Ipsos MORI

Report for BERR on the 2008 Consumer Conditions Survey

Market research survey conducted for the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR)

Ipsos

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Contents

Executive Summary

The Consumer Conditions survey and report breaks new ground in terms of research into consumer conditions in a variety of markets in the UK. The survey is a first in this area in the UK and fills a 'gap in the market' as data on consumer perceptions of market conditions has not been collated in such a detailed and systematic manner, nor on such an extensive scale, before. The survey adds a new dimension to the understanding of how different markets are perceived to be performing in terms of their transparency and in generating consumer confidence.

The assessment of consumer conditions is based on consumers' ratings of 45 UK markets on the key performance indicators relating to confidence and transparency. Complaints, vulnerable consumers and channels of purchase are also studied. The six key performance indicators measured covered: ease of comparing Quality and Prices, Choice, Living up to expectations, Protecting consumer rights and the Trustworthiness of advertising and marketing in each market.

The overall Consumer Confidence Index score (CCI) has been arrived at by taking an average of the mean scores consumers gave to each market on each of the six key performance indicators. It is important to note that the findings reveal consumers' **perceptions**. These may, or may not, be a reflection of actual conditions in the marketplace. Consumers' perceptions can be affected by:

- ➢ recent economic factors, changes and events in the marketplace, or a recent atypical experience
- ➢ the nature and extent of recent publicity and media coverage
- ➢ the types of markets covered - whether a market is associated more with a 'pleasurable' or 'painful' purchase or activity; or whether a market is complex or relatively uncomplicated, or whether it is a familiar 'everyday', or more infrequent 'critical event' market

However, consumer perceptions are important as from the consumer perspective, they represent the reality of the situation, which can provide valuable information; for example they may well indicate problems in terms of communication, information provision or shortcomings on the supply or on the demand side in certain markets.

The Consumer Confidence Index (CCI)

The markets which were relatively highly rated tended to be at the more 'fun' or **pleasure** end of the market spectrum.

- ✓ Markets such as CDs, videos, DVDs or video games, Clothing or footwear, Books, newspapers or magazines, TVs, DVD or MP3 players, Jewellery, silverware, clocks or watches and Garden equipment or plants all achieved a relatively high overall Consumer Confidence Index (CCI) score of 78 or more out of 100.
- ✓ Included among the higher rated group is Car or vehicle insurance, a market which achieved consistently higher scores than other markets associated with financial products.

At the other end of the spectrum are some of the '**pain**' markets, such as the types of markets which are engaged 'when things go wrong', or are more complex or have been affected by recent economic factors (or have experienced negative publicity in recent months).

- Overall, the most poorly rated markets were: Gas and electricity, Private pension plans, Home maintenance services, Petrol, diesel or oil, Private sector renting, and Estate agents and house purchasing services all failed to achieve a CCI score of more than 63 out of 100.

- Also among those markets which consumers rated relatively poorly were Fixed line telephone services, Mortgages, Internet service providers, TV service providers, Vehicle repairs or servicing and Professional services – all with a CCI score of between 64 and 67 out of 100. Mobile phone network services, Hire purchase, loans or credit, Betting, gambling, competitions, prize draws or lotteries and Personal banking also failed to reach an overall CCI score of 70.

The table below groups the markets according to the overall CCI scores attained. On the left (in green) are the markets which achieved the higher CCI scores. On the right (in red) are the markets which achieved lower overall scores. In the centre (in orange) are the remaining 'middling' markets – which, although they may well have achieved relatively good overall CCI scores (eg around 70 out of 100), are not ranked particularly highly or lowly compared with the other markets.

Markets achieving higher ratings CCI scores of 75 to 80	**Markets achieving middling ratings** CCI scores of 70 to 74	**Markets achieving lower ratings** CCI scores of 58 to 68
CDs, videos, DVDs, video games (80)	Personal computers/ software (74)	Betting, gambling, competitions, prize draws, lotteries (68)
Garden equipment/ plants	Chemist, pharmaceutical or medical products	Hire purchase, loans or credit
Books, newspapers or magazines	Bicycles/ repairs	Personal banking
Clothing or footwear goods	Hairdressing, barbers or beauty treatments	Mobile phone network services
TVs, DVD or MP3 players	Drinking/ eating out at pubs, restaurants, cafes, bars	TV service providers
Jewellery, silverware, clocks and watches	DIY materials or hardware	Internet service providers
Small domestic appliances	Furniture or furnishings	Mortgages
Toys/ games	Home insurance	Telephone services, fixed line
Booking holidays	Used vehicles	Professional services
Large domestic appliances	Air travel/ plane flights	Private sector renting
Food or drink for consumption at home	Vets goods or services	Estate agents/ house purchase services
Hotel or other holiday accommodation in the UK	Home improvement products (70)	Vehicle repairs/ servicing
New vehicles		Petrol, diesel or oil
Toiletries, perfumes, beauty products		Home maintenance services
Car or vehicle insurance		Private pension plans
Sports/ hobbies goods/ services		Gas/ electricity (58)
Floor coverings (75)		

* Please note that the markets have been assigned to one of the three groups to provide an equal distribution of markets. However, differences between CCI scores at the boundaries are unlikely be statistically significant (eg the CCI score of 75 for Floor coverings is not significantly different from the 74 score for Personal computers). However there is a significant difference between markets' scores in the 'highest' and 'lowest' group, and between the top and bottom ranked markets' scores within each group.

The Key Performance Indicators

While the above scores are based on each market's average of the mean scores on the six key performance indicators, there were some differences in the market's ratings between each key performance indicator – and between the key performance indicators (KPIs) themselves.

Across all markets, comparing Choice was the aspect which was the most highly rated - achieving the highest mean scores (79 out of 100 overall), and followed by the degree to which a market Lived up to expectations (77).

Consumer confidence with market conditions was not as high in terms of Advertising and marketing goods and services in a trustworthy manner (64), nor with whether or not Consumers' rights are being protected (66). Although only a handful of consumers gave 'Don't know' responses, these measures are characterised by a relatively high proportion of neutral or non-committal responses (around a third giving scores of between 40 and 60). On the other hand, the measures concerning comparing Quality or Prices were rated more positively (both attaining scores of 71 overall).

Although the markets which attained higher overall CCI scores also tended to achieve higher scores across all six key performance indicators, there were exceptions as consumers did discriminate between markets according to the specific performance indicator they were rating; for example:

- The market for New vehicles was well rated overall, but fell into the middle group for Protecting consumers' rights or for Advertising and marketing in a trustworthy manner.
- Used vehicles fell into the lowest group for Protecting consumers' rights or for Advertising and marketing in a trustworthy manner, but was ranked in the highest group for comparing Prices and for Choice.
- The market for Petrol, diesel or oil was among the lowest rated group on all factors except for Living up to expectations.
- While the market for Private pension plans was among the lowest rated group on all factors, it scored relatively well for Choice, but less well for Advertising in a trustworthy manner.
- The Air travel and plane flights market was often in the middle group, but fell into the lowest group for Protecting consumers' rights and reached the highest group in terms of comparing Prices.
- Middle ranking Vets goods or services found itself in the bottom category for comparing Prices and for Choice, but in the highest group for Living up to expectations and for Trustworthy advertising.
- The markets for Hairdressing, barbers or beauty products and Chemist, pharmaceutical or medical products were relatively poorly rated for comparing Prices.

The table below provides an overview of how the markets' rankings emerged in terms of the three groupings for overall CCI rankings, the six KPIs and the percentage of complaints (Highest group in green, Lowest in red, Middle group in orange – reversed for complaints as a lower percentage of complaints is a positive outcome).

Market - ranked by overall CCI	CCI score	Quality	Price	Choice	Expectations	Consumer Rights	Advertising	*Complaints*
CDs, videos …	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	*Low*
Clothing …	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	*Mid*
Books, papers	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	*Low*
TVs …	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	*Mid*
Garden …	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	*Low*
Jewellery…	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	*Low*
Small domestic	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	*Mid*
Toys, games …	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	*Low*
Book holidays	High	High	High	High	High	High	Mid	*Low*
Large domestic	High	High	High	High	High	High	Mid	*Mid*
New vehicles	High	High	High	High	High	Mid	Mid	*Mid*
Hotels, hols …	High	Mid	High	High	High	High	High	*Mid*
Food … home	High	High	Mid	High	High	High	Mid	*High*
Car insurance	High	High	High	High	High	Mid	Mid	*Low*
Toiletries …	High	Mid	Mid	High	High	High	Mid	*Low*
Sports …	High	Mid	Mid	High	High	High	High	*Low*
Floor …	High	Mid	Mid	High	High	Mid	Mid	*Low*
PCs, software	Mid	Mid	Mid	High	High	Mid	Mid	*High*
Chemist …	Mid	Mid	Low	Mid	High	High	High	*Low*
Bicycles …	Mid	Mid	Mid	Mid	High	High	High	*Low*
Hairdressing …	Mid	Mid	Low	Mid	High	High	High	*Low*
Pubs, cafes …	Mid	Mid	Mid	Mid	Mid	High	High	*High*
DIY …	Mid	Mid	Mid	Mid	Mid	High	Mid	*Mid*
Home insure	Mid	Mid	Mid	Mid	High	Mid	Mid	*Low*
Furniture …	Mid	Mid	Mid	Mid	High	Mid	Mid	*Mid*
Used cars	Mid	Mid	High	High	Mid	Low	Low	*Mid*
Air travel	Mid	Mid	High	Mid	Mid	Low	Mid	*Mid*
Vets …	Mid	Mid	Low	Low	High	Mid	High	*Low*
Home products	Mid	Low	Mid	Mid	Mid	Mid	Low	*High*
HP, credit	Low	Mid	Low	Mid	Low	Low	Low	*Mid*
Betting …	Low	Mid	Low	Mid	Low	Mid	Mid	*Low*
Mobile network	Low	Low	Low	Mid	Low	Low	Low	*High*
Banking	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Mid	Mid	*High*
TV services	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Mid	Mid	*High*
ISPs	Low	Low	Mid	Mid	Low	Low	Low	*High*
Mortgages	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	*Low*
Tel, fixed line	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	*High*
Estate agents	Low	Low	Mid	Low	Low	Low	Low	*High*
Renting	Low	Low	Mid	Low	Low	Low	Low	*High*
Professional	Low	Low	Low	Mid	Low	Low	Low	*High*
Vehicle repairs	Low	Low	Low	Low	Mid	Low	Low	*High*
Petrol, oil …	Low	Low	Low	Low	Mid	Low	Low	*Low*
Home maintain	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	*High*
Pension plans	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	*Low*
Gas, electricity	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	*High*

Complaints

Consumers were asked whether or not they had complained, and, if not, did they feel they had 'cause to complain' in any of the markets they had been active in. These responses can be affected by other factors such as the ease or difficulty of making a complaint or limitations in consumers' understanding or knowledge of certain markets and how to complain.

The findings on complaints have not been factored into the calculation of the overall CCI score as consumers tend to mark down a market in which they had cause to complain (which would therefore result in 'double down weighting' some markets). The results tend to support this assumption in that, on the whole, markets with high CCI scores tended to attract fewer complaints and vice-versa.

