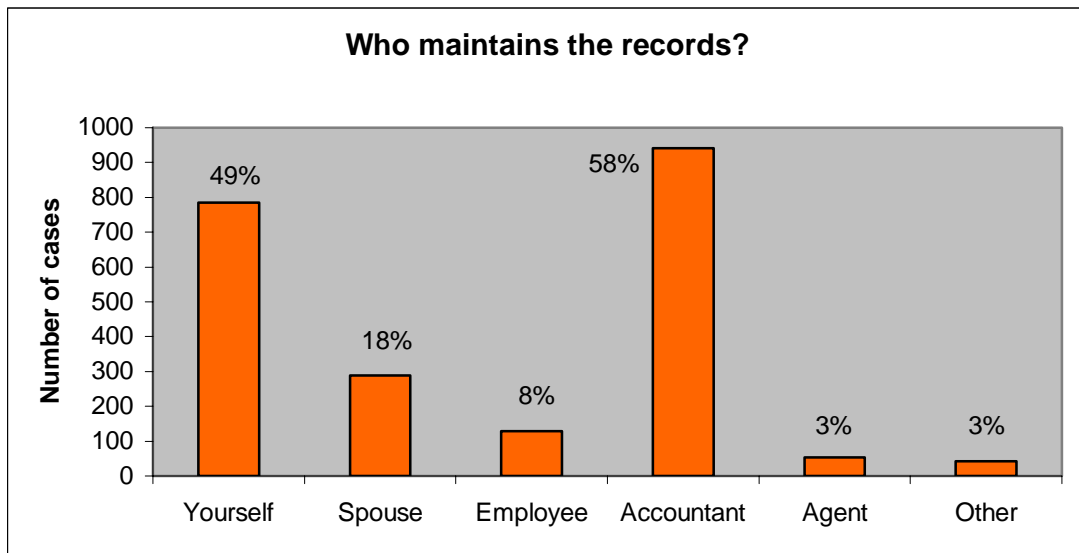


Figure 10: Maintenance of the records

There was no statistically significant difference among the respondents' use of accountants when split by case size: the use of an accountant was not a function of the size of the business.

¹⁴ Respondents could choose more than one category in this question.

6.2: Time Spent on Maintaining Records.

Where respondents or their spouses maintained the records, the majority of cases spend 1 hour or less doing so. Just over 77% of respondents spend less than 2 hours a week on Revenue related records.

When viewed by who maintained the records, there were no statistically significant differences in the amount of time spent on the records.

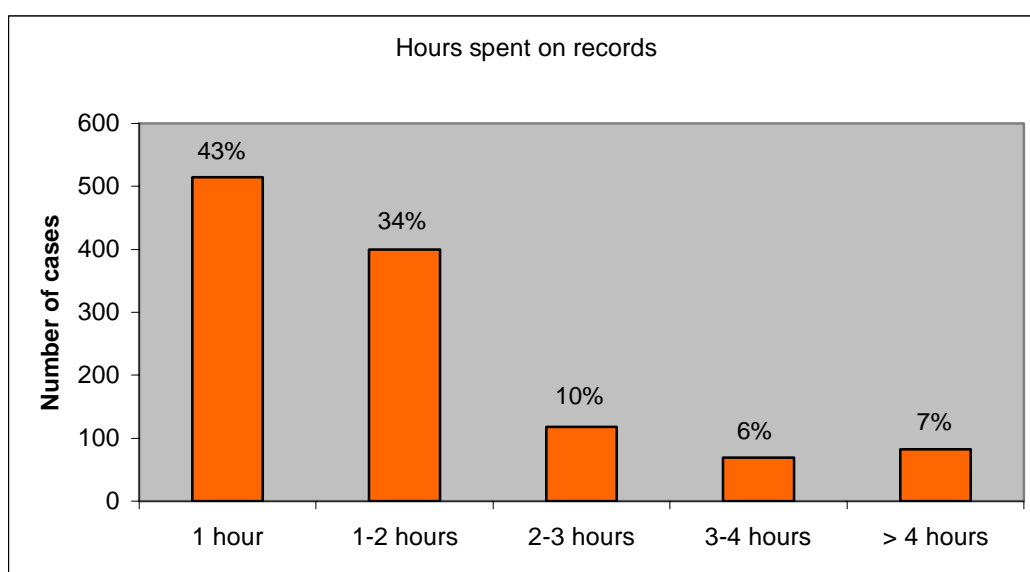


Figure 11: Hours spent on records per week

Where respondents were spending more than 2 hours per week, a number of comments did occur which related to tight deadlines rigidly enforced, for example in relation to the submission frequency of VAT returns.

6.3: Correlation of Satisfaction Levels with Maintenance of Records.

There was found to be no statistically significant differences among the respondents' satisfaction rating when split by who maintained the records in a business and how much time was spent on maintaining the records.

7: Conclusions

This survey allows robust quantification of customer satisfaction levels and perceptions of Revenue by a large section of Revenue's customer base.

Customer satisfaction with service delivery both at the overall level and specific to various communication channels is high. Regardless of the availability of electronic communication channels, the telephone remains the preferred method of contact between Revenue and its small and medium business customers.

With at least 66% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that the organisation is fair, efficient, effective in dealing with tax evasion and deserving of public confidence, perceptions of Revenue are very positive among small and medium business customers.

