



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

VeteransAgency

An Executive Agency of the Ministry of Defence

HELPLINE

CUSTOMER SURVEY 2006

Produced by the Business Improvement Team



HELPLINE CUSTOMER SURVEY 2006

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HELPLINE CUSTOMER SURVEY 2006

1. Introduction

The mission of the Veterans Agency (VA) is to “deliver modern, high-quality, customer focused services to war disablement pensioners, war widows, their dependants and carers and other veterans and in-Service beneficiaries of AFCS; and to deliver them consistently, efficiently and effectively in recognition of the many extraordinary and unique personal sacrifices made in defence of the nation”.

This survey concentrates on customers who contacted the Agency Helpline between the months of May and September 2006. Customers were targeted by call types:

- Veterans Badge application
- War Pension Appeals query
- War Pension Claims query
- AFCS
- Payments (War Pension payment queries e.g. change of bank, amount of War Pension being paid)
- Miscellaneous (e.g. change of address, admission/discharge to hospital)

This report details results from the 2006 survey and provides comparisons with the 2004 and 2005 survey results.

2. Objectives

The objective of this survey is to assist VA in establishing the needs of current and future customers with particular emphasis on ensuring that the Agency identifies:

- The level of customer satisfaction with VA services
- The cause(s) of any dissatisfaction
- Customer choices
- Customer preferences
- Customer priorities
- Customer ideas for improvement

3. Approach

Questionnaires were sent to 1000 callers. The response rate to the questionnaires issued was 53% (533) compared to a response rate of 52% in 2005.

4. Management Summary

Although perception has dipped slightly this year, the majority of customers still have a positive opinion of the Helpline Service.

Access and Contact

- 46% of respondents are aged over 70.
- 218 respondents found out about Veterans Agency from Ex-service organisations. 157 respondents from friends or relatives.
- 56% of respondents – 9% less than in 2005, managed to get through to Helpline on their first attempt.
- 29% of respondents were able to get through on their second attempt.
- When contacting Veterans Agency Helpline:
 - 97% were told the name of the office
 - 99% were spoken to politely
 - 92% were given the name of the operator
 - 95% felt details had clearly been explained to them
- 34% of respondents were put through to another person, an increase of 8% from 2005, of these:
 - 96% felt details had clearly been explained to them
 - 92% felt the person they were put through to helped them further
 - 85% felt their query was resolved

Service Provided

- 69% of respondents would prefer to be held in a queuing system an increase of 14% from 2005.
- 71% stated that they would prefer to listen to a message detailing their queue position and average waiting time.

Overall Satisfaction

- 96% would recommend the Veterans Agency Helpline service to others.
- 93% rated the overall service as either “excellent” or “good”.

5. Recommendations

Identified areas for improvement	Recommendations
“It took me 2 days to get through as all the lines were busy”.	Consider the possibility of changing the method of the queuing system to inform the customer of their queue position and waiting time.
“Cut down waiting times and introduce a call back service”.	Look into the feasibility of introducing a service for leaving messages and a call back facility.
Question 4c on survey shows a 6% reduction of Helpline staff informing the caller of their name.	Reiterate the importance of Helpline operators informing the customer of their name.

6. Comments/Enquiries

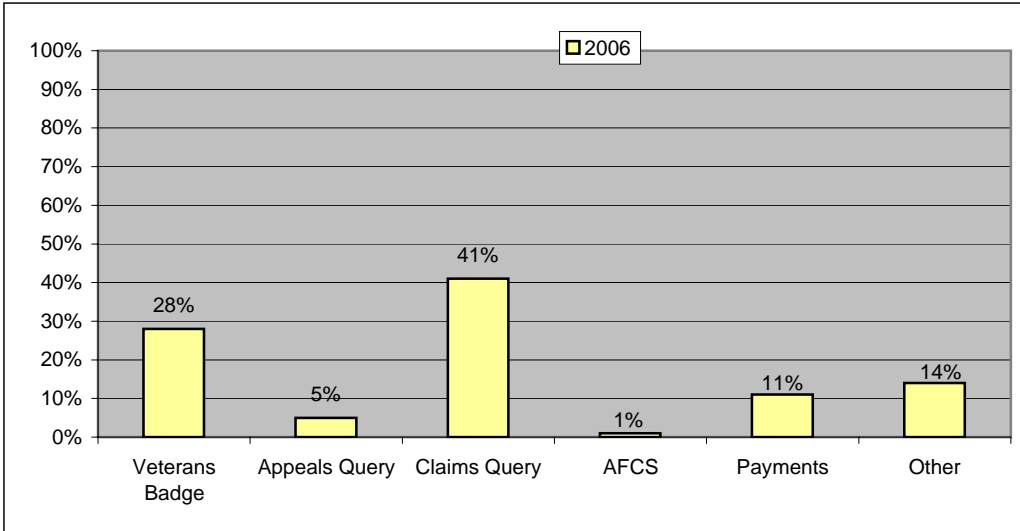
Any comments/enquiries about this report should be made to:

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CALL TYPE

	2004	2005	2006
Veterans Badge	NA	NA	28%
Appeals Query	NA	NA	5%
Claims Query	NA	NA	41%
AFCS	NA	NA	1%
Payments	NA	NA	11%
Other	NA	NA	14%

Total Respondents	NA	NA	533
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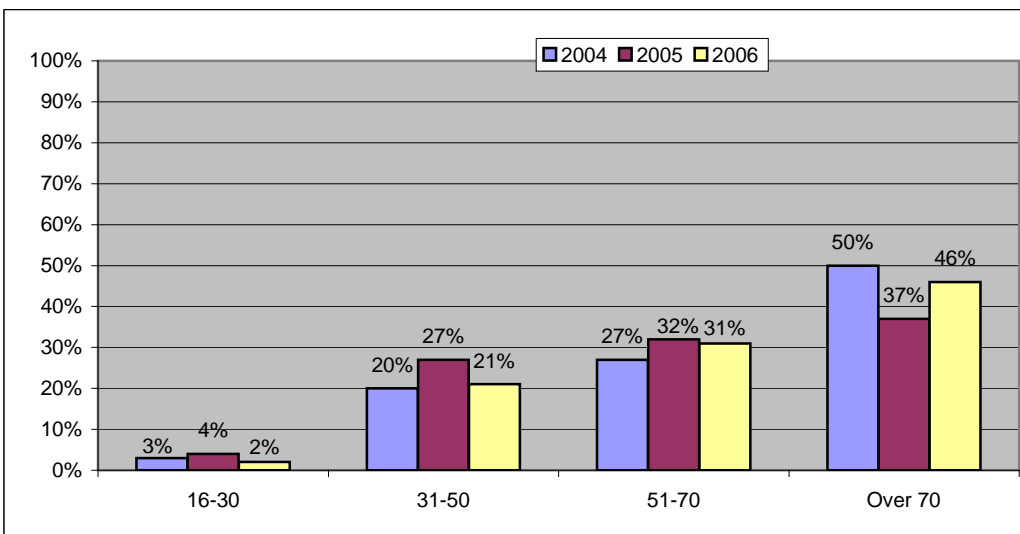


ACCESS AND CONTACT

1. What age group are you?

	2004	2005	2006
16-30	3%	4%	2%
31-50	20%	27%	21%
51-70	27%	32%	31%
Over 70	50%	37%	46%

Total Respondents	980	646	530
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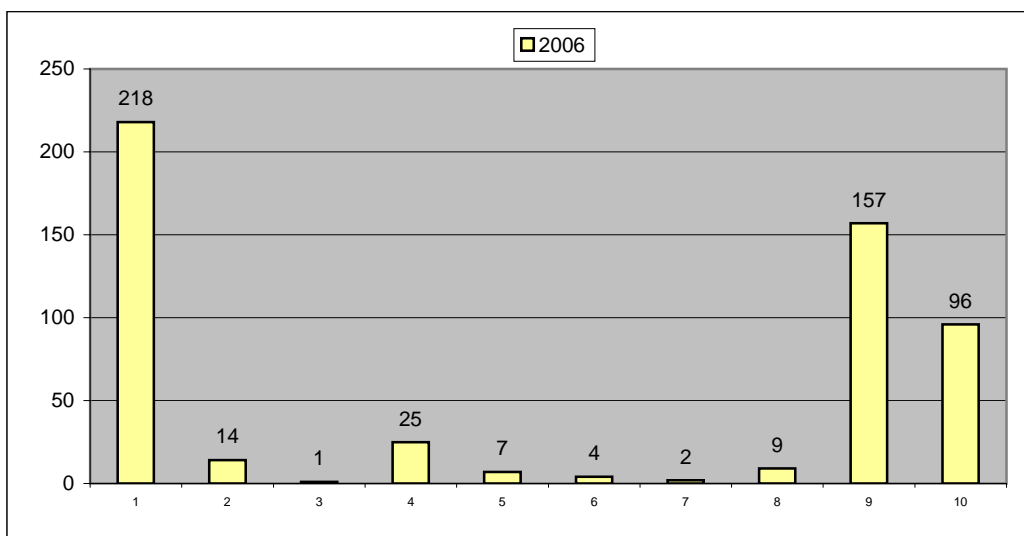


ACCESS AND CONTACT

2. How did you find out about Veterans Agency?

	2004	2005	2006
1 Ex-Service Organisation	NA	NA	218
2 Welfare Service advice day or surgery	NA	NA	14
3 Welfare Service mobile unit	NA	NA	1
4 Department for Work and Pensions	NA	NA	25
5 Citizens Advice Bureau	NA	NA	7
6 Age Concern	NA	NA	4
7 Telephone directory	NA	NA	2
8 Internet	NA	NA	9
9 Friends/Relatives	NA	NA	157
10 Other	NA	NA	96

Total Respondents	NA	NA	533
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Further answers from "Other" included:

10 pensioners were contacted by VA when discharged from service.