The market for Internet service providers attracted a significantly high level of complaints - 39% of consumers actually made or 'had cause to' complain and 30% actually made a complaint.

In four other markets around one in three made a complaint or felt they had 'cause to complain': TV service providers, Drinking/eating out at pubs, restaurants, cafes, bars, Mobile phone network services and Private sector renting.

On the other hand, the markets with the lowest level of total complaints (fewer than one in ten) included: Gambling, betting, competitions, prize draws or lotteries, Toiletries, perfumes or beauty products and Chemist, pharmaceutical or medical products.

Vulnerable or Disadvantaged Consumers

Vulnerable consumers were defined as those who felt they were at a disadvantage in any of the markets in terms of *"any health problems, of access to shops, or making sense of the information, or your financial circumstances"*.

Just over a fifth stated they felt at a disadvantage. These consumers were relatively more likely to have a disability, be in the DE social grade, be female and/or from a low income household. Those who did feel at a disadvantage in any of the markets tended to give lower scores on all the KPIs (yet those from low income households gave significantly higher scores on all KPIs than those from high income households).

There was relatively little difference between the markets in terms of the proportions stating they felt at a disadvantage and no particular pattern emerged. The greatest contrast was between the Private sector renting, Used vehicles, Petrol, diesel and oil markets where the highest proportion stated they felt at a disadvantage (around three in ten); and the Books, newspapers, magazines, Betting, gambling, competitions, prize draws and lotteries and Drinking and eating out at pubs, restaurants or bars markets, where the lowest proportion felt at a disadvantage (around a fifth).

Background and Objectives

The Consumer Conditions research study was a 'first' for the UK and the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR). It covered important new ground and filled an 'information gap' in terms of its evaluation of consumer conditions and consumer perceptions of a range of different markets.

The study's two main objectives were to:

1. assess and quantify the condition of **consumer confidence**, **perceived transparency** and **consumer complaints** in a wide range of UK markets for goods and services, as well as looking at vulnerable consumers

2. build up an evidence base, to inform debate and help develop consumer policy in the UK

The approach for meeting the above requirements was adapted from a similar Danish Consumer Agency project.

For the UK, the major challenges in terms of selecting the most appropriate survey design included:

1) deciding the number of markets to research (which determines the total sample size)
2) deciding which markets to include (which affects the number of interviews that could be achieved per market, especially if there were several 'niche' or low incidence markets to cover)
3) how to describe the markets in terms that are meaningful to respondents
4) the questions to be asked (topics, number and wording)

In order to discuss and address the above challenges:

(a) a joint Ipsos MORI/BERR workshop (which was also attended by experts from George & Lennard Associates) was held,

(b) a thorough 'cognitive pilot' exercise was conducted.

Both were very productive and the outcome produced a set of survey instruments which were 'fit for purpose'.

Survey Design

Origins: the Danish Consumer Agency Survey

The UK survey built on the foundations of a similar survey carried out annually by the Danish Consumer Agency. The Agency reports on consumer conditions in 57 Danish consumer markets by means of the Consumer Conditions Index (CCI). The CCI provided a useful overview to inform further regulation and policy development.

A market's ranking on the CCI is an indication of consumer conditions in that market and this was arrived at via three indicators:

- **consumer confidence** (based on consumers' ratings of 'expectations', 'marketing', 'consumer protection' – on a 0 to 10 scale)
- **transparency** (based on consumers' ratings of 'price/quality comparability', 'information on prices', 'competition/fair prices' – on a 0 to 10 scale)
- **complaint conditions** (based on various different data sources – and then assessed by the Danish Consumer Agency)

The Danish study covered 57 markets with c300 interviews per market – 4,500 telephone interviews in all. All the analysis of data was carried out by the Danish Consumer Agency, not by the market research provider.

The Literature Review

This Review was carried out by George & Lennard Associates. It was intended to assist BERR in commissioning a consumer survey to develop a Consumer Conditions Index for the UK. The Review included an analysis of a number of other relevant consumer research surveys. The review was also informed by discussions with representatives from relevant organisations in the UK and Denmark, who provided informal comments and advice on issues relating to methodologies (but not how the Agency arrived at the final CCI).

A substantial number of recent quantitative consumer research surveys were reviewed, primarily those carried out by organisations in the public sector, including regulatory and competition authorities and consumer organisations. The objective was to gain a comprehensive overview of survey materials likely to be of relevance to the BERR study. The literature was reviewed in terms of the purpose, nature and key themes, main findings and survey methodologies used.

The Review also contained a brief section to inform decisions about the choice of market sectors, such as highlighting the pattern of average household expenditure on different goods and services and how to include 'vulnerable' consumers in the survey samples.

The Literature Review highlighted some aspects of the Danish study which BERR needed to consider carefully, and with which Ipsos MORI agreed:

1) The Review commented on the size of the sample for each market sector – *"if the sample size is too small, this could result in questioning the robustness of the survey and the validity of results, thereby undermining the initiative".*
2) The Review also noted that, in order to be meaningful and robust, some of the words and questions would need to be adapted for use in the UK.

The Review also made reference to the issue of consumer vulnerability, disadvantage or disability noting BERR's concern that such customers need to be represented in the survey. Based on evidence gathered for the Review and on previous work on this issue, the Review emphasised the need to avoid stereotyping and making assumptions as to who is or may be vulnerable. The Review recommended moving away from defining vulnerability in terms of socio-demographic characteristics such as age, disability and income to a more flexible and refined approach. It was recommended that respondents were asked whether or not they felt at any particular disadvantage in any of the markets – *"for example, because of any health problems, of access to shops, or making sense of the information, or your financial circumstances"*.

A half-day **planning workshop** attended by all relevant parties was held to work through the key issues raised in the Literature Review and in the Ipsos MORI proposal. This resulted in a broad agreement of the methodology and questions to be used and was followed by a qualitative 'cognitive piloting' exercise to test the efficacy of the survey instruments and the market sector definitions and descriptions.

The Cognitive Pilot

Sixteen depth interviews were conducted between 26th and 29th March by research executives in the Ipsos MORI team and, for added insight, by experienced telephone interviewers; 9 of these were conducted face to face and a further 7 were conducted over the telephone in order to simulate the main survey situation. A diverse variety of respondents were interviewed - of differing ages and from a variety of backgrounds and regions. The outcomes were instrumental in enhancing the clarity of communication and consistency of the information collected - as the questionnaire was made accessible and comprehensible across a wide spectrum of types of respondents. The results of the pilot suggested that the questions were well understood by respondents, who were able to reply in a meaningful way.

Main Stage Methodology

A total of 5,496 telephone interviews were conducted between 15th April and 26th May, 2008. The interviews lasted 16.5 minutes on average. Most interviews covered 4 markets; however, in order to attain the target number of evaluations in the low incidence markets, in a few cases the interviews covered 5 or 6 markets. This resulted in 22,563 market evaluations in all – yielding a sample of at least 500 in each of the 45 markets.

The survey was broad in terms of its coverage and there were a number of factors which needed careful consideration in defining its scope. These factors included:

- the number – and type – of markets to be included in the survey; the criteria for choosing particular markets and how they should be described to be meaningful to consumers
- questionnaire content; what issues should, and should not, be covered in the survey
- the outcome of the Literature Review, and how it should feed into the project design
- what use was to be made of the survey results

The Questions

The full wording of the key questions relating to '**transparency'** and '**consumer confidence'**, plus questions on channel of purchase and complaints, can be found in the questionnaire in the Appendices.

Consumers were asked to rate the markets in which they had recent transactional experience in terms of:

- ✓ the ease of comparing the **quality** of goods and services
- ✓ the ease of comparing **prices,**
- ✓ the range of goods and services and the degree of **choice** available
- ✓ the degree to which the good or service lived up to **expectations**
- ✓ confidence that **consumers' rights** were protected
- ✓ confidence that goods and services were being **advertised and marketed** in a trustworthy manner.

These questions were chosen as they were felt to be:

- ✓ the most relevant key performance indicators of consumer conditions in various markets
- ✓ the topics and factors that consumers would be able to respond to meaningfully

As in the Danish study, consumers responded on an 11 point response scale - for its greater flexibility, sensitivity (and 'mid-point' for those non-committal responses).

The fact that the level of 'Don't know' responses was very low (between 2% and 6%) indicates consumers found the questions and market descriptions meaningful; a view which was also endorsed by the cognitive piloting.

The questions were based on those used in the Danish study. However, as suggested by the Literature Review, and confirmed by the pilot exercise, the wording was adapted for the UK market and 'tightened' to ensure consumers had specific reference points in mind in terms of the purchase or transaction, such as:

1) the geographical territory ("in the UK")

2) the period referred to ("in the past year or two").

2) the particular transactional experience to be borne in mind ("the most recent …").

This created a more level playing field for responses to all markets and helped the respondent to focus and provide a more definitive response (and not 'average out' multiple experiences or give an 'it depends' or 'don't know' response).

In addition, data was gathered on:

- ➢ whether or not consumers had made a complaint in that market or had 'cause to complain'
- ➢ channel or method of purchase and use of the internet
- ➢ whether or not they felt disadvantaged in that market
- ➢ socio-demographic data – gender, age, social grade, income, working status, ethnicity, disability, region.

As was noted in the Literature Review, a sample size of 300 per market was not considered to be sufficiently statistically robust for the UK. Therefore it was decided to increase this to c500 interviews per market.

With 45 markets and each interview covering at least 4 markets there were 22,563 market evaluations in total and a total sample of 5,496 respondents. This design increased the statistical reliability of the findings (see table in Appendices). This sample size is robust, and allows comparisons to be made both between markets and between individual markets over time, if required in the future.

As with the Danish study the interviews were conducted by telephone, although consideration was given as to whether or not a different interview channel might be more appropriate. Telephone interviewing was the best means of achieving a large representative sample in the time available. As there were no complicated questions nor any stimulus material required, this was the most appropriate channel of communication. Moreover, an automated CATI sample management system enabled the monitoring and control of the sample quotas by market sector.

The overall sample was representative of the UK population as a whole. Random Digit Dialling (RDD) was used to achieve this – and to ensure ex directory people were not excluded from the sample.

The CATI script was programmed so that the market sectors to be asked about were generated at random, and thus in a different order each time - so as to minimise any ‘order bias’. However, in order to overcome the difficulty of accessing respondents in low incidence markets, these markets were given a higher priority as the survey progressed. Indeed, towards the end of the fieldwork period some respondents were asked about 5 or 6 markets in order to achieve targets on the low incidence markets.

At the outset, respondents were screened for key market and socio-demographic quotas. These were set in terms of the number of interviews required per market sector plus overall socio-demographic and regional quotas to ensure the total sample reflected the profile of the UK.

However, the resultant individual market profiles did of course reflect the demographics of the types of consumers active in each market: Personal computers and software would have a younger user profile than Pension providers for example, while other markets might be skewed in terms of gender (e.g. Toiletries, perfumes, beauty treatments, hairdressing goods).

