

Dial-a-Ride Meeting Evaluation

Final report

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Executive summary

Abstract

Dial-a-Ride (DaR) holds Regional Forum Meetings twice a year in order to give its service users the opportunity to provide feedback and also to discuss topics relevant to the users. Attendees were satisfied with the format of the meetings: most said the meetings met their needs, and satisfaction with the transport provided to attend the meetings was also high, although results were slightly lower this wave compared with the previous two.

Key findings

Results generally remained very good this wave, with high levels of satisfaction assigned to the format of the meeting (79% were satisfied); the meeting starting on, and running to (90% and 94% respectively), time; transport provided to and from the venue (90%). Satisfaction with the venue itself remains slightly lower (74%).

While satisfaction remained high, it came down slightly since a peak recorded in 2011 following the introduction of the new meeting format. For example, satisfaction of the meeting format dropped slightly from 85% last wave, and the proportion saying the Regional Forum met their needs went from 80% to 76%.

Two thirds of attendees (65%) thought that the frequency with which the meetings are held was “about right”, while a fifth (21%) felt they should be held more often. Just four respondents thought the meetings are held too frequently.

The workshop section of the meetings was thought to be very or fairly useful by four in five (81%) attendees, although this had decreased (slightly, but not significantly) from 88% last wave. Similarly, the proportion of attendees who felt encouraged to speak at the meetings had decreased from 83% to 76% this wave.

Nine in ten respondents were satisfied that their meeting started on (90%), and ran to (94%), time – these figures were in line with those reported last wave (88% and 92% respectively). The majority of attendees were particularly satisfied with the transport provided to get them to and from the venue (90%), but were less satisfied with the venue itself (74%) – both of these figures were in line with the previous wave.

When asked to comment on any other prevailing issues, a number of suggested improvements to the meetings or DaR service were raised including extending booking hours and reducing the number of attendees at meetings. Last wave, the meeting venue and a lack of refreshments were highlighted as improvements by several attendees. Just one person mentioned either issue this wave so it seems that suggestions have been taken on board. Other areas that may warrant monitoring are meeting attendees’ needs well (17% felt their needs were not well met) and encouraging them to speak at the forums (14% did not feel encouraged).

Background and objectives

Background

Twice a year DaR holds Regional Forum Meetings with members of the service. These meetings give members a chance to discuss the service with DaR borough representatives.

For the first half of the meeting, attendees discuss agenda items. Then there is a workshop element in which the attendees divide into smaller groups for in-depth discussions on topics of interest. This format has been in place since the end of 2010 and is reported to meet users' needs well.

This report focuses on the six Regional Forum Meetings held between 21 May and 19 June 2012 and forms part of the on-going evaluation of attendees' satisfaction with the meetings. Data from the last five waves of meetings are shown where available.

Objectives

The specific objectives of the research were to:

- Assess satisfaction with the format and timing of meetings
- Gauge whether attendees feel encouraged to contribute at the meetings
- Measure satisfaction with the transport provided to and from the meetings
- Assess how well attendees' needs are met by the meetings
- Provide attendees with an opportunity to express any other concerns

Method

Paper questionnaires were handed out to attendees at the close of meetings. They were encouraged to return the completed questionnaires in a prepaid envelope. Individuals were also given the option of completing the questionnaire over the telephone and four attendees chose to do so.

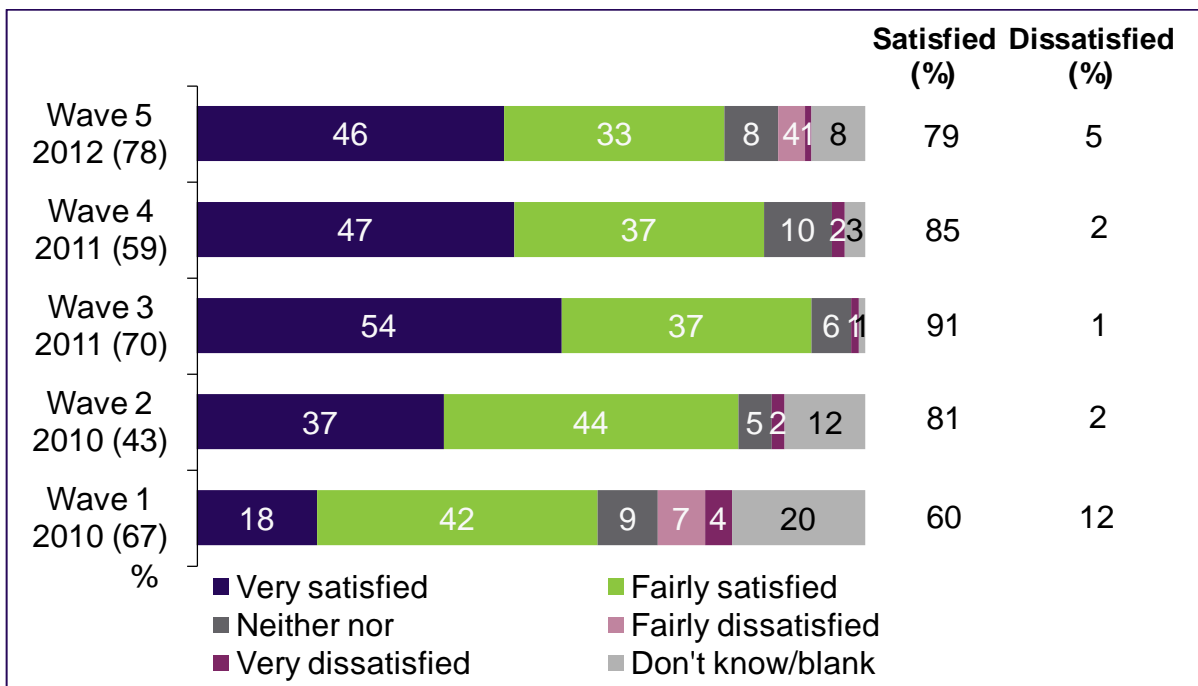
A total of 78 questionnaires were completed. Previous waves have seen 43, 67, 70 and 59 completes. It should be noted that these are relatively small base sizes meaning that changes over time are generally indicative rather than statistically significant.