20 pensioners were informed by consultants or doctors.

The Household Cavalry Journal.

Choice magazine.

Compensation claim company.

Ex-service colleagues.

Saga magazine.

NARPO magazine.

Local newspapers.

Yours magazine.

Local charity care and repair.

DLA.

Unite.

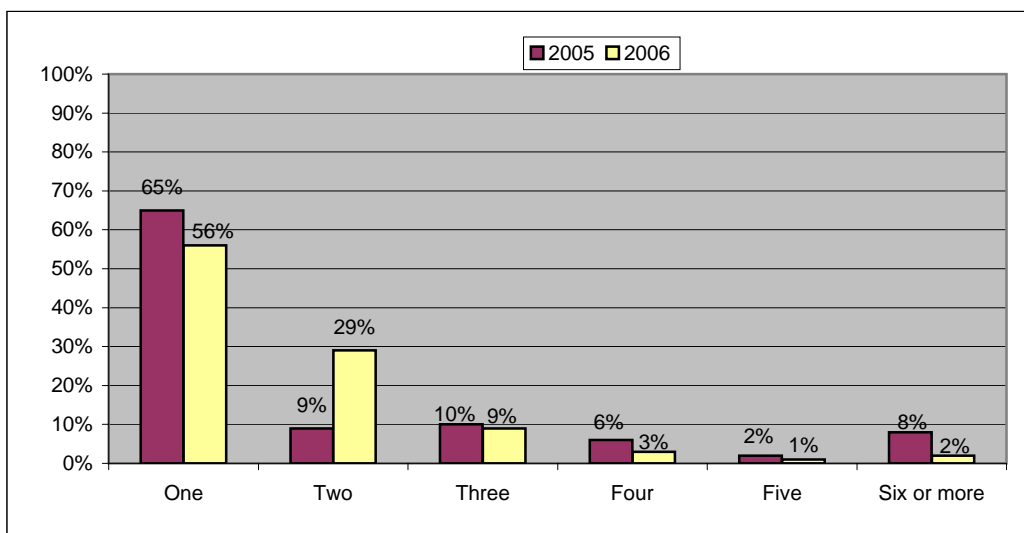
CSMA magazine.

Solicitors advertisement.

3. How many times did you have to telephone before you were able to get through to a Helpline operator?

	2004	2005	2006
One	NA	65%	56%
Two	NA	9%	29%
Three	NA	10%	9%
Four	NA	6%	3%
Five	NA	2%	1%
Six or more	NA	8%	2%

Total Respondents	NA	638	522
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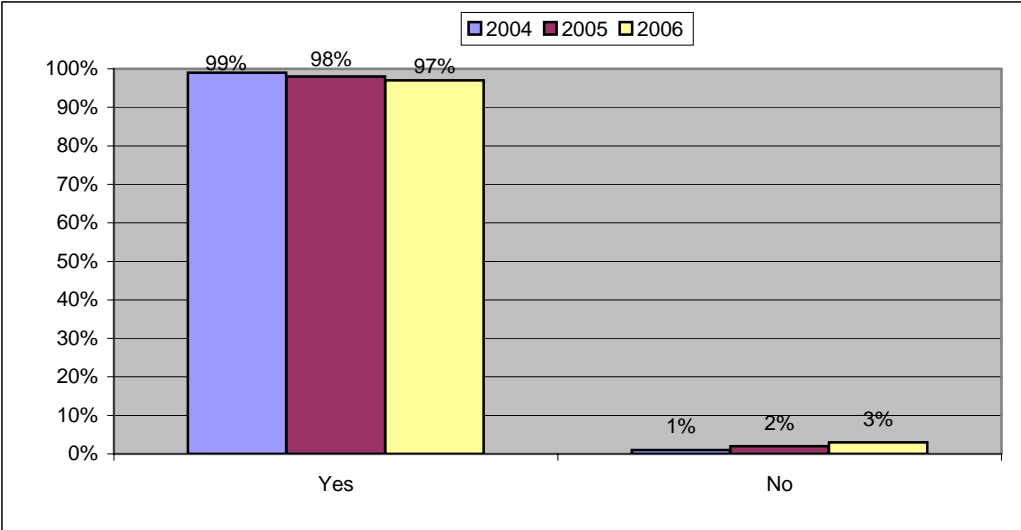


ACCESS AND CONTACT

4a. When you telephoned the Helpline, did the person you spoke to tell you the name of the office?