The Market Sectors

The Household Expenditure List was the main point of reference in deciding which market sectors to include in the study as focusing on the markets with relatively high annual consumer expenditure made an appropriate starting point. However, several items on this list are not defined in terms of 'markets'. Therefore the Consumer Direct list was also referred to in order to ensure that the major markets in the Household Expenditure list were covered.

The other criteria directing the choice of markets included:

- whether or not a market can be clearly and tightly defined and described in such a way as to be readily and consistently interpreted by respondents and was relevant in terms of the questions asked
- the importance or strategic significance to BERR

However, there remains the issue that one market can have three elements:

(a) manufacturers/products (eg plumbing products)
(b) retailers/outlets (eg B&Q)
(c) service implementers (plumbers), and it may not always be clear which one the consumer had in mind.

It needs to be borne in mind that the survey reveals consumer <u>perceptions</u> of each market – which may or may not reflect the actual state of the market (and may well be partly influenced by the nature and extent of recent economic factors or media coverage or a recent atypical experience). Moreover, it should be noted that the 'pain' markets, such as Vehicle repairs and servicing may be at a disadvantage compared with 'pleasure' markets such as those associated with leisure activities.

The **UK Consumer Confidence Index score (CCI)** for each market has been calculated by taking the average of the mean scores achieved on all the six key performance indicators (Quality, Price, Choice, Expectations, Consumer rights and Advertising). The results are presented as 'scores out of 100'.

A note on the CCI calculation and on statistical reliability is to be found in the Appendices. The table of the 45 markets covered in the survey, and the descriptions used, is to be found in the Appendices

Data Analysis and Weighting

Quotas were set for the overall sample in order to ensure it was representative of the population profile of the UK. However, screening for purchase activity in various markets can impact on the profile of the final sample. Therefore, the whole dataset was weighted to the UK population profile at the analysis stage.

The sample profile and weighting data is to be found in the Appendices. The final sample closely mirrored that of the UK population as a whole, except in terms of age, which is to be expected given the type of markets covered. Therefore those aged 16 to 34 were weighted up from 25% to 31%, while those aged 55+ were weighted down from 40% to 34% in order to reflect their true proportions in the population profile of the UK. This weighting also affected the weighted totals for certain markets, some of which then fell just below 500.

Main Findings

Overall Scores: – the Consumer Confidence Index (CCI)

For the key consumer confidence and transparency questions, respondents were asked to rate each of the markets on a scale of 0 (very negative rating) to 10 (very positive rating), with their most recent UK purchase in mind. The results are reported in terms of the mean scores achieved by each market, grossed up to represent ‘scores out of 100’.

The Consumer Confidence Index score (the CCI) was calculated by taking the average of all the mean scores achieved by each market on the six Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

- the ease or difficulty of comparing the quality of goods and services
- the ease or difficulty of comparing prices
- the range of goods and services and the degree of choice available
- the degree to which the product, service or buying experience lived up to expectations
- the degree of confidence that consumers’ rights are protected
- the degree of confidence that advertising and marketing is trustworthy

It needs to be borne in mind that the markets’ CCI scores reveal consumers’ **perceptions** of conditions in each market – which may, or may not, be an accurate reflection of actual conditions in that market. It needs to be noted that consumers are not necessarily comparing ‘like with like’ and that it is likely to be easier for consumers to make comparisons in some markets than in others. Recent economic factors and negative media coverage of some markets may also have had an impact on some of the scores, although it is not possible to say how significant these factors are.

However, consumer perceptions are important as from the consumer perspective, they represent the reality of the situation, which can provide valuable information. If consumer confidence is low in a market this may accurately reflect a justifiable mistrust of suppliers (and thus may indicate something going wrong on the supply side) or it may represent a misperception (and indicate something going wrong on the demand side). On the other hand, high consumer confidence may also not be straightforward to interpret as it could mask shortcomings in a market. For example, consumers may say they are confident in certain financial products but could realise some years later, when the product matures, that some of them have been mis-sold.

In addition, the differences that emerged between the markets’ scores also reflected the type of market being rated and how consumers felt about engaging with these, such as those markets consumers:

- enjoy being active in – the leisure/pleasure or ‘feel good/retail therapy’ markets (such as Clothing and footwear; Books, newspapers or magazines; Booking holidays; TVs, DVD or MP3 players, which all achieved higher scores)

- are content to engage with, but mainly for every day, more mundane, matters or for ‘hygiene’ factors (such as Home insurance, DIY materials or hardware, Hairdressing, barbers or beauty treatments, which achieved middling scores)

- accept the need to engage with occasionally in order to achieve certain ends, or at a critical event (such as Home improvement products, Chemist, pharmaceutical or medical products, which achieved middling scores)

- would prefer to avoid if they possibly could, such as ‘when things go wrong’ (eg with their car; Vehicle repairs or servicing did not score well)

- feel 'out of their depth' in; perhaps feeling they do not possess sufficient knowledge to be able to compare goods or services (such as with certain financial services; Private pension plans and Mortgages did not score well)

Respondents taking part in the survey were answering questions against a backdrop of relatively unfavourable economic conditions. Recent media coverage has highlighted problems relating to the 'credit crunch', the banking and financial sector - fewer mortgages available yet rising mortgage payments and poorly performing pension plans. In addition consumers have been experiencing rising food, energy and petrol prices.

Thus, in general, consumers' ratings of the markets which performed poorly:

- can be associated with 'stress or pain' rather than 'pleasure' markets, such as having to call a service 'for help when something goes wrong' (such as in the home or with the car) and/or
- tend to be in the markets which are less 'everyday' or familiar or where contact is less frequent, and/or
- tend to be markets which are more complex or ones where consumers may have a limited knowledge or understanding of that market

The poorly performing markets, those with lower Consumer Confidence Index (CCI) scores, tend to fall into one or more of the above categories, such as Gas and electricity, Private pension plans, Home maintenance services or Petrol, diesel or oil.

Vehicle repairs or servicing, Private sector renting, Professional services and Estate agents or house purchasing services are also poorly rated overall.

On the other hand the top performing markets, those with higher Consumer Confidence Index scores tend to be the 'everyday/frequent contact', less complex or 'feel good' markets. These include CDs, videos, DVDs, Garden equipment and plants, Books, newspapers or magazines, Clothing or footwear, TVs, DVD or PM3 players and Jewellery, clocks, watches or silverware.

However, the list of top performing markets includes one which one might not expect to find among these predominantly 'pleasure' markets – Car or vehicle insurance.

The table below, and those for each subsequent consumer confidence measure, separates the markets into three groups. On the left (in green) are the markets which achieved the higher scores overall. These tend to be associated with more pleasurable goods or services purchases. On the right (in red) are the markets which achieved the lower scores overall, while in the middle (in orange) are the remaining markets – the ones which did not achieve particularly high or low scores.

The number of markets in each group has to be determined by the distribution of mean scores and the point at which the relative scores differ, but this may not be a statistically significant difference. As some markets' scores were quite similar, the 45 markets do not conveniently split into similarly sized groups, or even a 'top ten' or 'bottom ten'.

The markets have been assigned to the 'high', 'middling' or 'lowest' group to provide a roughly equal number in each group. However as the scores were sometimes quite close, the score for the market listed at the bottom of the highest group is not necessarily statistically significantly different from the score attained by the market at the top of the middle group - but it is from the market at the bottom of the middle group and the market at the top (and bottom) of the lowest group. Likewise, the score attained by the market ranked at the bottom of the middle group is not necessarily statistically significantly different from the market at the top of the lowest group, but it is from the market ranked at the bottom of the lowest group or the market at the bottom of the highest group.

As a rule of thumb, in terms of the overall CCI score a difference of at least 3 points can be taken as being statistically significant; while for each of the six KPIs, a difference in scores of at least 4 points is required for a finding to be statistically significant. The differences in the scores attained by those markets listed on the left (in green) and those attained by the markets listed on the right (in red) are statistically significant.

Overall Consumer Confidence Index (CCI) scores

Markets achieving higher ratings CCI scores of 75 to 80	**Markets achieving middling ratings** CCI scores of 70 to 74	**Markets achieving lower ratings** CCI scores of 58 to 68
CDs, videos, DVDs, video games (80)	Personal computers/ software (74)	Betting, gambling, competitions, prize draws, lotteries (68)
Garden equipment/ plants	Chemist, pharmaceutical or medical products	Hire purchase, loans or credit
Books, newspapers or magazines	Bicycles/ repairs	Personal banking
Clothing or footwear goods	Hairdressing, barbers or beauty treatments	Mobile phone network services
TVs, DVD or MP3 players	Drinking/ eating out at pubs, restaurants, cafes, bars	TV service providers
Jewellery, silverware, clocks and watches	DIY materials or hardware	Internet service providers
Small domestic appliances	Furniture or furnishings	Mortgages
Toys/ games	Home insurance	Telephone services, fixed line
Booking holidays	Used vehicles	Professional services
Large domestic appliances	Air travel/ plane flights	Private sector renting
Food or drink for consumption at home	Vets goods or services	Estate agents/ house purchase services
Hotel or other holiday accommodation in the UK	Home improvement products (70)	Vehicle repairs/ servicing
New vehicles		Petrol, diesel or oil
Toiletries, perfumes, beauty products		Home maintenance services
Car or vehicle insurance		Private pension plans
Sports/ hobbies goods/ services		Gas/ electricity (58)
Floor coverings (75)		

In the majority of cases, markets attained similar ranking positions and a similar pattern of scores across all six KPIs. However, some markets did better, or worse, on certain KPIs than on others. When looking at the overall picture the variations between the average scores for each KPI across all markets needs to be borne in mind – consumers rated markets higher for Choice than for Trustworthy advertising.

The overall average CCI score was 71, for comparing Choice the overall average score was 78 and for Living up to expectations 77. The overall average score given for comparing Quality was 71; the same as that for comparing Prices (71). The lowest overall average scores were for Protecting consumer rights (66) and for Advertising and marketing in a trustworthy manner (64). Within each market, these last two KPI scores followed a very similar pattern – perhaps indicating consumers saw these two indicators as linked in some way.

