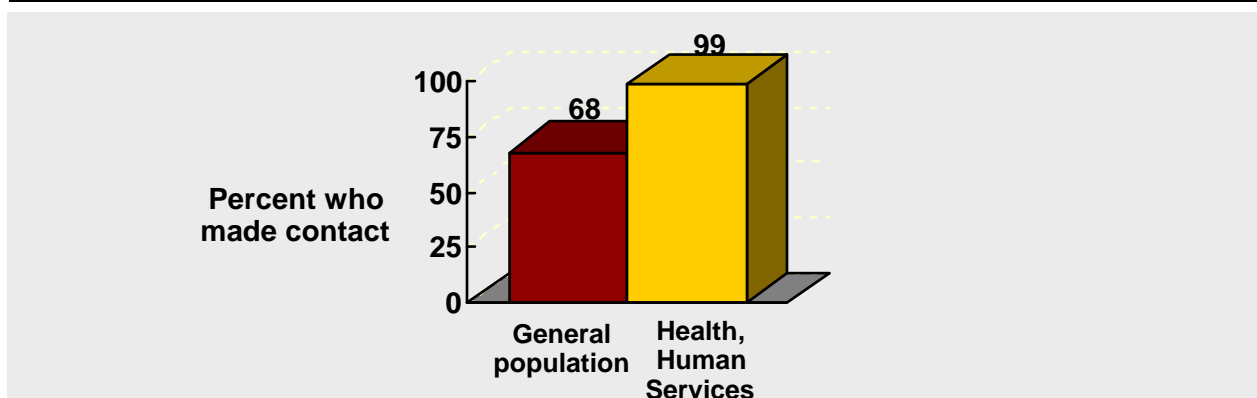


6. ACCESS

Just over two-thirds of the general population in Peel had some sort of contact with the Region of Peel (68 percent). Although there are ways to increase satisfaction and confidence without direct contact, Peel's best prospect is when it has direct contact with its citizens. Peel should consider this a great opportunity for improving satisfaction and confidence in Peel when service quality is high. Of course, the inverse is also true. When service quality is low, the high contact rate presents a risk of lowering satisfaction and confidence levels.

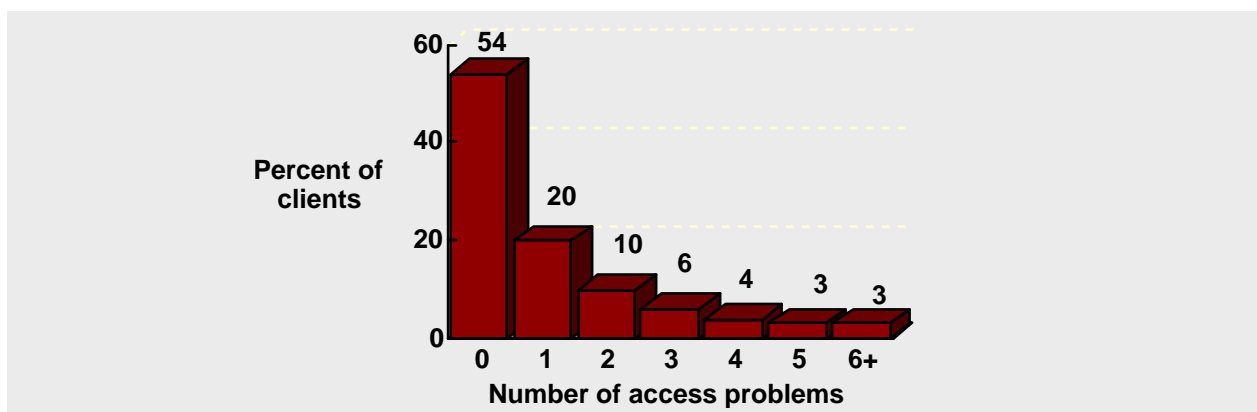
Given the nature of their relationship to Peel, almost all HHS clients have regular contact.