	2004	2005	2006
Yes	99%	98%	97%
No	1%	2%	3%

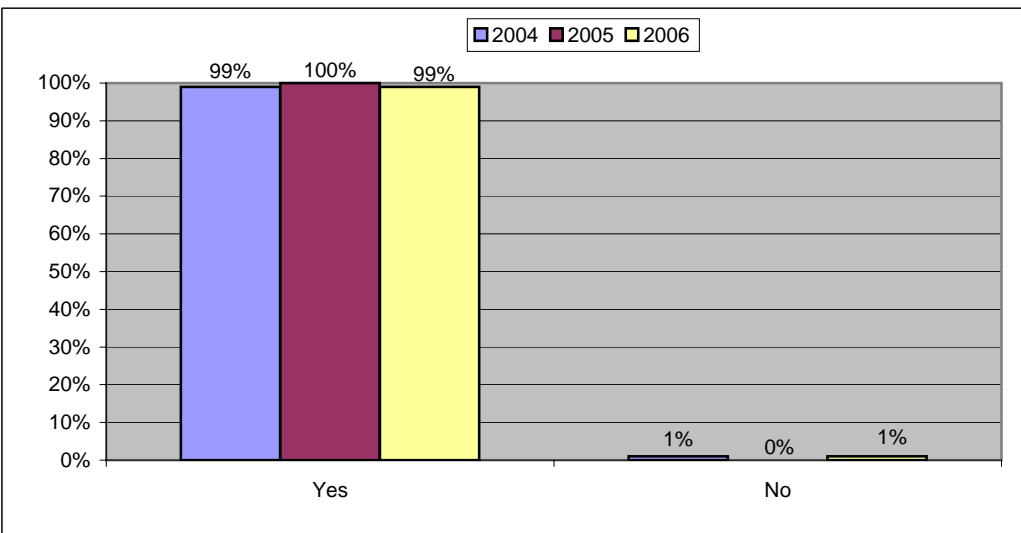
Total Respondents	904	593	506
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4b. When you telephoned the Helpline, did the person speak politely to you?

	2004	2005	2006
Yes	99%	100%	99%
No	1%	0%	1%

Total Respondents	924	605	506
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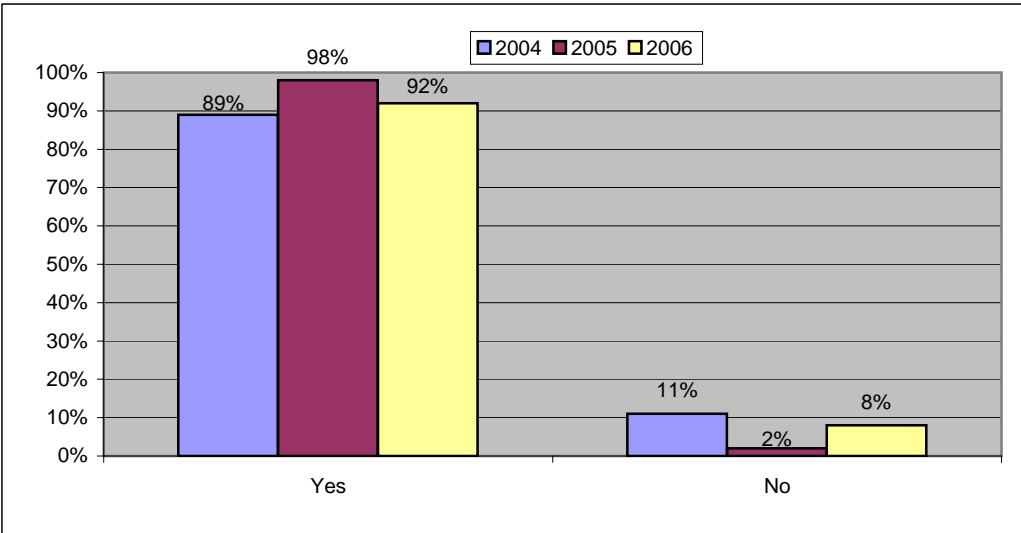


ACCESS AND CONTACT

4c. When you telephoned the Helpline, did the person tell you their name?

	2004	2005	2006
Yes	89%	98%	92%
No	11%	2%	8%

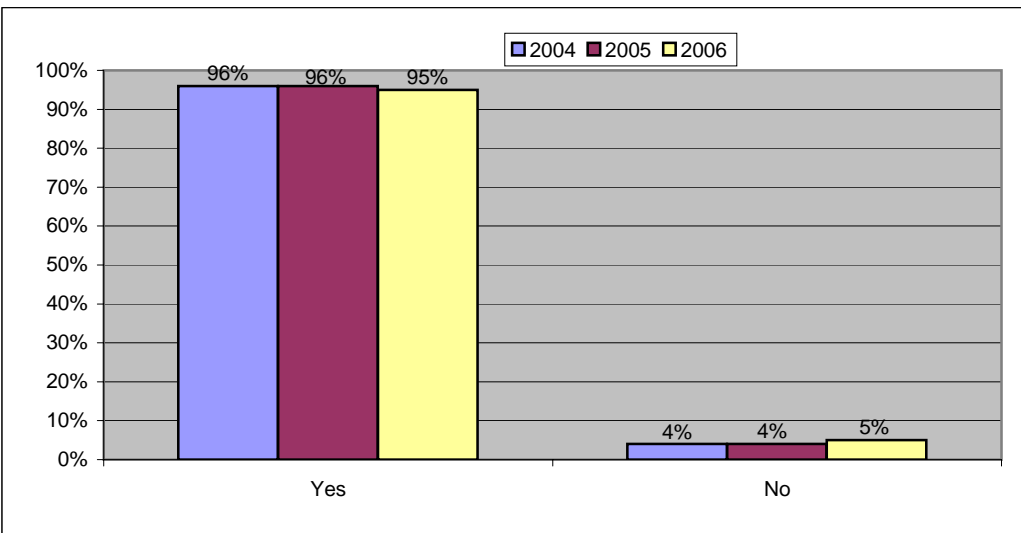
Total Respondents	864	593	474
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4d. When you telephoned the Helpline, did the person explain things clearly to you?