The table below is based on relative scores and rankings (whether or not a particular market fell into the 'highest', 'middling' or 'lowest' ranked group – and the score attained). Most markets' scores followed a similar pattern - higher for Choice and for Living up to expectations, middling for Quality and Price and lower for Trustworthy advertising and for Protecting consumer rights. In a few cases there were slightly different variations in a market's score between the different KPIs. For instance, while Private pension plans was always ranked in the lowest group it scored relatively well on Choice (70) but relatively poorly on Advertising (51). Other variations in terms of relative KPI scores within market are noted below:

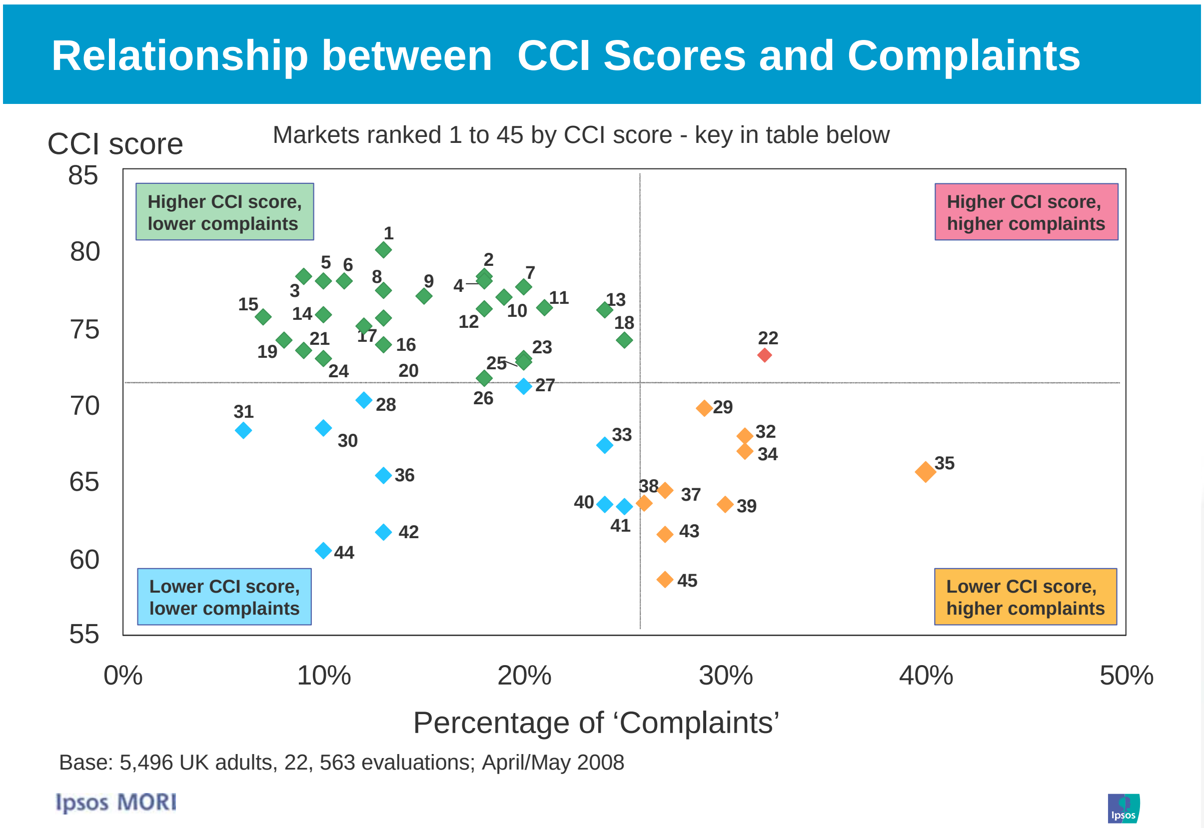
Market	**Notable variations**
Taking into account relative ranking and the scores attained …	**Of the 6 KPIs, scored relatively …**
Large domestic appliances	Less well on Advertising
Hotel or other holiday accommodation in the UK	Less well on Quality
New vehicles	Less well on Advertising and Consumer rights
Personal computers/ software	Better on Choice
Chemist, pharmaceutical or medical products	Better on Consumer rights and Advertising, less well on Quality and Price
Hairdressing, barbers or beauty treatments	Less well on Quality and Price
Drinking/ eating out at pubs, restaurants, cafes, bars	Better on Consumer rights and Advertising
DIY materials or hardware	Better on Consumer rights
Furniture or furnishings	Better on Expectations
Home insurance	Better on Quality
Used vehicles	Less well on Consumer rights and Advertising, better on Price and Choice
Air travel/ plane flights	Better on Price, less well on Consumer rights
Vets goods or services	Less well on Price and Choice, better on Expectations and Advertising
Home improvement products	Less well on Advertising and Quality
Betting, gambling, competitions, prize draws, lotteries	Less well on Expectations
Mobile phone network services	Better on Choice
Internet service providers	Better on Choice and Price
Telephone services, fixed line	Less well on Choice and Price
Professional services	Better on Expectations
Private sector renting	Better on Price
Estate agents/ house purchase services	Better on Price
Vehicle repairs/ servicing	Better on Expectations
Petrol, diesel or oil	Less well on Consumer rights, better on Expectations
Private pension plans	Better on Choice, less well on Advertising

Overall CCI Scores and Complaints

In the chart below, the markets are numbered for easy reference (with the key on the following page), and are mapped according to their overall CCI score in relation to the percentage of complaints each experienced (whether they had made a complaint or had cause to complain about a product or service in the past year or two in any of the specific markets they were being questioned on). There are four key quadrants:

- in the top left hand quadrant are the top performing markets, those achieving relatively high CCI scores and attracting a relatively low proportion of complaints.
- towards the top right hand quadrant are markets with relatively high CCI scores but a relatively high proportion of complaints
- in the bottom left hand quadrant are markets with relatively low CCI scores and a relatively low proportion of complaints
- in the bottom right hand quadrant are the worst performing markets with relatively low CCI scores and a relatively high proportion of complaints

This chart illustrates the relationship between complaints and CCI scores, in that those markets with high CCI scores tend to attract fewer complaints and vice-versa (such as Internet service providers). However, there are some notable variations: Drinking and eating out at pubs, restaurants, cafes and bars attracts a higher proportion of complaints than its CCI rank would suggest. While one might expect the proportion of complaints to be greater for lower ranked services such as Private pension plans, Petrol, diesel or oil and Mortgages. The possible reasons behind these apparent ‘anomalies’ are discussed in the section on Complaints.



Key to numbered ranking and market descriptions on the graphic above:

CCI rank	Market	CCI rank	Market
1	CDs, videos, DVDs, video games or other computer software	24	Home insurance (buildings or contents)
2	Clothing or footwear goods	25	Furniture or furnishings (such as curtains)
3	Books, newspapers or magazines	26	Used cars or vehicles
4	TVs, DVD or MP3 players	27	Air travel or plane flights
5	Garden equipment or plants	28	Vet's goods or services for pets or animals
6	Jewellery, silverware, clocks and watches	29	Home improvement products (such as conservatories, extensions, loft conversions, windows, doors)
7	Small domestic appliances (such as an iron, vacuum cleaner, toaster or kettle)	30	Hire purchase, loans or credit (excluding mortgages, including credit cards)
8	Toys or games, excluding internet video games	31	Betting, gambling, competitions, prize draws or lotteries
9	Booking holidays to be taken within or outside the UK (from travel agents or online, excluding just flights)	32	Mobile phone network services, not handsets
10	Large domestic appliances (such as washing machine, cooker, dishwasher or fridge freezer)	33	Personal banking
11	New cars or vehicles	34	TV service providers (such as satellite or cable)
12	Hotel or other holiday accommodation in the UK	35	Internet service providers
13	Food or drink for consumption at home	36	Mortgages
14	Car or vehicle insurance	37	Telephone services, fixed line, not mobiles
15	Toiletries, perfumes, beauty products or hairdressing goods	38	Estate agents or house purchase services (excluding conveyancing or surveys)
16	Sports or hobbies, goods or services	39	Renting a property or management services from a private landlord
17	Floor coverings (such as carpets)	40	Professional services (such as solicitors, surveyors, accountants)
18	Personal computers or software	41	Vehicle repairs or servicing
19	Chemist, pharmaceutical or medical products (including from the chemist, but not toiletries or cosmetics)	42	Petrol, diesel or oil
20	Bicycles or repairs	43	Home maintenance services (such as plumbers, decorators, electricians)
21	Hairdressing, barbers or beauty treatments	44	Private pension plans
22	Drinking or eating out at pubs, restaurants, cafes, bars	45	Gas or electricity
23	DIY materials or hardware		

Comparing Quality

On a scale of 0 to 10 respondents were asked how easy (10) or difficult (0), it was to compare the *quality of goods and services* in each market. The overall average score given to markets on this KPI was 71; same as that for comparing Prices (71). This score was lower than the average given for Choice (78) and Expectations (77), but above the overall average scores given to markets for Consumer rights (66) and Advertising (64).

The top performing markets in terms of the ease of comparing Quality are mainly the leisure, pleasure or 'feel good purchase or retail therapy' markets, such as CDs, videos, DVDs video games, Toys and games, TVs, DVD or MP3 players, Large domestic appliances and Garden equipment and plants - as noted in the table below. However, included in the 'higher rating' category are Car or vehicle insurance and Home insurance.

Markets achieving middling scores include those such as Furniture or furnishings, DIY materials or hardware, Used vehicles and Bicycles or repairs.

Markets which performed well overall, but relatively less well on comparing Quality included Hotel and holiday accommodation in the UK, Hairdressing, barbers or beauty treatments, Home improvement products and Chemist, pharmaceutical or medical products. On the other hand, Home insurance was rated relatively better on Quality.

Private pension plans emerged as being more difficult in terms of being able to compare Quality. This finding is backed up by the fact that this market also attracted the highest proportion of 'Don't know' responses.

Professional services (such as solicitors, surveyors or accountants) was also poorly rated, as were the 'pain' markets of Home maintenance services and Vehicle repairs and servicing.

The utilities services of Gas and electricity and Fixed line telephone fared little better; along with other communications services such as Internet service providers, TV service providers and Mobile phone network services.

Also thought to be relatively difficult in terms of comparing Quality are housing services such as Estate agents and house purchasing services and Private sector renting - plus Financial services such as Mortgages and Personal banking (with Hire purchase, loans or credit not far behind).

Ratings on comparing quality

Markets achieving higher ratings Mean scores of 76 to 80	**Markets achieving middling ratings** Mean scores of 68 to 75	**Markets achieving lower ratings** Mean scores of 58 to 67
CDs, videos, DVDs, video games (80)	Floor coverings (75)	Home improvement products (67)
Large domestic appliances	Home insurance	Personal banking
Garden equipment/ plants	Toiletries, perfumes, beauty products	TV service providers
Clothing or footwear goods	Sports/ hobbies goods/ services	Mobile phone network services
Car or vehicle insurance	Hotel or other holiday accommodation in the UK	Private sector renting
Small domestic appliances	Air travel/ plane flights	Petrol, diesel or oil
Toys/ games	Furniture or furnishings	Mortgages
TVs, DVD or MP3 players	Drinking/ eating out at pubs, restaurants, cafes, bars	Estate agents/ house purchase services
Booking holidays	Used vehicles	Internet service providers
Books, newspapers or magazines	Personal computers/ software	Telephone services, fixed line
Food or drink for consumption at home	DIY materials or hardware	Vehicle repairs/ servicing
Jewellery, silverware, clocks and watches	Bicycles/ repairs	Gas/ electricity
New vehicles (76)	Vets goods or services	Professional services
	Chemist, pharmaceutical or medical products	Home maintenance services
	Betting, gambling, competitions, prize draws, lotteries	Private pension plans (58)
	Hairdressing, barbers or beauty treatments	
	Hire purchase, loans or credit (68)	

Comparing Prices

Respondents were asked how easy, or difficult, it was to compare the prices of goods and services in each market. Key factors in respondents' assessments are likely to be:

- the degree of complexity in the market, and how knowledgeable consumers are about the market and its products or services, and/or
- the existence of acknowledged 'benchmarks', and/or
- the amount of comparative information available, and/or
- despite the existence of comparative data, how easy or 'confusing' it may be consumers to make sense of the information

The top performing markets in terms of the ease of comparing Prices are again the leisure, pleasure or 'feel good purchase/retail therapy' markets, as noted in the table below. However, included in the higher category are Large and Small domestic appliances and Car or vehicle insurance.