Figure 16. The majority of citizens had contact with Peel in the past year



Contact with more than two-thirds of one million citizens represents a great deal of interaction. How smoothly does it go? When describing their recent service experience, survey respondents enumerated any difficulties that they encountered in accessing the service on each channel that they used – on the phone, at a Peel office, and so on. Figure 17 shows the incidence of access problems – 54 percent of clients had none, 20 percent reported one, and 6 percent reported five or more.

Figure 17. Frequency of access problems



The impact of access problems

Although all access problems are important and should be taken seriously, it is important to focus on those which are potentially causing the most damage to citizen and client satisfaction levels. There are some problems which do not have as serious an impact on satisfaction as others, and Peel should be focusing on those which have the greatest impact. The impact of access problems can vary, from problems such as ‘I had problems finding the right [Web]site’ which causes a decrease in satisfaction of 0.5 points, to ‘Peel staff did not take enough time to explain things to me’ which causes a decrease in satisfaction of 3.9 points.

Table 10. Access problems decrease satisfaction

Problem	Percent of clients	Decrease in satisfaction (0 – 10)
Among all clients...		
Access to staff was difficult	14	3.5
I got incorrect/conflicting information from different sources	15	3.0
The process was too complicated / too much red tape	17	3.1
Didn't know where to get information that I needed*	14	2.2
The hours of service did not suit my schedule	11	2.1
Among those who visited a Peel office or other site...		
Peel staff did not take enough time to explain things to me	9	3.9
I had to wait too long in line	9	2.3
I got bounced around from one person/department to another	8	2.2
Peel office was located in an inconvenient location	22	1.3
Among those who used the telephone...		
Peel staff did not take enough time to explain things to me	12	3.9
No response / slow response to my phone message	22	2.5
I got bounced around from one person/department to another	18	2.3
I had to wait too long on hold	20	1.8
Among those who used the Internet...		
I had trouble finding the right email address / no response*	14	3.6
I had trouble finding the information I needed	27	1.8
I had trouble finding the right site	9	0.5

* Question not asked of HHS clients

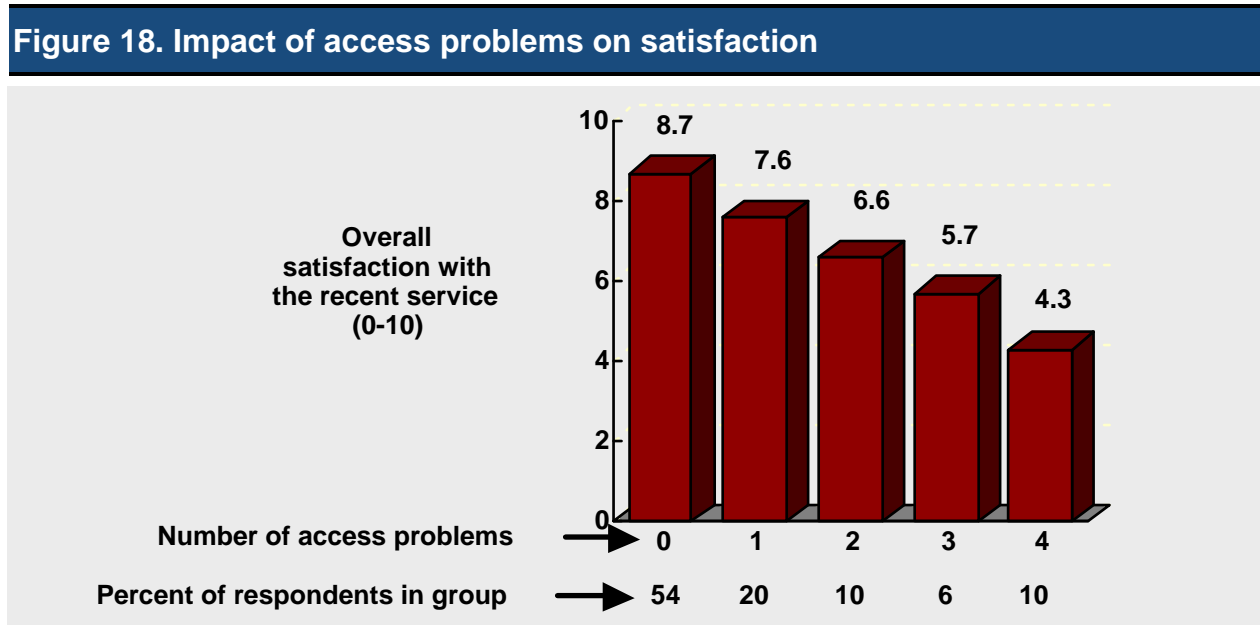
Table 4 also highlights that the most frequent problems are not always the most damaging issues. For respondents who visited a Peel office, 'Peel office was located in an inconvenient location' was more than twice as frequent as any other problem. While office location does affect satisfaction, and should be addressed given its frequency, it clearly represents a more difficult and costlier issue to fix. The other office access problems, even though they were less frequent, each caused more damage to satisfaction, and may be easier to resolve. In fact, the negative impact of an inconvenient office location can be reduced simply by making that office visit smoother and faster for Peel residents.