	2004	2005	2006
Yes	96%	96%	95%
No	4%	4%	5%

Total Respondents	891	565	511
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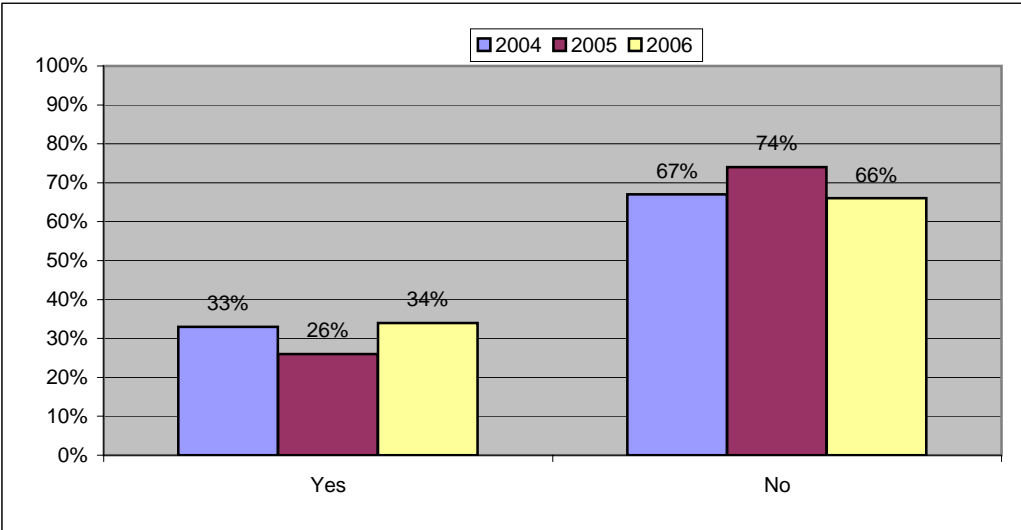


ACCESS AND CONTACT

5. When you telephoned the Helpline, were you put through to another person?

	2004	2005	2006
Yes	33%	26%	34%
No	67%	74%	66%

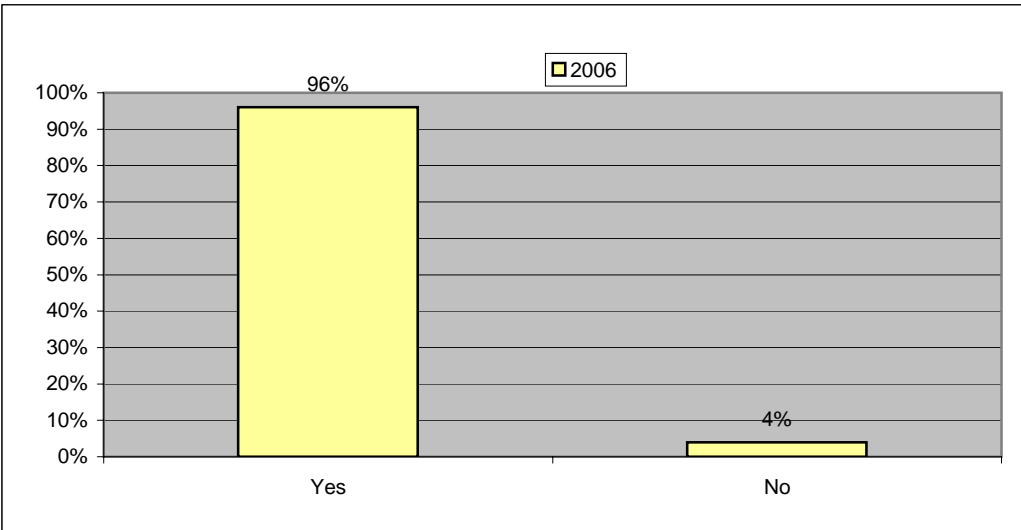
Total Respondents	722	461	521
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6a. Did the person you were put through to explain things clearly to you?