Despite the fact that additional charges are now quite common in the industry, Air travel and plane flights was rated in the top group in terms of the ease of comparing Prices, though not so well rated on the other key performance measures.

Several 'home' markets attained a middling ranking for comparing Prices, such as Floor coverings, Home insurance, Furniture or furnishings, DIY materials or hardware and Home improvement products.

Markets such as Estate agents and house purchasing services, Private sector renting and Internet service providers, which were in the lowest group overall, attained a middling rating on comparing Prices.

Private pension plans, Professional services, Vehicle repairs and servicing and Home maintenance services are the markets consumers felt to be the more difficult in terms of being able to compare prices. Again Private pension plans attracted a relatively high proportion of 'Don't know' responses – another indication that consumers find this market complex and/or difficult to assess.

Other markets, where price information is more readily available (but where competitive tariffs may be confusing consumers), also fall into the 'difficult to compare' category, such as Gas and electricity, Fixed line telephones or Mobile phone network services. Consumers also rated other financial products or services as more difficult to compare on price: Mortgages, Personal banking and Hire purchase, loans or credit.

It seems that services such as Hairdressing, barbers or beauty products, Chemist, pharmaceutical or medical products or Vets goods and services are also less transparent in terms of being able to compare prices.

Petrol, diesel or oil is perhaps more poorly ranked than might be expected (given prices are often comparable and clearly displayed at the pumps). However, the recent price increases may be a factor, with some consumers keen to mark the market down on Price regardless. However others may have rated this market as more 'difficult' than 'easy' as they may have felt that there is very little differentiation between the prices ("all the same, so cannot compare prices") or that reasons for the prices charged, or the price increases, are not transparent.

Ratings on comparing prices

Markets achieving higher ratings Mean scores of 76 to 81	**Markets achieving middling ratings** Mean scores of 69 to 75	**Markets achieving lower ratings** Mean scores of 54 to 68
CDs, videos, DVDs, video games (81)	Food or drink for consumption at home (75)	Hairdressing, barbers or beauty treatments (68)
Large domestic appliances	Personal computers/ software	TV service providers
Small domestic appliances	Floor coverings	Betting, gambling, competitions, prize draws, lotteries
Clothing or footwear goods	Toiletries, perfumes, beauty products	Petrol, diesel or oil
TVs, DVD or MP3 players	Sports/ hobbies goods/ services	Chemist, pharmaceutical or medical products
Car or vehicle insurance	Home insurance	Hire purchase, loans or credit
Books, newspapers or magazines	Furniture or furnishings	Mobile phone network services
Toys/ games	Bicycles/ repairs	Personal banking
Air travel/ plane flights	DIY materials or hardware	Mortgages
Garden equipment/ plants	Drinking/ eating out at pubs, restaurants, cafes, bars	Vets goods or services
Booking holidays	Estate agents/ house purchase services	Telephone services, fixed line
New vehicles	Home improvement products	Gas/ electricity
Hotel or other holiday accommodation in the UK	Private sector renting	Vehicle repairs/ servicing
Jewellery, silverware, clocks and watches	Internet service providers (69)	Home maintenance services
Used vehicles (76)		Professional services
		Private pension plans (54)

Comparing Choice and Range of Goods and Services

Respondents were asked to think about the range of goods and services available in each market and to rate *how much choice* they felt there was in each market.

The key performance indicator of consumer Choice attracted higher CCI scores overall than the other five KPIs - 78 on average, just ahead of Living up to expectations (77).

Of the 45 markets covered, all bar 6 achieved average scores of at least 70. Over half the markets achieved average scores of 8 or more in terms of the range and choices available, notably Toiletries, perfumes, beauty products, CDs, videos, DVDs, video games, New vehicles and TVs, DVD or MP3 players.

Given that this KPI was generally well rated, most of the middle ranked markets in the central column on the table below also attained high scores (over 75).

The markets for Petrol, diesel, oil, Gas and Electricity and Private sector renting all scored relatively poorly in terms of Range and choice (all scoring an average of less than 65). The first two are perhaps a reflection of a limited number of high profile suppliers (and products) in the market, while the last one is more difficult to interpret. However, these three markets tended to attract a relatively high percentage of non-committal responses:

- between 30% and 40% gave 'neutral' scores of between 40 and 60 to these markets (as against an average of 16%), and

- between 15% and 17% said 'Don't know' (compared with an average of 2%).

This could indicate that some consumers may have found it difficult to assess these particular markets in terms of Range and choice. Indeed a common characteristic among the poorer performing markets (those in the right hand column in the table below), was that a quarter or more respondents ascribed 'neutral' scores of between 40 and 60 to these markets, with Private pension plans additionally attracting a higher proportion of 'Don't knows' (15%).

Some of the poorer results seemed to reflect a perception that a market is characterised by relatively few suppliers, such as Fixed line telephones or TV service providers. Yet Mobile phone network services, a market in which just a small handful of suppliers operate, scored relatively highly (perhaps indicating that some consumers may have the choice of tariffs, or even handsets, in mind when responding).

While the results for some markets indicated that consumers may be having some difficulty in assessing the market in terms of choice, other results were more difficult to interpret. Markets where there would appear to be an abundance of suppliers, such as Home maintenance services or Estate agents and house purchase services, were not well rated. Perhaps consumers find differentiating between suppliers in these markets difficult or perceive that there is a certain 'sameness' about suppliers in the market - that "there's not much to choose between them".

The relatively low scores for Mortgages or Personal banking may relate to the factors mentioned above and could have been impacted by recent events and negative media coverage of the banking sector, such as the consequences of the 'credit crunch'. However, it is beyond the scope of this study to explore the extent to which any of these factors applied.

Ratings on comparing range and choice

Markets achieving higher ratings Mean scores of 82 to 88	**Markets achieving middling ratings** Mean scores of 73 to 81	**Markets achieving lower ratings** Mean scores of 58 to 72
Toiletries, perfumes, beauty products (88)	Drinking/ eating out at pubs, restaurants, cafes, bars (81)	Home maintenance services (72)
CDs, videos, DVDs, video games	Mobile phone network services	Private pension plans
New vehicles	Hire purchase, loans or credit	Mortgages
TVs, DVD or MP3 players	Home improvement products	Vehicle repairs/ servicing
Books, newspapers or magazines	Betting, gambling, competitions, prize draws, lotteries	Vets goods or services
Booking holidays	Home insurance	Telephone services, fixed line
Toys/ games	Hairdressing, barbers or beauty treatments	Estate agents/ house purchase services
Jewellery, silverware, clocks and watches	DIY materials or hardware	TV service providers
Small domestic appliances	Furniture or furnishings	Gas/ electricity
Clothing or footwear goods	Chemist, pharmaceutical or medical products	Private sector renting
Food or drink for consumption at home	Air travel/ plane flights	Petrol, diesel or oil (58)
Garden equipment/ plants	Internet service providers	
Car or vehicle insurance	Bicycles/ repairs	
Large domestic appliances	Personal banking	
Personal computers/ software	Professional services (73)	
Floor coverings		
Hotel or other holiday accommodation in the UK		
Used vehicles		
Sports/ hobbies goods/ services (82)		

Living up to Expectations

Respondents were asked whether what they bought or experienced lived up to what they wanted. Generally the markets were quite well rated on this factor – the total overall score of 77 being second only to Range and choice (78). Moreover, judging by the low level of 'Don't know' responses, consumers did not seem to have any difficulty in rating the markets on this dimension.

Not surprisingly perhaps, consumers felt one particular market failed to live up to their expectations – that of Betting, gambling, competitions, prize draws and lotteries – presumably related to their having set their hopes of winning too high.

Apart from this market, the other poorly performing markets in terms of expectations were those which did not perform well on other key performance indicators and also tended to be characterised by an above average level of 'non-committal' scores (40 to 60 out of 100). In terms of Living up to expectations, the markets for Gas and electricity, Estate agents and house purchasing services, Private sector renting and Private pension plans all achieved an average score of less than 70.

Among other markets performing relatively poorly in terms of Living up to expectations were those related to multimedia and communications: Internet service providers, Fixed line telephone services; Mobile phone network services and TV service providers.

On the other hand, nearly half the markets achieved an average score of at least 80; headed by CDs, videos, DVDs, video games, New vehicles, TVs, DVD or MP3 players, Jewellery, silverware, clocks or watches and Books, newspapers or magazines.

Of the six key performance indicators, Living up to expectations was the only one in which Petrol, diesel and oil did not feature in the bottom (red) tier. In this middling group it was joined by other associated markets such as Used vehicles and Vehicle repairs and servicing.

Ratings on 'living up to expectations'

Markets achieving higher ratings Mean scores of 79 to 84	**Markets achieving middling ratings** Mean scores of 74 to 78	**Markets achieving lower ratings** Mean scores of 63 to 73
CDs, videos, DVDs, video games (84)	Home improvement products (78)	Hire purchase, loans or credit (73)
New vehicles	Used vehicles	Professional services
TVs, DVD or MP3 players	DIY materials or hardware	Personal banking
Jewellery, silverware, clocks and watches	Air travel/ plane flights	TV service providers
Books, newspapers or magazines	Drinking/ eating out at pubs, restaurants, cafes, bars	Home maintenance services
Booking holidays	Vehicle repairs/ servicing	Mortgages
Floor coverings	Petrol, diesel or oil (74)	Mobile phone network services
Vets goods or services		Telephone services, fixed line
Garden equipment/ plants		Internet service providers
Bicycles/ repairs		Private pension plans
Large domestic appliances		Private sector renting
Sports/ hobbies goods/ services		Estate agents/ house purchase services
Hairdressing, barbers or beauty treatments		Gas/ electricity
Toiletries, perfumes, beauty products		Betting, gambling, competitions, prize draws, lotteries (63)
Clothing or footwear goods		
Food or drink for consumption at home		
Furniture or furnishings		
Small domestic appliances		
Car or vehicle insurance		
Hotel or other holiday accommodation in the UK		
Home insurance		
Toys/ games		
Chemist, pharmaceutical or medical products		
Personal computers/ software (79)		

Confidence in Protecting Consumers' Rights

Respondents were asked how much confidence they had that their rights in each market were protected. Although the level of 'Don't know' responses was relatively low, the high level of 'neutral' scores of 40 to 60 out of 100 (30% overall) and the relatively low overall average score for this KPI (66) indicates several consumers were less sure how to rate markets on this factor. While those markets with the highest level of neutral scores also tended to be the markets with the poorest ratings, this relationship is not as evident in terms of Protecting consumers' rights as it was for comparing Choice.

Consumers had the most confidence that their rights are protected when it came to matters of health. For example, the market for Chemist, pharmaceutical and medical products achieved the highest rating, while Drinking and eating out at pubs, restaurants, cafes or bars also performed relatively well on this KPI.

The reasons for the relatively high ratings achieved by some of the markets in the left hand (green) column in the table below, such as Clothing and footwear, may relate to people's experiences about the ease of returning or exchanging goods in such markets.

