

# **Consumer survey**

## **Annexe L of the doorstep selling report**

May 2004

OFT716L

# 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Office of Fair Trading (OFT) is a non-ministerial Government department with the responsibility of being the main UK fair trading authority. The Director General of Fair Trading has a general duty to keep under review activities that may be detrimental to the economic interests of the consumers.
- 1.2 The OFT is investigating the areas of the sale of goods and services both door to door and in-home after visits or demonstrations from salespeople. This research has been conducted to assess consumer's buying experience with respect to goods bought this way in terms of the initial approach from the salesperson, the sales process itself and the after sales experience and outcomes;. It is under these powers that the OFT is investigating the area of the sales of goods and services both door-to-door and in-home after visits or demonstrations from salespeople. This represents a particular area of concern for consumers and one which is frequently under the scrutiny of consumer watchdog and citizen advice bodies. One of the particular prompt for the research has been a complaint lodged by the Citizens Advice. This research has been conducted to assess consumers' buying experience with respect to goods bought this way in terms of the initial approach from the salesperson, the sales process itself and the after sales experience and outcomes.

## Objectives

- 1.3 The main emphasis of this research is to provide detailed assessment of the consumer experience of purchasing goods and services sold both door-to-door and in-home. In particular, consumer experience will be analysed according to the value and type of product or service sold, i.e.:
- Low and moderate value - with a value of less than £35
  - Intermediate value - with a value of between £35 and £500
  - High value - with a value of more than £500

1.4 More specifically, the research will:

- Look at the types of products and services purchased via this route
- Understand the nature of the contact process between salesperson and potential buyer
- Examine the sales process itself
- Assess the reasons for purchasing this way
- Measure satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the products/services purchased
- Look at the after sales experience
- Provide profile information on consumers in general to aid analysis of this market

1.5 While the main focus of the research amongst those engaging in doorstep or in-home purchasing has been on a recent purchase transaction which they are able to talk about, the research also explored consumers' buying patterns and attitudes in this area more generally amongst the general UK public.

## **Methodology**

1.6 All fieldwork was conducted using a computer-assisted telephone interviewing system (CATI). This was undertaken by fully trained interviewers at Synovate's specialist CATI centre. Strict monitoring and quality control procedures were adopted at all stages of the data collection process. A national random sample was selected for the UK using known residential telephone listings. The inclusion of ex-directory households was ensured by means of an algorithm to generate the last two digits of each of the original telephone numbers selected.

1.7 A structured questionnaire was developed in conjunction with the client and fully piloted prior to the start of main fieldwork. To encourage participation, the OFT was identified as the survey sponsor at the outset. The questionnaire included a short screening element to identify whether the person contacted was eligible for the main interview or not. To qualify for the main interview the respondent must have purchased goods or services in the last 6 months from a salesperson or representative that visited their home. This timeframe was extended to 12 months in the case of purchases with a value of over £500. Goods or services were categorised as follows:

- those with a value of under £35
- those with a value of £35-£500
- those with a value of over £500

1.8 Where a respondent had purchased goods or services from more than one of the above groups, the most appropriate category was selected for the main interview (based on the status of the quotas). Those changing their gas or electricity provider were allocated to the mid value segment in all cases.

1.9 Across May, June and early July 2003, a total of 9,662 adults aged 18+ were taken through the initial screening interview, from which 1,131 full interviews were achieved with purchasers. Amongst those eligible for the main interview and within quota (1,358 respondents), some 16% declined to take part in the main interview. The breakdown of the main interviews achieved, by value, was as follows:

< £35	429 interviews
£35-£500	483 interviews
Over £500	219 interviews

- 1.10 A proportion of those who had not purchased any goods or services in the last 6/12 months were taken through a 6-7 minute questionnaire about their general experiences of and attitudes towards door-to-door selling. A total of 4,245 such interviews were conducted.
- 1.11 After the coding of all data, tabulations were produced to an agreed specification. The contact sample was adjusted in terms of age, gender and region to correct any small-scale imbalances in the actual profile achieved. Weighting was also employed to correct any imbalances in the proportion of buyers (by value) and non-buyers selected for interview.

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 When asked about telephone calls attempting to sell them something and uninitiated by themselves, nearly 6 in every 10 (58%) UK adults claim to receive such calls every month or more. Over a 12-month period, the mean average number of unsolicited telephone sales calls was 14.
- 2.2 The frequency of unsolicited personal calls by a salesperson at the door was less commonplace. Nevertheless, some 1 in 4 (24%) claimed to receive such calls every month or more. Over a 12-month period, the mean average number of such visits was 6.
- 2.3 Some 39% of adults claim to have ever purchased from a door-to-door salesmen or representative, where the purchase was agreed in their home. Only a minority of those ever buying in this way do so with any regularity (8% stating this was once every 6 months or more).
- 2.4 Amongst the 61% who have never purchased from a door-to-door salesmen or representative, it is clear that a general wariness of door-to-door salespeople, a dislike of this type of approach and a preference for other traditional sales channels (allowing greater choice and price comparisons) represent the key drivers for not doing so. It is clearly evident that the majority of non-purchasers feel that this form of selling should be more tightly regulated and this is broadly consistent across all sections of the population. In fact, 4 in every 5 of those not purchasing in the previous 6 months believed that unsolicited sales calls at the doorstep should not be allowed, feeling that this represented an invasion of privacy.
- 2.5 Some 16% of UK adults were found to have purchased from a door-to-door salesmen or representative, where the purchase was agreed in their home, during the last 6 month period<sup>1</sup>. Seven% of respondents had bought goods or services from the lower value range (less than £35), 7% had done so from the medium value range (£35-£500) and 4% from the high value range (over £500). It is evident that a diverse range of goods and services are bought through the channel and the role of door-

to-door selling in the utilities sector (principally gas and electricity) is clearly apparent. Nevertheless, the traditional goods and services associated with this sector still appear to account for much of the activity.