Research findings

Overall satisfaction

Attendees were asked their overall satisfaction with the format of the Regional Forum Meetings. Overall satisfaction remained high at four out of five attendees, however for the second wave in a row satisfaction is slightly (but not significantly) down. This wave's proportion of satisfied attendees remains significantly higher than the proportion seen in wave 1, in 2010.

Chart 3.1¹ Overall satisfaction with meeting format



Q1 Overall how satisfied were you with the format of the Regional Forum you attended?
Base: All attendees (in brackets above)

Some attendees made spontaneous comments about the fact that the meetings met with their approval, for example:

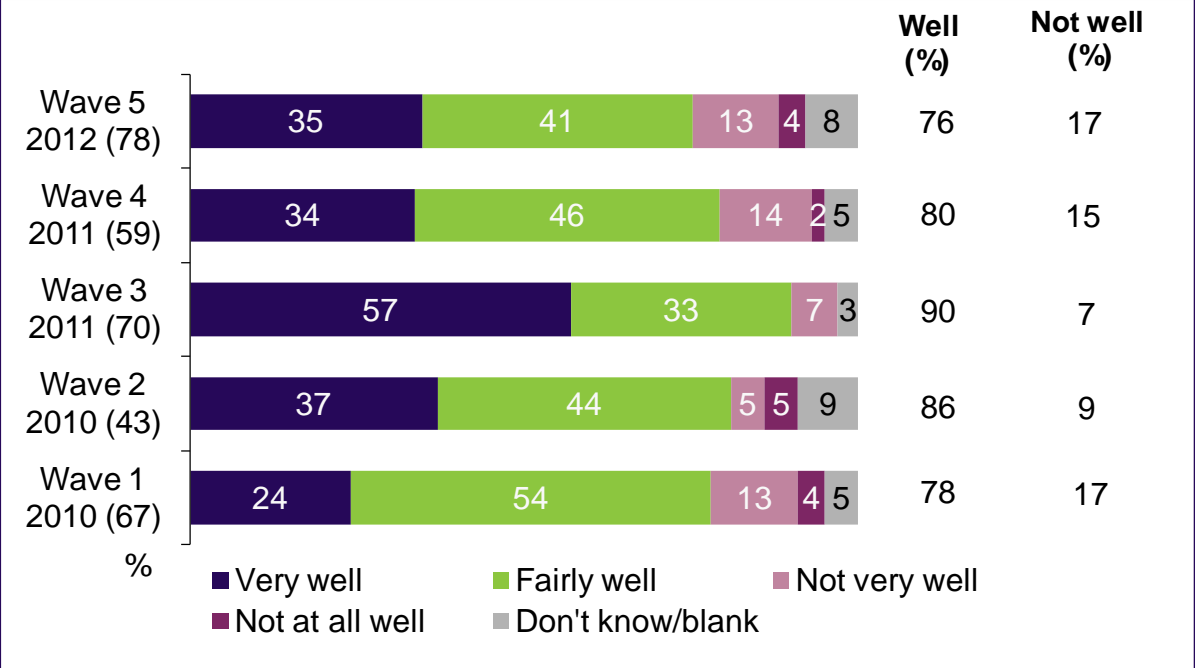
“The forum was well organised. Staff very helpful. It highlighted how difficult it is to please everyone.” (Female, 80+)

“This was my first meeting and I was quite impressed by the presence of the participants and their active discussions. The DaR staff were very cooperative and helpful and I saw them patiently listening to everyone and responding to various questions that were raised. I think such regional forums are a bridge between the users and organisers. My heartiest compliments.” (Male, 80+)

¹ Where two categories do not sum to the total (e.g. with wave 4 ‘very/fairly satisfied’) this is due to rounding.

Three quarters of attendees this wave said the meetings met their needs either very or fairly well. This is a slight decrease from last wave and is significantly lower than the proportion reported last year in wave 3. The proportion saying their needs were met not very or not at all well remains a concern, with one in six (17%) stating this was the case. A couple of respondents felt there were too many people at the meeting they attended (on 28 May), while some believe that DaR staff are reluctant to take on negative feedback.