Access problems and overall satisfaction with service delivery

While Table 4 provides direction for specific action, Figure 18 highlights a more general but equally important finding. While specific problems will have more or less impact on satisfaction, when Peel residents experience multiple access problems, the overall experience can seriously decrease satisfaction levels.

Not surprisingly, respondents who experienced no access problems had very high satisfaction scores (8.7). Over half (56 percent) of respondents who had contact with Peel experienced no access problems and therefore were relatively satisfied. One access problem (18 percent of respondents) dropped satisfaction by an entire point to 7.7. This is lower than respondents who had no access problems, however it still represents a satisfied score.

When respondents experienced 2 access problems, their scores became less than satisfied (7.0). With 3 or more access problems, satisfaction scores begin to plummet. Although only 16 percent of respondents experienced 3 or more problems, just over 1 in 10 Peel residents who had contact with Peel experienced 4 or more access problems, resulting in satisfaction scores of 4.4.



A look at dissatisfied clients

Eleven percent of clients gave their recent experience a “dissatisfied” rating of just 1 or 2 out of 5 (see Figure 13). Clearly, this group faced **more** access problems than did satisfied clients. Did they also face **different** access problems – that is, are there certain access problems that crop up more frequently among the dissatisfied group?

The answer is yes. Dissatisfied clients more frequently reported that staff did not take enough time to explain things and that access to staff was difficult. **In other words, dissatisfied clients more frequently have problems getting through to staff.** Other aspects – the “process” elements such as telephone problems and complex procedures do not differentiate satisfied and dissatisfied clients as strongly.

Table 11 quantifies this pattern in terms of the ratio of dissatisfied to satisfied clients that report each access problem. The ratio for “staff not taking time” in the office context is 15 to 1 – dissatisfied clients very frequently report this problem while satisfied clients rarely do.

The importance of staff taking time is emphasized by two related findings:

- This problem causes a large decrease in overall satisfaction (Table 10), and;
- Staff taking time with clients is essentially a re-statement of the second driver of satisfaction (Figure 14), “Staff made a real effort to help me get what I needed”.