Appendix 1: Revenue Customer Survey 2006 Questionnaire

Page 1

Revenue Customer Survey 2006

Part I: Customer Service

1. In your business, who maintains the records required for Revenue purposes? Please tick as many as are applicable.

Yourself <input type="checkbox"/>	Spouse <input type="checkbox"/>	Employee <input type="checkbox"/>
Accountant <input type="checkbox"/>	Agent <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>

If 'Other' please specify:

2. If you, your spouse or your employee maintain the records, please estimate how many hours per week are required to deal with Revenue issues? Please tick the appropriate box.

1 hour or less <input type="checkbox"/>	1 to 2 hours <input type="checkbox"/>	2 to 3 hours <input type="checkbox"/>
3 to 4 hours <input type="checkbox"/>	More than 4 hours <input type="checkbox"/>	

3. Which of the following sources of information do you use to keep up to date with your Revenue obligations? Please tick as many as are applicable.

A contact person in Revenue <input type="checkbox"/>	Revenue Publications <input type="checkbox"/>	www.revenue.ie <input type="checkbox"/>
Employee <input type="checkbox"/>	Accountant <input type="checkbox"/>	Agent <input type="checkbox"/>
TV, Radio, Newspapers <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>	

If 'Other' please specify:

4. What is your preferred method of contact with Revenue? Please indicate your preference in the boxes below on a scale of 1 - 5 with 1 as your most preferred and 5 as your least preferred option.


Telephone <input type="checkbox"/>	Letter/Fax <input type="checkbox"/>	email <input type="checkbox"/>
Calling in person <input type="checkbox"/>	www.revenue.ie <input type="checkbox"/>	

5. How many times have you made personal contact with Revenue during the last year? Please tick as many as are applicable.

Contact type:	None	Once	2 to 3 Times	4 to 6 Times	More than 6
Telephone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Letter/Fax	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
email	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Calling in person	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
www.revenue.ie	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. If you made contact with Revenue in the last year, how would you rate your satisfaction with the service you received? Please tick the appropriate box/boxes.

Contact type:	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	No Opinion	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Telephone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Letter/Fax	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
email	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Calling in person	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
www.revenue.ie	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



7. Have you used the Revenue On-line Service (ROS) in the last year? Yes No

If 'No', please indicate your reason/s for not availing of this service?

8. What service improvements or additional services would you like to see provided by Revenue?

9. In general, how would you rate your overall satisfaction with the service you get from Revenue? Please tick the appropriate box.

Very Satisfied Satisfied No Opinion Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied

If you would like to add a comment on this question, or any question in Part 1, please do so here:

Part 2: Customer Perceptions of Revenue

Thank you for completing Part 1. The second part of the survey consists of a number of statements about Revenue. Please tick the box which best reflects your opinion about each statement.

10. Revenue's approach to administering taxes and duties is fair.
Strongly Agree Agree No Opinion Disagree Strongly Disagree
11. Revenue's approach to administering taxes and duties is efficient.
Strongly Agree Agree No Opinion Disagree Strongly Disagree
12. Revenue is effective in dealing with tax evasion.
Strongly Agree Agree No Opinion Disagree Strongly Disagree
13. Public confidence in Revenue is justified.
Strongly Agree Agree No Opinion Disagree Strongly Disagree

If you would like to add a comment on any aspect of Part 2, or any overall comments, please do so here:

14. Finally, are you the owner of the business? Yes No

If 'No', please state your position/role in the business:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your answers will be treated in the strictest of confidence. The information provided will be used to review and improve Revenue's service to business customers.

Please return your completed survey using the enclosed Freepost envelope or fax it to the Research Unit at 01- 674 8015.

Appendix 2: Sample of Covering Letter Issued with Survey

Dear Customer,

The Research Unit of the Revenue Commissioners is conducting a survey based on a random sample of customers who recently filed a VAT 3 return. The survey covers customer service and customer perceptions of Revenue. We would like to invite you to participate by completing the enclosed questionnaire.

The survey should take no more than ten minutes to complete and ideally should be completed by the owner of the business. Your answers will be treated in the strictest confidence and the information you provide will be used to review and improve Revenue's service to business customers.

If you would like to clarify any aspect of the survey please contact any of the following in the Research Unit:

Michael McDonnell	Tel: 01 674 8744	Email: mmcdonne@revenue.ie
Mary Dwyer	Tel: 01 674 8218	Email: mdwyer@revenue.ie

Please return the completed questionnaire using the enclosed Freepost envelope or, if you prefer, by fax to 01 674 8015.

We appreciate your views and look forward to your response by the 12th May.

Many thanks for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,



Gerard Moran
Principal

Appendix 3: Case Size Table: Codes and Ranges

Value Range (in €)	Case size
	None
1-500	A
501-1,200	B
1,201-2,400	C
2,401-3,600	D
3,601-4,800	E
4,801-6,000	F
6,001-7,400	G
7,401-10,000	H
10,001-13,000	I
13,001-18,000	J
18,001-25,000	K
25001-30,000	L
30,001-40,000	M
40,001-50,000	N
50,001-60,000	O
60,001-90,000	P
90,001-120,000	Q
120,001-200,000	R
200,001-500,000	S
500,001-1,000,000	T
1,000,001-2,000,000	U
2,000,001+	V
<1	Z

The survey was conducted using samples taken from the population of cases with case size A to F. Case size is computed by taking the average tax liability and/or collection total for VAT for liabilities/ payments/ collections posted in a 24 month period prior to the current period (i.e. period in which the payment is received).