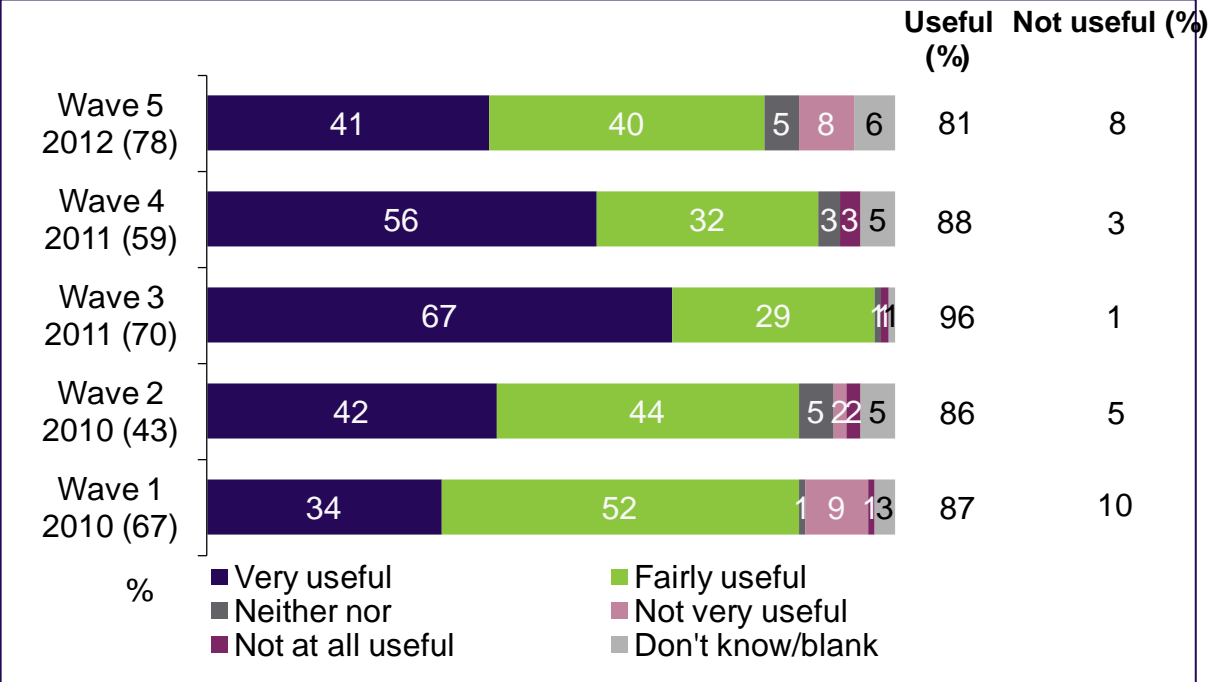
Chart 3.2 Extent to which meeting met needs



Q9 Overall how well did the Regional Forum meet your needs?
 Base: All attendees (in brackets above)

One hour of each meeting was dedicated to a workshop session where attendees discussed topics in greater detail within small groups. This section of the meeting was thought to be very/fairly useful by four in five (81%) respondents. While this is still a good result, it is the lowest proportion seen in the last five waves and significantly lower than wave 3. One in twelve (8%) thought it to be not very/not at all useful.

Chart 3.3 Usefulness of the workshop



Q3 How useful did you find the workshop (open discussion) section of the Regional Forum?
 Base: All attendees (in brackets above)

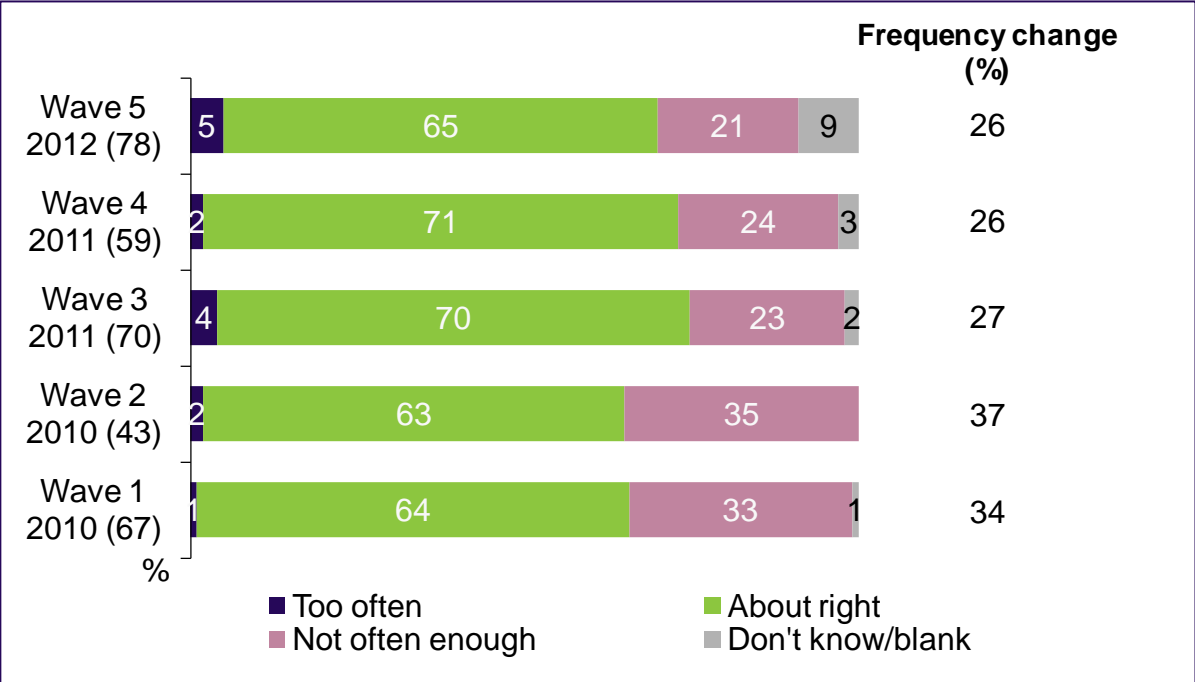
One respondent was particularly pleased with the workshop section of the meeting:

“A small map of the venue which includes the nearest rail stations and bus stops within a shortish distance would be helpful to me. I made the point to the chairlady during the workshop session.” (Male, 80+)

Meeting frequency

The Regional Forum Meetings are currently held every six months. The majority of respondents felt this frequency was “about right” across all waves of research, although this proportion has decreased slightly this wave from 71% to 65%. Four respondents (5%) thought the meetings were held too often, though on the other hand 16 individuals (21%) felt the meetings should be held more frequently.