Relatively low scores were achieved in the markets for Petrol, diesel and oil, Gas and electricity, Home maintenance services, Estate agents and house purchasing services, Private pension plans and Internet service providers.

Other markets which performed relatively less well on Protecting consumer rights were New vehicles and Used vehicles, which both dropped down the rankings on this measure in comparison with their overall CCI score.

Ratings on 'protecting consumers' rights'

Markets achieving higher ratings Mean scores of 70 to 75	**Markets achieving middling ratings** Mean scores of 64 to 69	**Markets achieving lower ratings** Mean scores of 50 to 63
Chemist, pharmaceutical or medical products (75)	Car or vehicle insurance (69)	Hire purchase, loans or credit (63)
Clothing or footwear goods	Personal computers/ software	TV service providers
Garden equipment/ plants	Floor coverings	Air travel/ plane flights
Books, newspapers or magazines	New vehicles	Mortgages
CDs, videos, DVDs, video games	Vets goods or services	Professional services
Food or drink for consumption at home	Furniture or furnishings	Telephone services, fixed line
Jewellery, silverware, clocks and watches	Home insurance	Mobile phone network services
Small domestic appliances	Betting, gambling, competitions, prize draws, lotteries	Used vehicles
Hotel or other holiday accommodation in the UK	Personal banking	Vehicle repairs/ servicing
Toys/ games	Home improvement products (64)	Private sector renting
TVs, DVD or MP3 players		Internet service providers
Toiletries, perfumes, beauty products		Private pension plans
Hairdressing, barbers or beauty treatments		Estate agents/ house purchase services
Sports/ hobbies goods/ services		Home maintenance services
Booking holidays		Gas/ electricity
Bicycles/ repairs		Petrol, diesel or oil (50)
Large domestic appliances		
Drinking/ eating out at pubs, restaurants, cafes, bars		
DIY materials or hardware (70)		

Confidence in Advertising and Marketing

Respondents were asked how much confidence they had that businesses in each market advertised and marketed their goods and services in a trustworthy manner.

This dimension of consumer confidence attracted lower scores overall than the other five dimensions (64 on average across all markets). Although the level of 'Don't know' responses was not out of line with the other dimensions (3%), the relatively high proportion giving 'neutral' scores of 40 to 60 (34% overall) indicated this dimension was one consumers were less confident about rating.

The best performing market was Garden equipment and plants, followed by other markets which were also in the top tier on most of the other KPI measures, such as CDs, videos, DVDs, video games, Clothing and footwear and Books, newspapers and magazines.

Markets achieving a middling rating included a wide variety, such as Personal computers or software, Toiletries, perfumes or beauty products, Personal banking, Furniture or furnishings and New vehicles.

The markets with the lowest scores on this dimension were Gas and electricity, Home maintenance services, Private pension plans, Internet service providers and Petrol, diesel and oil - all scored less than 57.

Several other markets also failed to score more than 60, and these tended to be the same markets that were in the bottom tier on most of the other measures.

Markets such as Used vehicles and Home improvement products, were relatively less well rated on this dimension than on most other KPIs.

On the other hand, Drinking and eating out at pubs, restaurants, cafes or bars, Chemist, pharmaceutical or medical products and Vets goods or services were rated relatively better on this KPI than others.

Ratings on confidence in trustworthiness of advertising and marketing

Markets achieving higher ratings Mean scores of 69 to 74	**Markets achieving middling ratings** Mean scores of 61 to 68	**Markets achieving lower ratings** Mean scores of 51 to 60
Garden equipment/ plants (74)	Booking holidays (68)	Telephone services, fixed line (60)
CDs, videos, DVDs, video games	Food or drink for consumption at home	Used vehicles
Clothing or footwear goods	DIY materials or hardware	Mobile phone network services
Books, newspapers or magazines	Large domestic appliances	Professional services
Hairdressing, barbers or beauty treatments	Floor coverings	Private sector renting
Jewellery, silverware, clocks and watches	Personal computers/ software	Home improvement products
Bicycles/ repairs	New vehicles	Mortgages
Chemist, pharmaceutical or medical products	Toiletries, perfumes, beauty products	Vehicle repairs/ servicing
Hotel or other holiday accommodation in the UK	Car or vehicle insurance	Hire purchase, loans or credit
Small domestic appliances	Furniture or furnishings	Estate agents/ house purchase services
TVs, DVD or MP3 players	Personal banking	Internet service providers
Drinking/ eating out at pubs, restaurants, cafes, bars	Betting, gambling, competitions, prize draws, lotteries	Private pension plans
Sports/ hobbies goods/ services	Home insurance	Petrol, diesel or oil
Toys/ games	TV service providers	Home maintenance services
Vets goods or services (69)	Air travel/ plane flights (61)	Gas/ electricity (51)

Complaints

Respondents were asked whether or not, in the past year or two, they had made a complaint in any of the markets they were questioned about, and if not, whether or not they felt they had had any cause to complain.

When assessing the findings regarding the level of complaints, it should be borne in mind that figures do not relate to the seriousness or significance of a complaint and may be affected by other factors, such as:

- the ease, or difficulty, of making a complaint in a particular market. Thus, for example, markets such as Food and drink or Eating out where 'you are on hand', and it is relatively easy to make a complaint, may have a higher percentage of complaints than, for example, Mortgages or Private pension plans where it may not be as straightforward to make a complaint - such as requiring a letter or phone call (and it may not always be clear how or to whom to direct the complaint).

- the consumers' ability to understand the technical or financial complexities of goods and services, where consumers may feel they need to be more knowledgeable (such as with certain financial services products) or need more technical support; this could affect certain communications or multimedia markets.

- whether or not the consumer believes a complaint will achieve a satisfactory outcome or have any effect, or be worth the 'bother' or is 'out of anyone's hands' (such as perhaps with Pensions, Mortgages or Petrol).

The findings regarding complaints have not been factored into the calculation of the overall CCI score as consumers may, in theory, mark down a market in which they had cause to complain. While this is only an assumption, the results do indicate that markets with poorer mean scores also tended to have a higher proportion of complainers. Therefore if the complaints data was also factored into markets' CCI scores, the overall CCI score would have been 'double down - weighted'.

It should also be noted that the significance of the complaint was not explored; for example, in some markets with infrequently purchased products or services complaints may be infrequent but could be associated with high consumer detriment.

There is a broad relationship between the overall CCI scores and the level of complaints in that those markets with higher CCI scores generally had a lower level of complaints. However, there were 'anomalies', but these tended to be logical or partly explained by the factors referred to above (even when 'cause to complain' was included).

Examples of markets with lower CCI scores and a relatively low level of complaints included Private pension plans, Mortgages, Petrol, diesel, oil, Betting, gambling, competitions, prize draws, lotteries and Hire purchase, loans or credit.

Markets with higher CCI scores and a relatively high level of complaints include: Food and drink for consumption at home, Drinking, eating out at pubs, restaurants or bars, and Personal computers or software (see graphic on page 16).

One market in particular had a significantly higher level of total complaints (actually made or had cause to) than any other – Internet service providers - 39% (with 30% having actually made a complaint).

In four other markets around one in three made a complaint or felt they had 'cause to complain' (the percentage who actually made a complaint is shown in brackets below):

- ➢ TV service providers (25%)
- ➢ Drinking/eating out at pubs, restaurants, cafes, bars (26%)
- ➢ Mobile phone network services (24%)
- ➢ Private sector renting (21%)

Markets also experiencing a relatively higher level of total complaints were (the percentage who actually made a complaint is shown in brackets):

- ➢ Home improvement products (23%)
- ➢ Telephone services, fixed line (20%)
- ➢ Gas or electricity (21%)
- ➢ Personal computers, software (19%)
- ➢ Vehicle repairs or servicing (19%)
- ➢ Home maintenance services (18%)

The markets with the lowest level of total complaints (with fewer than one in ten making a complaint or felt they had cause to) were:

- ✓ Betting, gambling, competitions, prize draws or lotteries (3%)
- ✓ Toiletries, perfumes or beauty products (3%)
- ✓ Chemist, pharmaceutical or medical products (4%)
- ✓ Hairdressing, barbers or beauty treatments (5%)
- ✓ Books, newspapers or magazines (5%)

Those respondents who are relatively more likely to say they have complained or had cause to complain included those who felt at a disadvantage in any of the markets, and/or those aged under 55, those in the ABC1 social grades, internet users, those in the higher income bracket, BME and/or male consumers.

The results for all markets are shown in the table below. The percentages are a combination of those who actually made a complaint plus those who felt they had cause to complain (in the past year or two, in the markets they were being questioned about).

Markets with a lower level of total complaints (6% to 15%)	**Markets with an 'average' level of total complaints** (18% to 21%)	**Markets with a higher level of total complaints** (23% to 39%)
Betting, gambling, competitions, prize draws, lotteries (6%)	Hire purchase, loans or credit (18%)	Food or drink for consumption at home (23%)
Toiletries, perfumes, beauty products	Used vehicles	Professional services
Chemist, pharmaceutical or medical products	Hotel or other holiday accommodation in the UK	Personal banking
Books, newspapers or magazines	Large domestic appliances	Vehicle repairs/ servicing
Private pension plans	TVs, DVD or MP3 players	Estate agents/ house purchase services
Home insurance	Clothing or footwear goods	Personal computers/ software
Hairdressing, barbers or beauty treatments	DIY materials or hardware	Home maintenance services
Car or vehicle insurance	New vehicles	Gas/ electricity
Garden equipment/ plants	Small domestic appliances	Telephone services, fixed line
Vets goods or services	Air travel/ plane flights	Home improvement products
Floor coverings	Furniture or furnishings (21%)	Private sector renting
Jewellery, silverware, clocks and watches		TV service providers
Petrol, diesel or oil		Mobile phone network services
Mortgages		Drinking/ eating out at pubs, restaurants, cafes, bars
Bicycles/repairs		Internet service providers (39%)
Toys/games		
CDs, videos, DVDs, video games		
Booking holidays		
Sports/hobbies goods/services (15%)		

Channels of Purchase

The most common channel of purchase was ‘at the shop or retail outlet’. This accounted for the great majority of transactions and was relatively more common (accounting for over 90% of purchases) in the following markets:

- Drinking or eating out at pubs, restaurants, cafes, bars
- Hairdressing, barbers or beauty products
- Jewellery, silverware, clocks, watches
- Chemist, pharmaceutical or medical products
- Toiletries, perfumes, beauty products
- Petrol, diesel or oil
- DIY materials or hardware

In markets such as Vehicle or Home insurance, Fixed line telephone services or Internet service providers, telephone transactions were common - but not for Mobile phone network services, where an ‘in person at the retail outlet’ transaction predominated (perhaps relating to associated handset purchases). For Private pension plans there were, understandably, a variety of other responses regarding the nature of the transaction, such as ‘direct debit or deductions from pay’. Direct debit was also cited for Gas and electricity and Fixed line telephone services.

For Home maintenance services, a market with a relatively low CCI score, a quarter of the transactions were over the phone and a quarter were ‘in person at the doorstep’. Home improvement products, where doorstep transactions were also common, had a higher proportion of transactions at the retail outlet (and a higher CCI score).