	2004	2005	2006
Yes	NA	NA	96%
No	NA	NA	4%

Total Respondents	NA	NA	168
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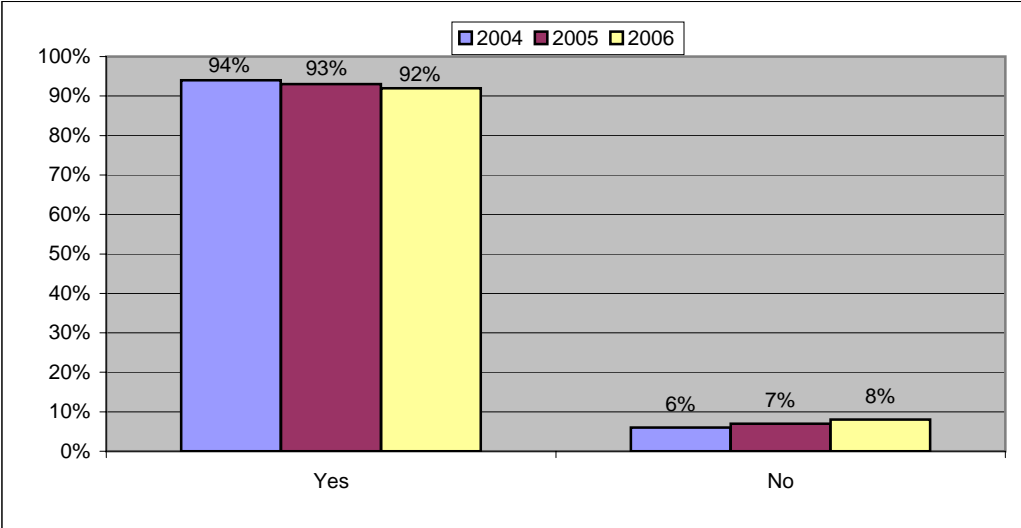


ACCESS AND CONTACT

6b. Did the person you were put through to help you further?

	2004	2005	2006
Yes	94%	93%	92%
No	6%	7%	8%

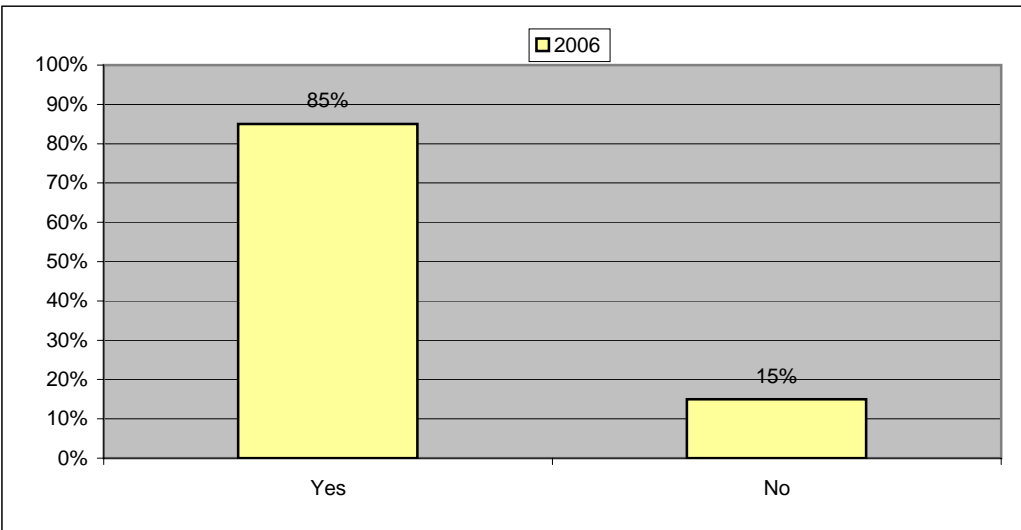
Total Respondents	227	112	154
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6c. Did the person you were put through to resolve your query?

	2004	2005	2006
Yes	NA	NA	85%
No	NA	NA	15%

Total Respondents	NA	NA	154
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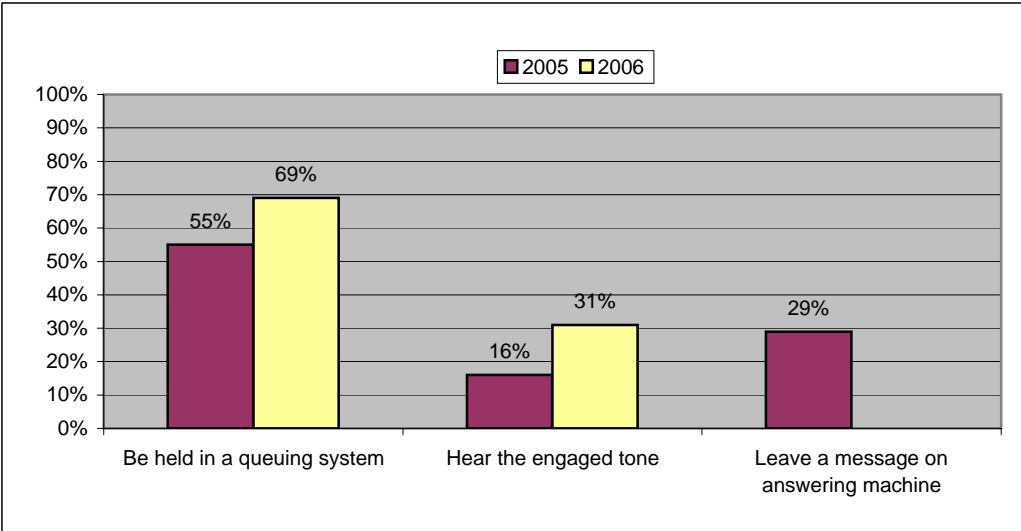