Chart 3.4 Frequency of meetings



Q10 It is intended that the Regional Forums be held every 6 months. Do you think this is...?
 Base: All attendees (in brackets above)

When asked if there were any other issues they wished to highlight, two attendees suggested the meetings should be held more frequently:

“[Meetings] should be run every quarter not every 6 months.”(Male, 35-59)

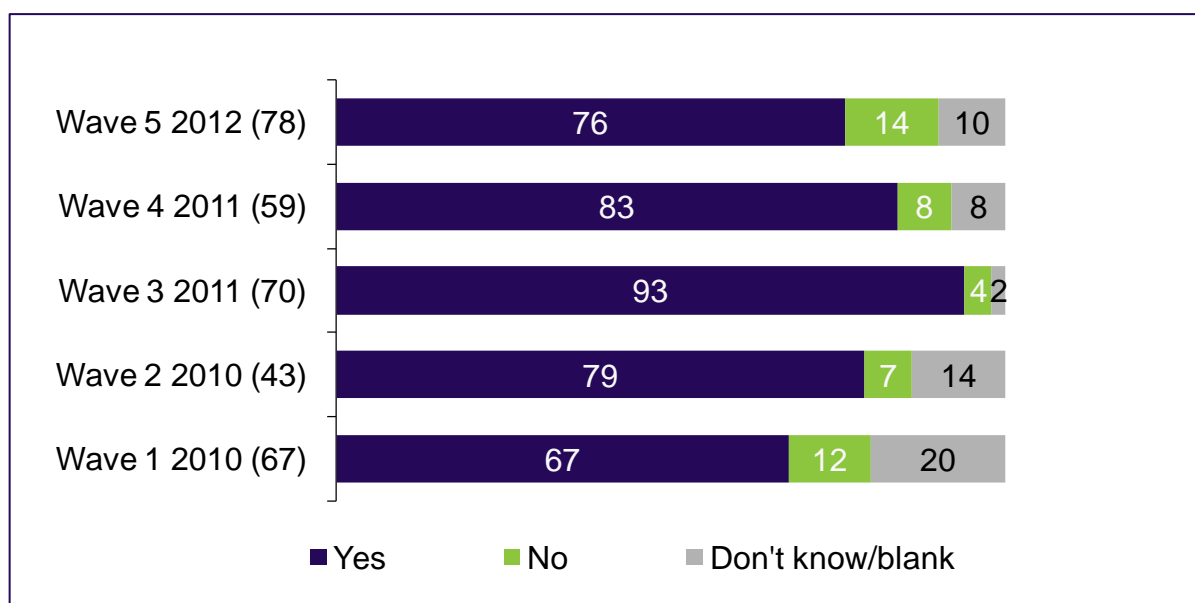
“Quarterly meetings would be preferable.” (Female, 70-79)

Involvement at meetings

Three quarters of respondents felt they were encouraged to speak at the Regional Forum Meetings this wave, falling slightly from 83% last wave. This proportion is significantly lower than reported in wave 3, but is generally in line with waves 1 and 2.

It may be that ratings were particularly high after the new format was introduced for wave 3, and that we are seeing a ‘normalising’ of opinion. However, it is slightly concerning that the amount of attendees who felt they did not feel encouraged to speak has almost doubled this wave, from 8% to 14%, and this should continue to be monitored.

Chart 3.5 Encouragement to speak at meetings



Q2 Did you feel encouraged to speak at the Regional Forum?

Base: All attendees (in brackets above)

Two respondents highlighted a lack of opportunities to put their views across during the meetings:

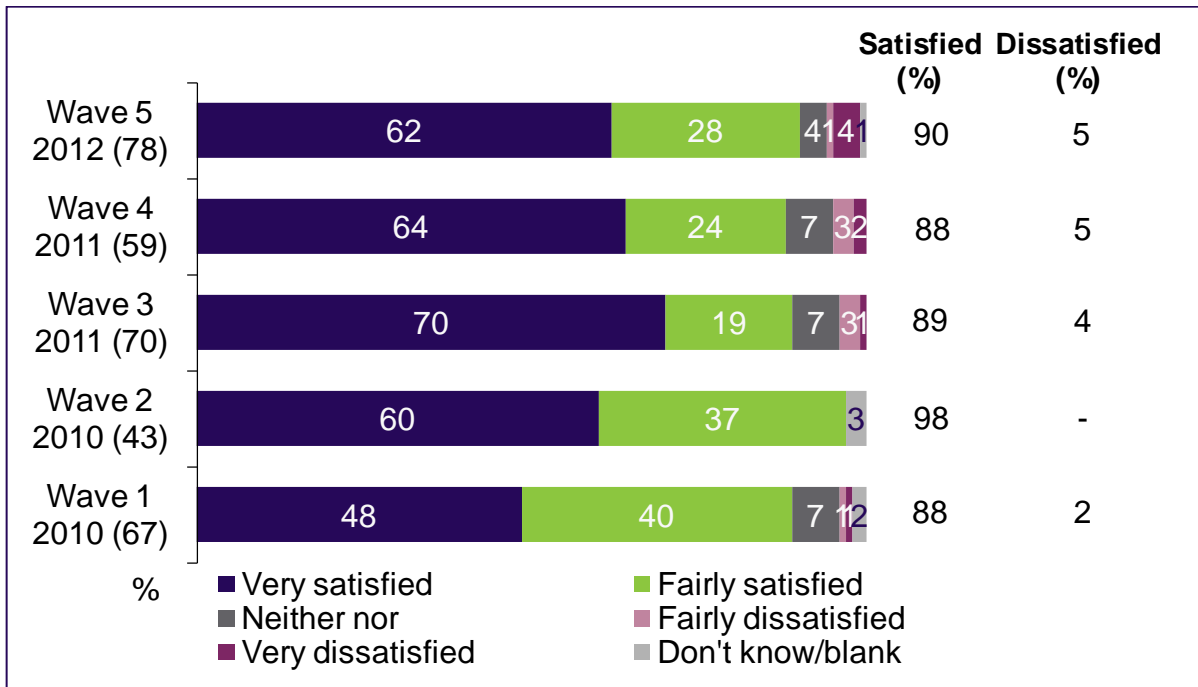
“There is always time for DaR ‘PR show’ but not enough time for debate. The structure is fine but DaR has one agenda, they’re not happy to take on negative feedback.” (Male, 35-59)

“At the forum, we should be allowed to give our opinions and suggestions and complaints about our bookings, and therefore discuss the way forward.” (Female, 80 or over)

Meeting timings

Three in five (62%) respondents were very satisfied that the meeting started on time, with another 28% claiming they were fairly satisfied. Just four individuals (5%) said they were dissatisfied; one attended the meeting on 21 May, two attended on 28 May, and one attended on 12 June.

Chart 3.6 Satisfaction that meetings started on time



Q4 Overall how satisfied are you that the Regional Forum started on time?

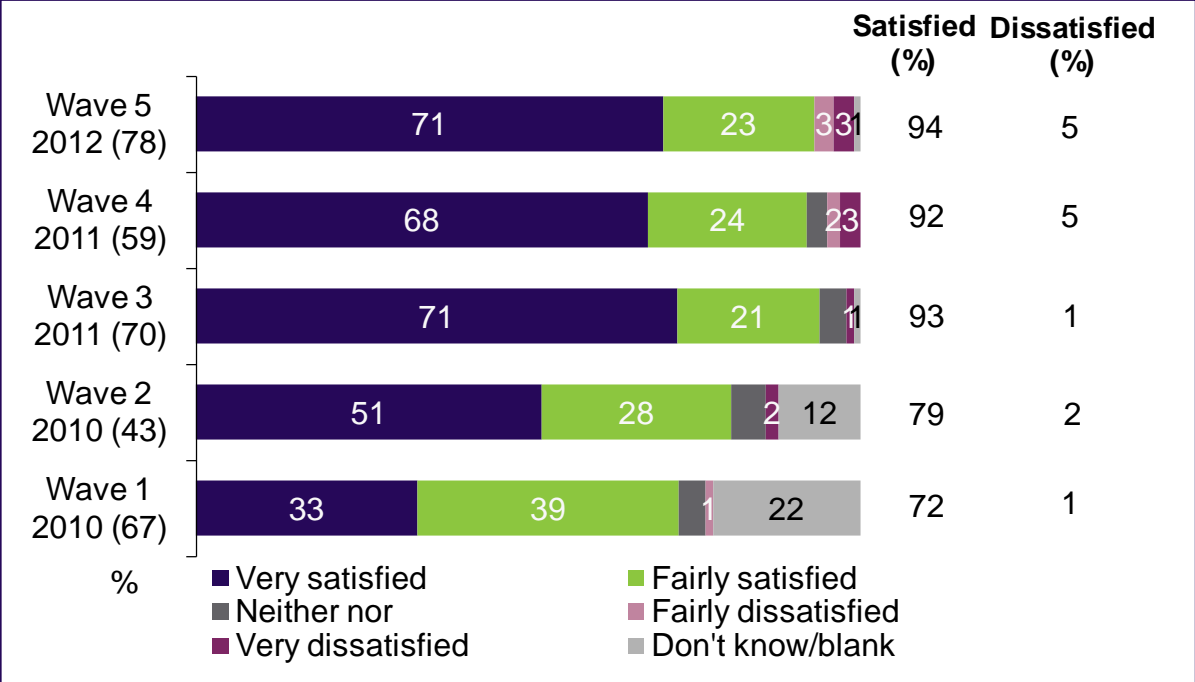
Base: All attendees (in brackets above)

The member who was dissatisfied that the meeting on 12 June started on time mentioned this when asked if there were any issues they wished to highlight:

"It never starts on time, always late." (Male, 35-59)

Compared to satisfaction for meetings starting on time, a similar proportion of respondents were satisfied that the meeting ran to time (94%). This proportion remained unchanged from wave 3 and 4, but is significantly higher than waves 1 and 2.