Table 11. Access problems among satisfied and dissatisfied clients

Problem	Ratio of dissatisfied to satisfied clients
Peel staff did not take enough time to explain things to you (Office)	15:1
Peel staff did not take enough time to explain things to you (Phone)	10:1
Access to staff was difficult (General)	7:1
The process was too complicated, or there was too much red tape (General)	6:1
You got incorrect or conflicting information from different sources (General)	6:1
The Peel office was in an inconvenient location (Office)	6:1
You got bounced around from one person or department to another (Office)	5:1
You had to wait too long in line at a Peel office (Office)	5:1
You didn't know where to get information that you needed (General)	4:1
The hours of service did not suit my schedule (General)	4:1
You got bounced around from one person or department to another (Phone)	4:1
There was no response or a slow response to your phone messages (Phone)	3:1
You had trouble finding the information you needed (Internet)	3:1

In the first line of the table, 45 percent of dissatisfied clients and 3 percent of satisfied clients reported this problem, for a ratio of 15:1

Access problems in demographic segments

It might seem likely that certain demographic groups would have greater difficulty accessing service than others. This is the case, but the degree to which demographics determine ease of access is very slight, and the difference is not always in the expected direction. For example, those whose first language is English report more access problems than those with English as a second language.

The essential point of these results is that demographic variables each account for 2 percent or less of the variance in access – a negligible amount.

Table 12. Demographics have little impact on difficulty in access

Demographic variable	Segment	No. of access problems	% of variance explained
Gender	Female	1.2	<1
	Male	1.0	
First language	English	1.2	1
	Other	.9	
Lived in Canada	Entire life	1.2	<1
	Immigrated	1.0	
Age	Under 25	1.8	2
	26-34	1.1	
	35-49	1.1	
	50-64	.9	
	65+	1.0	
Education	Some public or HS	1.2	1
	Completed HS	1.2	
	Some post-secondary	1.4	
	Completed post-sec.	1.0	
	Graduate, prof. degree	.9	
Occupation	Employed	1.1	2
	Student	1.7	
	Looking for work	1.5	
	Other	1.0	
Income	<\$40,000	1.3	2
	\$40,000 - \$80,000	.9	
	>\$80,000	.7	

Access channels

Detailed questions on channels of access were asked to those in the Public Health and Human Services groups. This section describes their channel use.

Across the board, the telephone stands out as critical to Peel's quality of service delivery. **The phone is the initial channel of contact for two-thirds of clients, and the primary channel for more than half. Clients' satisfaction ratings for the phone are 8,0 out of 10, which is extraordinarily high.**

Citizens First 5 found that, across all government services in Canada, satisfaction with the telephone stood at just 54 out of 100, i.e. 5.4 out of 10. The reason that underlies this low rating is the number of access problems that citizens encounter – busy signals, lengthy waits on hold, frustrating automated answering systems and the like. Clients who call Peel's Contact Centre do not experience these issues, and satisfaction is correspondingly high.

Good telephone service is a major reason why Peel's overall service quality ratings are higher than those of most other governments.

Health / Human services			
Channel	Initial channel	Main channel	Satisfaction with channel
Telephone	66	55	8.0
In-person visit to office/centre/clinic	22	35	8.3
Website	4	2	8.0
Mail	4	4	–
Visit from Peel staff	3	4	9.0

Hours of operation

Questions about hours of operation were asked to the Health and Human Services clients only.

Although most clients were satisfied with Peel's hours of operation, fewer "Child Care" clients found them satisfactory. This is not a surprising result given the unpredictable nature of child care needs, which theoretically could be at any time of the day, 7 days a week.

Table 13. "Are Peel's regular hours of operation satisfactory?"

Service	Percent of respondents	
	Yes	No
Peel Living clients	85	15
OW clients	82	18
Child Care clients	68	32
Health Services clients	80	20
Overall	80	20

For clients who were not satisfied by Peel's hours of operation, the vast majority preferred access to Peel's services after 4:30 pm – after normal working/business hours. More than one-third of clients suggested access to Peel on Saturdays. Both of these responses point to Peel clients wanting access to Peel during times when they are more available themselves (hence the reluctance to suggest hours before 8:30 am).

Table 14. Preference for additional hours (if regular hours are not satisfactory)

When would you prefer additional hours?	Percent of respondents	
	Yes	No
Before 8:30 AM	6	94
After 4:30 PM	80	20
On Saturday	39	61

"Yes" responses add to more than 100 as clients could select multiple options.