Internet or email transactions were the most popular method of purchase for Air travel and plane flights and Booking holidays or Hotel accommodation. Transactions over the internet were also relatively common for CDs, videos, DVDs or video games, Personal computers and software, TVs, DVD or MP3 players, Toys and games, Personal banking and Hire purchase, loans or credit.

The overall CCI score for all markets was 71, for transactions made over the internet or for at the retail outlet this rose to 73, but dropped to 67 for telephone or mail order transactions and 66 for ‘in person on the doorstep’. Comparing choice was the KPI which achieved the highest scores overall (78); this rose to 81 for purchases over the internet and 80 for those in person at a retail outlet. For comparing prices the internet also attained the highest score (76), ahead of ‘in person at a retail outlet’ (72). Least well rated on this KPI were purchases ‘over the phone’ (67), ‘by mail or mail order’ (65) or ‘in person at the doorstep’ (64). A similar pattern emerged in terms of comparing Quality as well as for the other KPIs. Overall, ‘by mail or mail order’ or ‘in person at the doorstep’ attained lower scores than purchasing via the internet or at the retail outlet, while the scores relating to ‘over the phone’ were in between. ‘Over the phone’ transactions were marginally more likely to be involved in complaints than other channels (22% compared with 20% for via the internet and 19% for other channels).

It is interesting that for Protecting consumers’ rights, Living up to expectations and the Trustworthiness of advertising and marketing, there was little difference between internet and in-store purchasing in terms of the scores attained – and, as noted above, both attained higher scores than the other channels.

A relatively higher proportion of respondents aged 55 and over or those in the lower income groups transacted in person, while internet transactions were relatively more common among higher income groups and/or those aged under 55, especially among those aged 16 to 34.

Vulnerable or Disadvantaged Consumers

Respondents were asked whether or not they felt at any particular disadvantage in any of the markets – *“for example, because of any health problems, of access to shops, or making sense of the information, or your financial circumstances”*. This comprehensive definition was suggested by George & Lennard Associates following their Literature Review of the ways various consumer studies had tacked this issue as it avoided stereotyping consumers and was in line with the objectives of the study.

Overall 22% of the total sample felt they were at a disadvantage in at least one of the markets they were asked about. In general, differences between markets were small. There seemed to be little pattern to the markets where this proportion tended to be higher (27% to 29%), which were:

- Private sector renting
- Used vehicles
- Estate agents and house purchase services
- Professional services
- Home maintenance services
- Petrol, diesel or oil

The proportion feeling at a disadvantage was relatively lower (under 20%) for:

- Books, newspapers, magazines
- Betting, gambling, competitions, prize draws, lotteries
- Drinking and eating out in pubs, restaurants, cafes, bars

There seemed to be little pattern to the markets where the proportion feeling disadvantaged tended to be higher or to be lower, except perhaps in terms of perceptions of current price or value for money; yet the scores they gave for Comparing prices were not out of line with the scores they gave on the other KPIs.

Those who did feel at a disadvantage gave significantly lower scores to the markets they were asked about on all the six key performance measures. Among disadvantaged consumers their overall CCI score was 66 - compared with 71 for the whole sample; and for Protecting consumers rights and for Trustworthy advertising and marketing, their score dropped to below 60.

In general and in the above markets, those feeling they were at a disadvantage were not differentiated in terms of age, but were relatively more likely to:

- have a disability
- be in the DE social grade
- be female
- have made a complaint or felt they had cause to complain
- to have transacted over the phone (no difference regarding internet use)
- be in a low household income (up to £12k gross pa)

However, it is interesting to note that those from a low income household gave significantly higher scores on all the KPIs than those from a high income household, especially in terms of comparing Quality.

The Markets: the Characteristics of Consumers

The overall sample was representative of the population of the UK, and, to a large extent, the sample for each market reflected the socio-demographics of the consumers active in each market. For example, nearly all those active in the markets for Personal computers, Internet service providers, Mobile phone network services used the internet. On the other hand, internet use was lower among those interviewed in the markets for Gas and electricity, Home insurance or Garden equipment and plants.

However, markets also reflected the socio-demographics of the consumers active in these markets, such as age and social grade. For example, in the Internet or Mobile phone network services markets consumers were relatively more likely to be in the ABC1 social grade and/or aged under 65. On the other hand in the markets for Home insurance or Garden equipment and plants the consumers interviewed were relatively more likely to be aged 55 and over.

The main socio-demographic differences observed between markets tended to be the more obvious life-style and age-sensitive ones noted above; such as:

Market	**Characteristics: - relatively more likely to be:**
Bicycles and repairs	ABC1; aged 16 – 54; male, high income*; working; no disability
Toys and games	Aged under 55; use internet
Sports, hobby goods/services	Aged under 55; use internet
TVs, DVD or MP3 players	Aged 16 - 34
Private sector renting	Aged under 34; use internet; working; BME
Estate agents, house purchasing services	ABC1; high income*, working; use internet
Professional services	ABC1; aged 55+;
New cars/vehicles	ABC1; high income*;
Used cars/vehicles	C1C2; working; aged under 55; use internet;
Air travel, plane flights	ABC1; aged under 34;
Home maintenance services	ABC1, aged 55+,
Mortgages	Working; aged 35 – 54; ABC1; high income*; internet use
Private pension plans	ABC1; working; aged 55+;
Hire purchase, loans, credit	ABC1; high income*; use internet
Betting, gambling, competitions, prize draws/lotteries	Aged 55+; C2DE; low income; lower internet use

('high income' = £30k and over pa; 'low income' = Up to £12k pa)*

Those who were relatively more likely to give higher scores on the key performance measures tended to be those aged 55 and over, those in the low (or middle) income brackets, those not working, those who do not use the internet or are white British and/or female consumers. However, those in the 16 to 34 age group gave relatively higher scores on Quality, Price, Consumer rights and Advertising.

Those from a low income household gave significantly higher scores on all the KPIs than those from high income households (73 vs 70), especially in terms of comparing Quality (73 vs 68). In terms of social grade, it was noticeable that those in the AB social grade gave lower scores across all KPIs.

Appendices

The Questionnaire

"Good morning, afternoon, evening. My name is …… , and I'm calling from Ipsos MORI, the research organisation. We are carrying out a government survey about what people think about certain types of goods, services and businesses. The interview will take around 15 minutes.

I would like to assure you that all the information we collect will be kept in the strictest confidence, and used for research purposes only. The results will be reported anonymously as statistics, and will be used to improve the service received by consumers".

ELIGIBILITY Qs

Q1 **I'm going to read out a short list of markets for particular goods and services and, for each one, please tell me whether or not you have made any purchases, made a payment or had any dealings in that market, in the UK, in the last year or two.**

A) Firstly thinking about …(READ OUT NAME OF MARKET) … **have you had any dealings with, or made a purchase or payment for anything in this market in the UK, in the past year or two, excluding just browsing?**

B) And thinking about …(READ OUT NAME OF MARKET) **… have you had any dealings with, or made a purchase or payment for anything in this market in the UK, in the past year or two, excluding just browsing?**

C) And thinking about …(READ OUT NAME OF MARKET) **… have you had any dealings with, or made a purchase or payment for anything in this market in the UK, in the past year or two, excluding just browsing?**

D) And thinking about …(READ OUT NAME OF MARKET) **… have you had any dealings with, or made a purchase or payment for anything in this market in the UK, in the past year or two, excluding just browsing?**

CONTINUE READING OUT MARKETS UNTIL 4 ARE COVERED
CODE ALL THE ONES READ OUT BUT NOT ELIGIBLE

NOTE MARKETS (name and code) TO BE COVERED:			
A.			
B.			
C.			
D.			
E.			

I am now going to ask you a few questions about your recent experience of dealing with, buying or making payments for goods and services in these markets. For each please think about your <u>most recent</u> dealing, payment or purchase in that particular market.
By 'market' I mean all the businesses - manufacturers, shops and traders - that provide the goods and services in that market.

Q2 **How easy, or how difficult, was it to compare the <u>quality</u> of goods and services in the ………………………… market? Please answer on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means it is very difficult and 10 means it is very easy to compare the quality of goods and services in this market.**
SINGLE CODE

	Difficult									Easy	DK
0	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	11

Q3 **How easy, or how difficult, was it to compare <u>prices</u> in the …………………… market? Please answer on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means it is very difficult and 10 means it is very easy to compare the prices of goods and services in this market.**
SINGLE CODE

	Difficult									Easy	DK
0	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	11

Q4 **Thinking of the <u>range</u> of goods and services available in the …………………….. market, how much choice do you think there is in this market? Please answer on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means there is very little choice, and 10 means there is plenty of choice of goods and services.**
SINGLE CODE

	Very little choice									Plenty of choice	DK
0	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	11

Q5 **How well, or how poorly, do you think what you bought or experienced in the ………………………. market lived up to what you wanted? Please answer on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means it did not, and 10 means it did, live up to what you wanted.**
SINGLE CODE

	Did not									Did	DK
0	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	11

And now moving on to your general impressions of this …………………….. market

Q6 **How much, or how little, confidence do you have that consumers' rights in the ………………………. market are protected? Please answer on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means you have no confidence, and 10 means you have a lot of confidence that consumers' rights are protected in this market.**
SINGLE CODE

	No									Lot	DK
0	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	11

Q7	**How much, or how little, confidence do you have that businesses in the ………………………. market advertise and market their goods and services in a trustworthy manner? Please answer on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means you have little confidence, and 10 means you have a lot of confidence that businesses advertise and market their goods and services in a trustworthy manner in this market.** SINGLE CODE										
	Little								Lot	DK
0	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	11

Q8 **a) Have you made a complaint about a product or service in the ……… market in the UK in the past year or two?**
IF 'NO' ASK (b), OTHERS GO TO NEXT Q.
b) Have you had any cause for complaint about a product or service in the …….. market in the UK in the past year or two?

	Yes	NO	Don't know
Made a complaint	1	2	3
Cause to complain	1	2	3

Q9. How was your most recent purchase, payment or dealings with businesses in the …………………… … market made?
IF NECESSARY PROMPT **For example was it over the phone, the internet, at a shop or some other way?** SINGLE CODE

- **a) over the phone?**
- **b) in person - at the shop, retail outlet?**
- **c) over the internet/by email?**
- **d) by mail or mail order?**
- **e) in person - doorstep?**
- **f) in person, from a street trader?**
- Other
- DK

QUESTIONS 1 TO 9 ARE THEN REPEATED FOR THE OTHER 3 MARKETS IN WHICH THEY HAVE TRANSACTED IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

ASK JUST THE ONCE, AT THE END
Q33. **Do you feel at any particular disadvantage in getting a good deal in any of the 4 markets we have discussed? For example, because of any health problems, of access to shops, or making sense of the information, or your financial circumstances?**

Yes ……………. ASK Q34
No
DK

Q34. **In which of the 4 markets we've discussed is there a particular problem?**
ENTER UP TO 4 MARKET CODES
DK

DEMOGRAPHICS
And now just a few questions to ensure we have talked to a wide variety of people …
Socio-demographic data on age, gender, working status, household income, region and internet use also captured.