Chart 3.7 Satisfaction that meetings ran to time

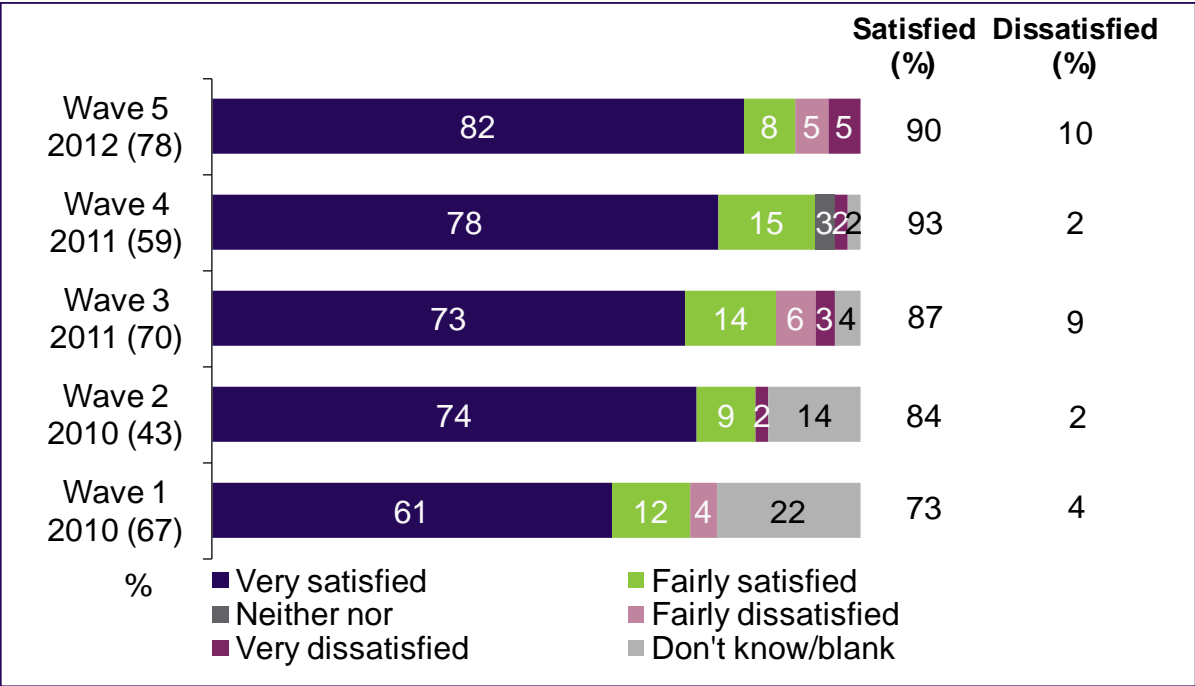


Q5 Overall how satisfied are you that the Regional Forum ran to time?
 Base: All attendees (in brackets above)

Travelling to the meeting

Many respondents travelled to the meeting using the DaR service. Satisfaction with the transport provided remains very high this wave at 90%; this is consistent with the previous two waves. Eight attendees were fairly/very dissatisfied

Chart 3.8 Satisfaction with transport provided to attend meeting



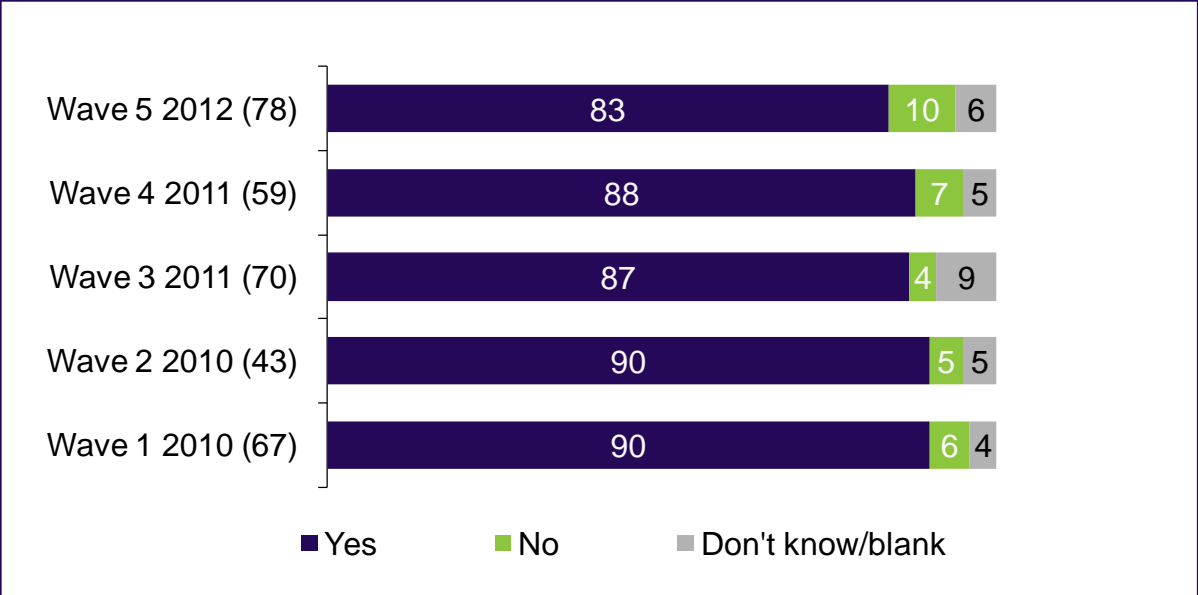
Q6 How satisfied were you with the transport provided for you to attend the Regional Forum?
 Base: All attendees (in brackets above)

One respondent specifically mentioned transport when asked if there were any issues they wanted to highlight, although their concerns lay more with other Dial-a-Ride members than the service itself:

“We are given a pick up time and are told it could be 15 minutes either side of that time. I have always been ready on time. On this journey the first pick up after mine was [...] The man had only just got up 15 mins so we had to wait 15 minutes on the bus for him. We had to wait 10 minutes at each of the next 3 pick-ups which meant an extra 45 minutes I had to sit in the bus. Passengers should be reminded of that rule.”(Gender and age unknown)

The proportion of attendees who said they were informed about their pick-up time before the Regional Forum has declined slightly during the course of this research, from 90% in wave 1 to 83% at present. Similarly, the amount of respondents who were not informed has increased to one in ten this wave.