SERVICE PROVIDED

7. What option would you prefer if your call cannot be answered due to the lines being busy?

	2004	2005	2006
Be held in a queuing system	NA	55%	69%
Hear the engaged tone	NA	16%	31%
Leave a message on answering machine	NA	29%	NA

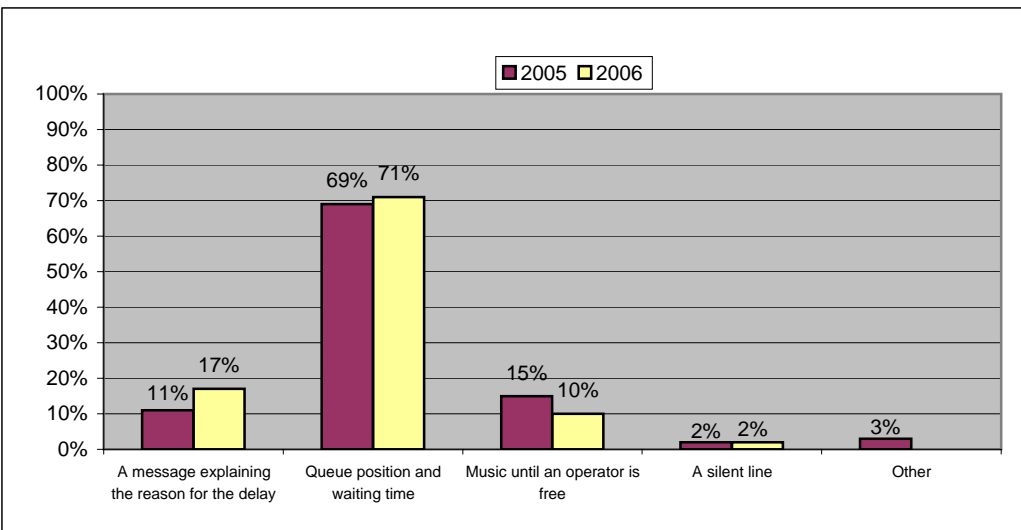
Total Respondents	NA	624	494
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8. Which method of queuing system would you prefer?

	2004	2005	2006
A message explaining the reason for the delay	NA	11%	17%
Queue position and waiting time	NA	69%	71%
Music until an operator is free	NA	15%	10%
A silent line	NA	2%	2%
Other	NA	3%	NA

Total Respondents	NA	348	442
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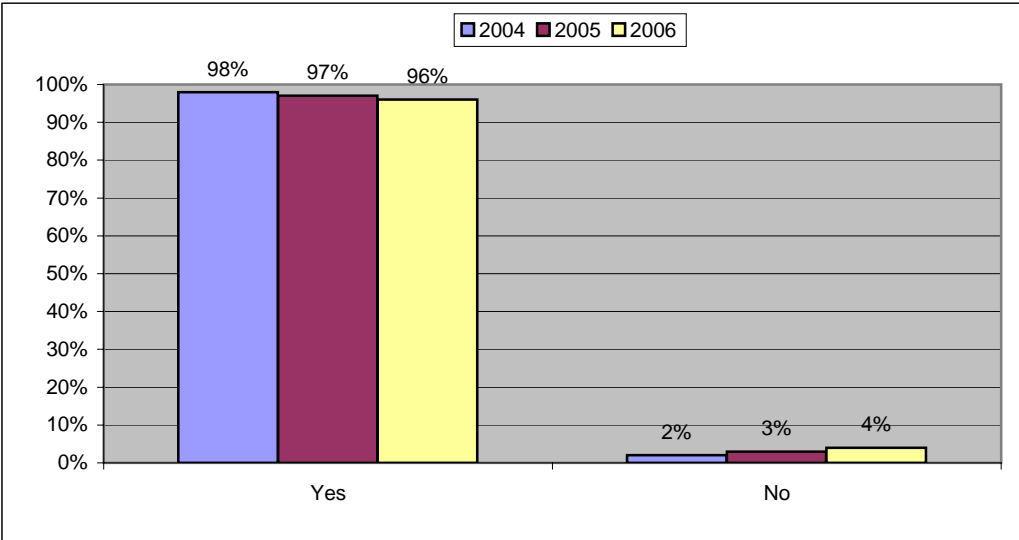


OVERALL SATISFACTION

9. Would you recommend the Veterans Agency Helpline service to others?

	2004	2005	2006
Yes	98%	97%	96%
No	2%	3%	4%

Total Respondents	949	630	530
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Additional comments from "no" included:

Nobody there.