List of the 45 Market Sectors

	Home, fittings and appliances
	Home maintenance services (such as plumbers, decorators, electricians)
	Home improvement products (such as conservatories, extensions, loft conversions, windows, doors)
	Furniture or furnishings (such as curtains)
	Floor coverings (such as carpets)
	TVs, DVD or MP3 players
	TV service providers (such as satellite or cable)
	Internet service providers
	Personal computers or software
	Telephone services, fixed line, not mobiles
	Mobile phone network services, not handsets
	Large domestic appliances (such as a washing machine, cooker, dishwasher or fridge freezer)
	Small domestic appliances (such as an iron, vacuum cleaner, toaster or kettle)
	Food or drink for consumption at home
	Gas or electricity
	Garden equipment or plants
	DIY materials or hardware

	Personal goods and services
	Clothing or footwear goods
	Chemist, pharmaceutical or medical products (including from the chemist, but not toiletries or cosmetics)
	Toiletries, perfumes, beauty products or hairdressing goods
	Hairdressing, barbers or beauty treatments
	Jewellery, silverware, clocks and watches

	Professional and financial services
	Personal banking
	Hire purchase, loans or credit (excluding mortgages, including credit cards)
	Car or vehicle insurance
	Home insurance (buildings or contents)
	Mortgages
	Private pension plans
	Professional services (such as solicitors, surveyors, accountants)
	Estate agents or house purchase services (excluding conveyancing or surveys)
	Renting a property or management services from a private landlord

	Transport
	New cars or vehicles
	Used cars or vehicles
	Vehicle repairs or servicing
	Bicycles or repairs
	Petrol, diesel or oil
	Air travel or plane flights

	Leisure
	Booking holidays to be taken within or outside the UK (from travel agents or online, excluding just flights)
	Hotel or other holiday accommodation in the UK
	Drinking or eating out at pubs, restaurants, cafes, bars
	Books, newspapers or magazines
	Sports or hobbies, goods or services
	Toys or games, excluding internet video games
	CDs, videos, DVDs, video games or other computer software
	Vet's goods or services for pets or animals
	Betting, gambling, competitions, prize draws or lotteries

The Sample Profile and Weighting

The data are weighted to the national UK profile using target rim weights for age, gender, social class, working status and region.

The percentages described below as 'weighted' are the figures from the 2001 census data describing the UK Household profile and these figures were used to weight the data. 'Unweighted,' is the percentage of interviews achieved in the 2008 survey.

As can be seen below, the sample profile achieved closely matched that of the UK population profile as a whole, thus the weights that needed to be applied were minimal. The main differences related to age and gender, and this was largely a reflection of the type of markets covered (such as more women purchasers, fewer young purchasers).

Figures are based on household	**% Weighted to census profile**	**% Unweighted in sample**
Gender – Male 16+	48%	43%
Gender – Female 16+	52%	57%
Age – 16-34	31%	25%
Age – 35-54	35%	35%
Age – 55+	34%	40%
Social Grade - AB	25%	29%
Social Grade – C1	28%	29%
Social Grade – C2	20%	16%
Social Grade - DE	24%	25%
Working Status – working	59%	55%
Working Status – not working	41%	45%
Region - London	12%	12%
Region – South East/Eastern	23%	23%
Region – South West	9%	9%
Region – Midlands	16%	16%
Region – North East; Yorks; Humber	13%	12%
Region – North West	11%	11%
Region - Scotland	9%	9%
Region - Wales	5%	5%
Region – Northern Ireland	3%	3%
White British/Irish*	89%	89%
BME *	10%	10%

* Where figures do not add to 100%, it is because the remainder refused to answer.

Statistical Reliability

Any survey which is not conducted amongst the total population, but amongst a sample drawn from the total population is open to certain sampling tolerances. A sample of 500 consumers per market was selected in order to ensure the results are be robust and that comparisons between markets, and over time if necessary, would be meaningful. Nevertheless, all results are subject to margins of error, which means that not all differences are statistically significant. The table below shows the confidence intervals for the sample sizes associated with this project, in relation to percentages of respondents. While it is important to note these confidence intervals, when interpreting the results the statistical reliability information on the following page, which relates to the mean scores, is also very pertinent to this study.

For example, for a finding that 30% of respondents (in a sample of approximately 500) say they made a complaint in a particular market, the chances are 95 in 100 that the 'true' result (which would have been obtained by interviewing every consumer instead of a sample of 500) falls between 26% and 34% (30% plus or minus 4 percentage points). However, the result is proportionately more likely to be near the centre (30%) of this confidence interval than its extremes (26% or 34%).

If the results of 2 markets with sub-sample sizes of 500 are being compared, then a difference of at least ±6 percentage points would have to be seen between the markets to conclude that there is a real difference in the population at the 5% level of significance.

It should be borne in mind that confidence intervals and significance tests can strictly only be calculated for random probability samples, although it is generally accepted that good quality quota samples, such as this one, behave in the same way, and this assumption underlies the figures in the table below. Furthermore, these margins of error are also likely to be increased by design issues such as weighting, which reduce the *effective* base size – in this case, the impact of the weighting reduced the effective base size of the total sample from 5,496 to 5,107, and reduces the effective base sizes of individual markets to a range of 477 to 459.

Table 1

Percentage point difference required to consider the findings reliable - statistically significant at the 95% confidence level			
Percentage result	***10% or 90%***	***30% or 70%±***	***50%***
Overall reliability	Plus or minus	Plus or minus	Plus or minus
5,496	1	2	2
5,107	1	2	2
2,000 (eg approx no. of men)	2	2	3
1,000 (eg approx no. aged 65+)	2	3	4
500	3	4	5
459	3	5	5
Comparing sub-groups against total			
5,107 versus 1,000	2	3	3
5,107 versus 459	3	4	5
Comparing different sample sizes			
5,107 versus 5,107	2	2	2
2,000 versus 2,000	2	3	4
1,000 versus 1,000	3	4	5
477 versus 459	4	6	7
Source: Ipsos MORI			

It should also be noted that these figures only relate to variability in the data due to sampling error. There are other possible sources of survey error, for example coverage error (where the sample does not match the required total population, such as the proportion of people who do not have access to a landline telephone, eg mobile-only households), non-response error (which the weighting is partly designed to counter), measurement error, or processing error (where a mistake is made in the data processing – this should not apply to this survey given the use of CATI and other quality procedures). Measurement error may arise because people do not understand the question, misremember, are unable to answer according to the required scale, under-report socially undesirable attitudes or behaviours, or otherwise are unable to give a 'true' answer to a question. For example, in this case people were asked about their experience over the past one to two years, and errors may have occurred in their recall of events – for example people are more likely to recall particularly significant events or purchases than day-to-day ones, and may find it easier to recall particularly bad experiences than particularly good ones. This was the reason for running the cognitive pilot interviews, in order to test this and minimise the likelihood of such measurement error.

In table 1 is shown the 95% confidence intervals and differences required between sub-groups for there to be a significant difference at the 5% level. However table 1 relates to percentages only and therefore cannot be used when looking at mean scores for the CCI index or the six KPIs. Thus information on the distribution of the answers to the KPIs (i.e. the standard deviation) has to be used to calculate confidence intervals and the 'least significant difference' for it to be significant between sub-groups. This information is provided in table 2 for one example market and in the paragraph below it. Another point to note about table 2 is the lower standard deviation for the CCI index. The reason why it is lower is because it is an index, made up as an average of the 6 KPIs – ie a 'mean of means'. Therefore it will naturally have less spread in the distribution of scores as it is unlikely to find many people who answered at the extremes, scores of '0' or '10' to all 6.

Table 2

Confidence intervals for mean scores – example market[1]

KPI:	**Base excl. Don't knows**	**Mean score**	**Standard deviation**	**Lower confidence interval**	**Upper confidence Interval**
Quality	433	59.9	28.3	57.2	62.6
Price	433	57.6	29.4	54.8	60.4
Choice	453	61.8	27.1	59.3	64.3
Expectation	466	65	26.8	62.6	67.4
Consumer Rights	458	53.4	27.9	50.8	56
Advertising	465	51.2	27.2	48.7	53.7
CCI	482	58.3	23.6	56.2	60.4

Source: Ipsos MORI

For example, for the 'Price' KPI with a mean score of 57.6 out of 100, the chances are 95 in 100 that the 'true' result lies between 54.8 and 60.4 (a difference of approximately 3 points either way). When compared to another market (assuming a similar standard deviation and base size), the difference would need to be equal to or greater than 4 points to conclude that there is a significant difference between the mean scores on the KPI for these two groups.

[1] Note these figures are actually out of 10 – they have been multiplied by 10 to give a figure out of 100 for presentational purposes.

On the other hand, for the CCI with a mean score of 58.3, the chances are 95 in 100 that the 'true' result lies between 56.2 and 60.4 (a difference of approximately 2 points either way – as it has a lower standard deviation because it is a 'mean of means'). When compared to another market (assuming a similar standard deviation and base size), the difference would need to be equal to or greater than 3 points to conclude that there is a significant difference between the mean scores on the CCI index for these two groups.

Given this market has some of the widest variation and standard deviation scores, it seems reasonable to use these intervals as rules of thumb when looking for significant differences between markets on their KPIs and CCI score.

Calculating the Consumer Confidence Index (CCI) Score

The issue of how best to calculate the CCI score is not a straightforward one. The calculation needs to be relatively simple, transparent, comprehensible, equitable and justifiable in its use of the data.

For example, there is the issue of whether or not (and if so how) to factor in the level of complaints into the CCI score. However, it could be argued that to some extent the dimension of 'complain and cause to complain' is already factored into the scores – as respondents would in theory, mark down a market in which they had cause to complain. While this is only a logical assumption and may not necessarily be the case, results do indicate that markets with lower mean scores also tend to have a higher proportion of complainers (although not in every case).

Therefore if the complaints data was also factored into markets' CCI scores, the overall CCI score would have been 'double down - weighted'. On this basis it was recommended to exclude the complaints responses in the calculation of the CCI itself, while using the analysis to examine the relationship between the number of complainers in a market and its CCI score.

Bearing in mind this and the need for transparency and simplicity, it was recommended that the CCI scores were produced based on the data from Q2 to Q7 (the six KPI questions on quality, price, choice, meeting expectations, consumer rights and advertising). There were two alternatives for this:

1) using the 'mean of means' combining scores from Q2 to 7 (for presentation purposes this has been scaled up to be a score out of 100 rather than out of 10, ie a score of 5.3 becomes 53 out of 100 and a score of 6.4 becomes 64).
2) using a 'Net' score - the % scoring 'easy' 8-10 minus the % scoring 'difficult' 0-2.

Overall, it was recommended to create the CCI score using option (1) – a mean score across the six key consumer questions – for the following reasons:

- it is clear and easy to explain
- it ensures that the full range of data is used.

Although there can be a tendency for mean (or 'mean of means') scores to cluster around the mid-point, the sample sizes in this survey are still large enough to detect significant differences between different groups of markets as shown in the report (well above average, above average, and just above average), and this, combined with the simplicity and clarity of the calculation, suggests that this 'mean of means' approach is the most appropriate.