Chart 3.9 Whether informed of pick-up time

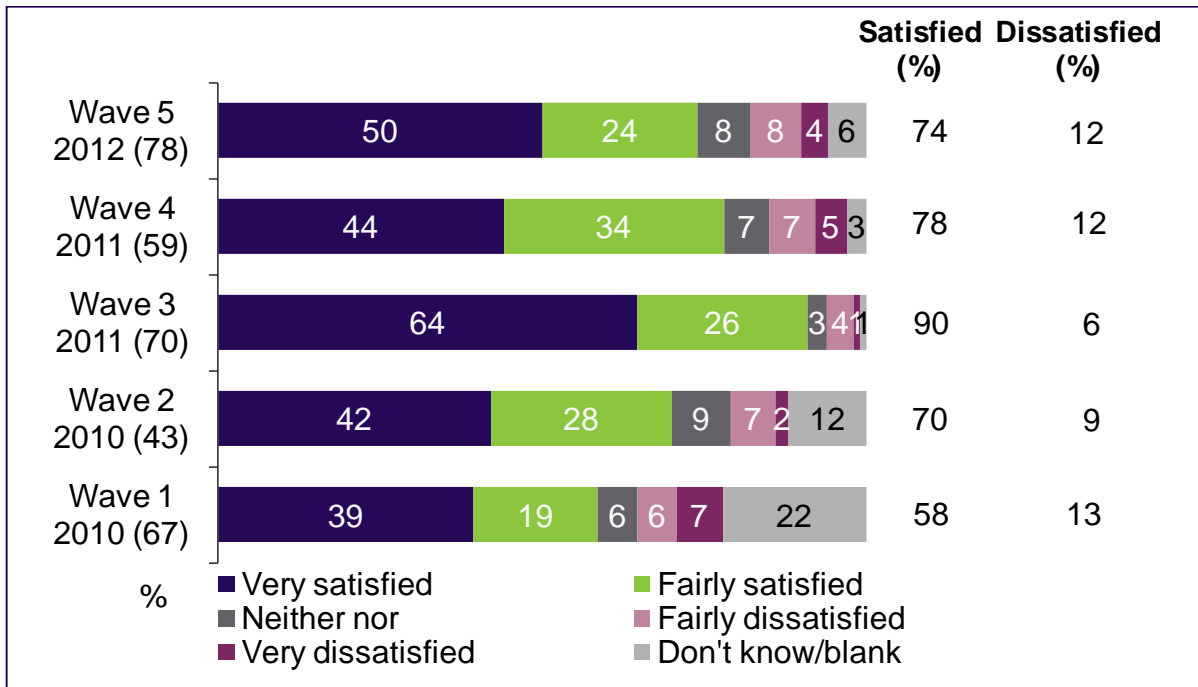


Q7 Were you informed about your pick-up time before the Regional Forum?
 Base: All attendees (in brackets above)

The venue

Three quarters (74%) were satisfied with the meeting venue, a slight decrease from last wave's figure of 78% and significantly lower than the proportion seen in wave 3 (90%). The proportion of respondents expressing a degree of dissatisfaction remained constant at 12%.

Chart 3.10 Satisfaction with the meeting venue



Q8 How satisfied were you with the venue for the Regional Forum?

Base: All attendees (wave 5: 78, wave 4: 59, wave 3: 70, wave 2: 43, wave 1: 67)

When asked if there was anything they wished to raise, just one respondent mentioned specific issues with the venue for the meeting in Ilford on 12 June:

“Poor location - should be on the ground floor. Venue had one small lift, if it breaks there is nothing that can be done.” (Male, 35-59)

No negative comments were made about the venue for the other four meetings which were all held at the Dial-a-Ride offices on Mandela Way.

Further feedback

Respondents were given the chance to highlight any specific issues concerning the DaR service and the Regional Forum meetings. As seen last wave, many of the comments were positive, however there were also suggested improvements.

Last wave, the meeting venue and a lack of refreshments were highlighted as improvements by several attendees. Just one mentioned either issue this wave so it seems that suggestions have been taken on board.