Takes too long to help you, very unfriendly.

It is time wasting.

Not helpful at all, didn't know answers to my question.

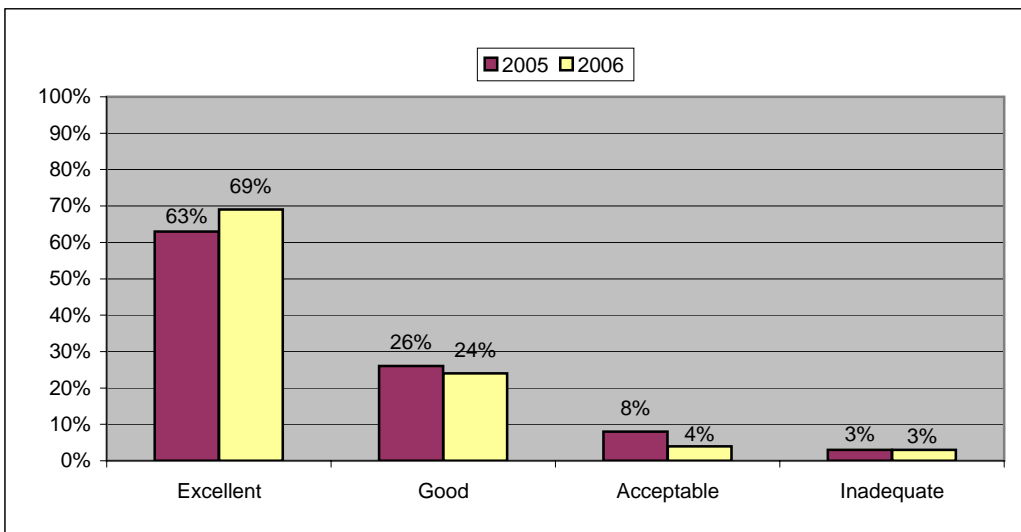
The person I spoke to did not really listen to what I required.

OVERALL SATISFACTION

10. How would you rate the overall service you received from the Veterans Agency Helpline?

	2004	2005	2006
Excellent	NA	63%	69%
Good	NA	26%	24%
Acceptable	NA	8%	4%
Inadequate	NA	3%	3%

Total Respondents	NA	638	529
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10a. How would you rate the overall service you received from the Veterans Agency Helpline by call type response rates?

	<u>Veterans Badge</u>	<u>Appeals Query</u>	<u>Claims Query</u>	<u>AFCS</u>	<u>Payments</u>	<u>Other</u>
	2006	2006	2006	2006	2006	2006
Excellent	86%	46%	59%	50%	72%	68%
Good	12%	42%	31%	50%	19%	21%
Acceptable	2%	4%	6%	0%	4%	4%
Inadequate	0%	8%	4%	0%	5%	7%

Total Responses	145	26	221	6	58	72
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11. Please tell us if you have any thoughts or ideas on how we can further improve the service our Agency Helpline provides.

Over 60 customers stated they received an excellent or good service from the Helpline.

I would like to see the Agency Helpline remain as it is at present. I have always found them helpful, cheerful and confident.

I found the service to be of excellent standard. The lady I spoke to was very helpful, polite and professional. I found the service to be one of the best both in how it was conducted and most certainly in the professional and politeness of the staff. I would not find any fault or reason for change.

If you are extra busy on the Helpline would it be possible to note the telephone number of the caller and to phone them back, rather than keep the caller waiting.

Everytime I rang the Agency my questions were answered clearly and I was left with a feeling of support.

I like the way that everytime I phone you get a real sense that you care, which is nice. You should never lose sight of this.

The Agency Helpline provides a good contact for generic information. Similar provision via email could be considered. This could be an option when lines are busy.

Slightly disappointed when requesting forms. Had to wait and still no forms arrived. I then resorted to requesting forms via email, so far only one form has arrived.

I feel the service has improved over the last three years, well done.

I found the service helpful, especially when I first left the Navy.

I sent you an email some weeks ago and had no reply. I phoned up and was told that sending emails waste of time. Is this still the case?

The Agency staff are polite, kind and always make time for you even though they must deal with hundreds of people. I would recommend other companies to take on board your methods and act upon it. The difference it makes to an individual to feel respected and not too much trouble is second to none.

The only improvement I can suggest is an increase in the number of operators answering calls before midday.

I think it is the most professional and best administered Agency that I have ever dealt with.

Open the Agency Helpline at weekends.

I was particularly impressed by the clear precise diction and clarity of expression of the Helpline operator and have informed three of my friends of the excellent service.

I can only comment of my own experience and overall I can congratulate the Agency for the way they dealt with my queries. What ex-service personnel want to feel is that their problems are handled sensibly, without nonsense and to be treated with respect, empathy, understanding and courtesy. From my own experience VA seem to have got it right.

I had to go through my problems/questions with the operator before I was put through to someone else, then I had to go through the problem again. Is there any way of making this procedure more simple?