It was noted by three respondents who attended the meeting on 28 May that the venue felt crowded due to too many people:

"Room is too crowded." (Male, 35-59)

"Too many groups for a small (but delightful) venue." (Female, 80+)

"Too many people in the room." (Female, 35-59)

While others highlighted issues with the booking system:

"Booking line almost always engaged and very hard to get through to someone." (Male, 35-59)

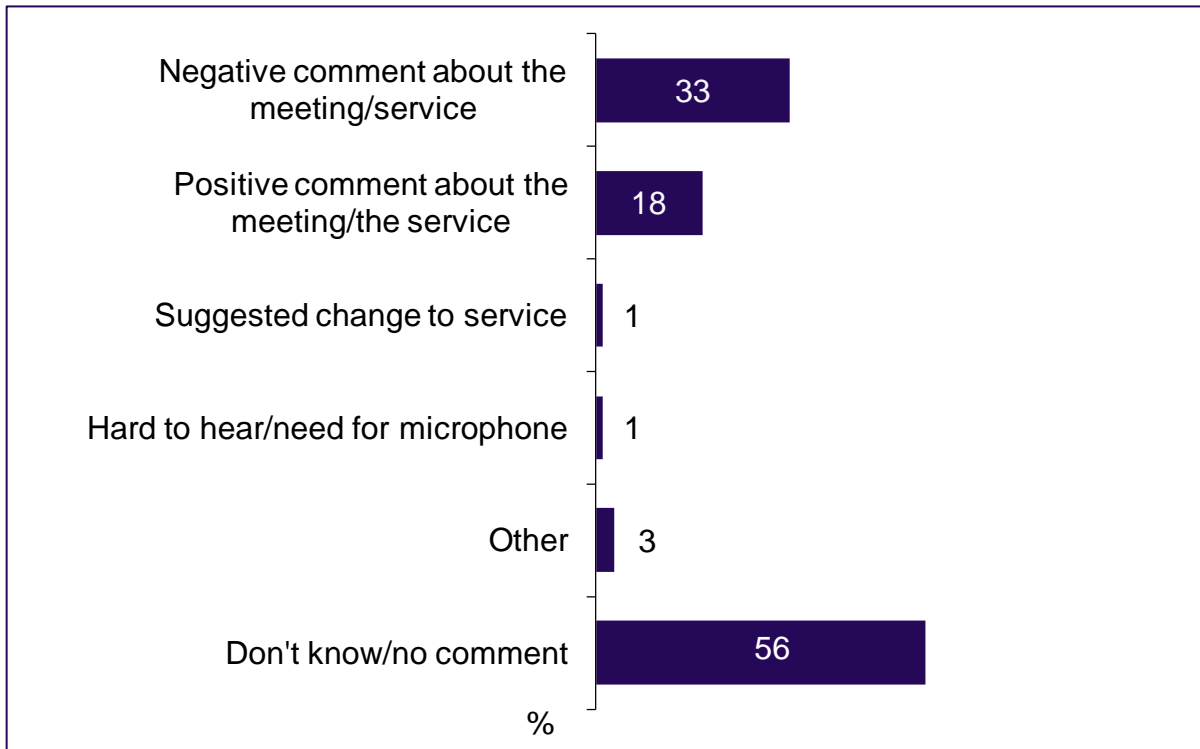
"I do think something requires looking at on the computer system." (Female, 80+)

"I find it very frustrating trying to get through to book a ride at any time I ring, even at 9am." (Female, 80+)

"Please make booking time until 5pm." (Female, 60-64)

"The normal booking time is far too short. For instance, the booking time in Stratford E12, they can book anytime Monday to Sunday. I know this because I have a cousin who lives there. Sometimes I forget to book and when I suddenly remember, I find it's after 4 o' clock. Also certain users are accommodated all the time and some aren't - why?" (Female (70-79))

Chart 3.11 Specific issues raised by attendees



Q11 Are there any other specific issues you would like to highlight?
 Base: All attendees (wave 5: 78)

The suggested improvements cover a broad range of topics. To give a feel for the comments being made, some of the suggested improvements are shown below.

“A nearer venue for the meeting would be preferable for the next time as it was an hour each way.” (Female, 60-64)

“I was dissatisfied there was no microphone so it was difficult to hear.” (Female, 80+)

“I have been refused and let down over 10 years since joining. I am on the end boundary of [...], I have been told it is full up or they can't take me or it's the wrong day to phone.” (Female, 70-79)

“Some addresses may be difficult to pinpoint. Although mine is clearly noted in the drivers sheet. New drivers to my address do not always come to the correct place and I have to walk.” (Gender and age unknown)

“We have been disappointed on two consecutive times waiting for transport from [...] at 11.15am. We pray it does not happen too often. It happened this Sunday and the Sunday before.” (Male, 80+)

“Having a depot nearer and some trips going further than 5 miles would be a little better for some folk.” (Female, 80+)

Many attendees were very complimentary about the Regional Forum Meetings and also the service itself:

"Overall, I am delighted with the service DaR has provided."(Female, 60-64)

"The service is excellent, free obviously not personalised which some clients seemed to think it was."(Female, 80+)

"I've always found all the drivers very helpful."(Female, 80+)

"In my opinion the service is wonderful and everybody, in or out of the office is extremely helpful and works hard to provide transport for difficult times and venues. Well done!"
(Gender and age unknown)

"Before the meeting starts, the comfort rooms are pointed out and where and whether they are marked; disabled, ladies and gents. Where the fire escape is and how do you get downstairs in wheelchairs etc." (Male, 60-64)

"The Dial-a-Ride service is excellent, what would I do without it. Drivers very helpful and cheerful, and call centre staff are polite and helpful." (Female, 80+)

"I would like to thanks Dial-a-Ride for being there for us from door to door." (Female, 80+)

Appendix

	Total	%
Gender		
Male	18	23
Female	48	62
Prefer not to say/blank	12	15
Age		
16-59	8	10
60-64	7	9
65-69	2	3
70-79	12	15
80+	36	46
Prefer not to say/blank	13	17
Ethnicity		
White	50	64
BAME	13	17
Prefer not to say/blank	15	19