- 2.6 By way of comparison, some 27% of UK adults claimed to have purchased a product (or service) from a catalogue in the last 6 months. In the majority of such cases (75%) the most recent purchase was of a value of under £35.
- 2.7 Focussing now on the experiences of recent purchasers (those purchasing over the previous 6 month period), convenience, value for money and particular product/service features appear as the key motivators for this mode of purchase. Further factors such as the expertise and effectiveness of the salesperson, the need for the service/product and the lack of alternative channels, tended to be more influential amongst higher value purchases.
- 2.8 The vast majority of in-home sales (71%) were unsolicited, that is the salesperson *initially* approached the respondent, and this was generally by calls at their door 'out of the blue'. Purchases of high value goods were significantly more likely to have been the result of solicited visits (62% of the high value purchases were solicited).
- 2.9 As would be expected, lower value purchases tended to take place on the doorstep (81%), whereas mid value and high value purchases were more likely to take place in home (67% and 91%). A salesperson calling out of the blue or one calling on a regular basis is less likely to come into the home.
- 2.10 One in every 5 (20%) recent purchasers had been visited by the salesperson before. Not surprisingly, this was much more likely amongst low value purchasers compared to mid or high value purchasers. Of those that had been visited by the salesperson before, 8 in every 10 had also purchased from them before.

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter, these are referred to as 'recent purchasers' in this report.

- 2.11 Overall, in the majority of cases (68%) the salesperson did show some form of identification. ID was most likely to be shown to those making a mid value purchase (80%), largely driven by the fact that a large number of the mid value purchases were for utility services and ID was shown in 94% of such sales.
- 2.12 Recent purchasers of high value goods were most likely to feel that specific 'sales techniques' had been adopted, with over half (53%) of all high value purchasers feeling this was the case (compared to 42% for mid value goods and 29% for low value goods). The key techniques that were used for high value sales were a high initial price followed up by the offer of a discount (33%), a discount available on the condition that the sale was agreed that day (31%), and, to a slightly lesser degree, telephoning a colleague or superior in order to secure a special deal or discount (21%).
- 2.13 At an overall level, it should be noted that salespeople are likely to be perceived to behave in a polite and helpful manner (93% agreement), to be generally well informed about the product they are selling (83% agreement) and to be clear about the price (82% agreement).
- 2.14 Of particular concern are purchasers' perceptions of the salesperson using pressure selling, making claims that were subsequently found to be untrue, unnecessarily prolonged visits, avoidance of price discussions and the salesperson seeming intent on selling the respondent something they didn't need. In all these case between 1 in 10 and 1 in 8 respondents showed agreement. Low value recent purchasers tend to hold less critical perceptions regarding the salesperson's behaviour than their higher value counterparts. Overall, 1 in every 20 recent purchasers indicated that they actually felt threatened or intimidated to some degree by the salesperson.
- 2.15 Overall 6 in every 10 respondents (59%) recalled being informed in some way of their cancellation rights. Those purchasing mid or high value goods were more likely to be informed.
- 2.16 Just under half (45%) of all respondents were required to sign any form of contract. As would be expected this increased for those purchasing

goods priced over £35. Over 6 in every 10 mid and high value purchasers (64% and 62%) were required to sign a contract, compared with just 13% of low value purchasers.

- 2.17 The vast majority of high value purchasers received a receipt (92%), compared to 4 in every 5 (79%) mid value purchasers and just over half of low value purchasers (56%).
- 2.18 One fifth (19%) of respondents recalled being offered credit facilities. This increased to half (49%) of all high value purchasers and 16% for mid value goods, and just 5% of low value goods. The offer of credit facilities was also particularly high among double glazing sales (54%).
- 2.19 As would be expected, high value goods were most likely to require a deposit compared with lower value goods. Two thirds of high value goods required a deposit (64%) compared to 1 in 10 of all mid value purchases (10%) and just 1% of low value purchases.
- 2.20 One in every 5 recent purchasers (20%) claimed that something unexpected had happened after their purchase. This is less likely to be the case with low value purchases (7%) and more likely for mid value (26%) and high value (31%) purchases.
- 2.21 Overall around three quarters of recent purchasers were satisfied to some extent with the goods or services they had bought. Broadly speaking, satisfaction with goods or services does not vary to any great extent across the different purchase value groups. Overall satisfaction is generally slightly lower when thinking about the sales process itself, with around 7 in every 10 being satisfied to some extent. High value purchasers expressed higher levels of satisfaction with the aspects of the sales process. Consistently higher levels of satisfaction were also seen amongst those receiving a solicited visit as opposed to an unsolicited visit.
- 2.22 Of all recent purchasers, 4% (41 respondents) judged that their purchase had not been a genuine transaction, and viewed it as a cover for a swindle, fraud or deception.

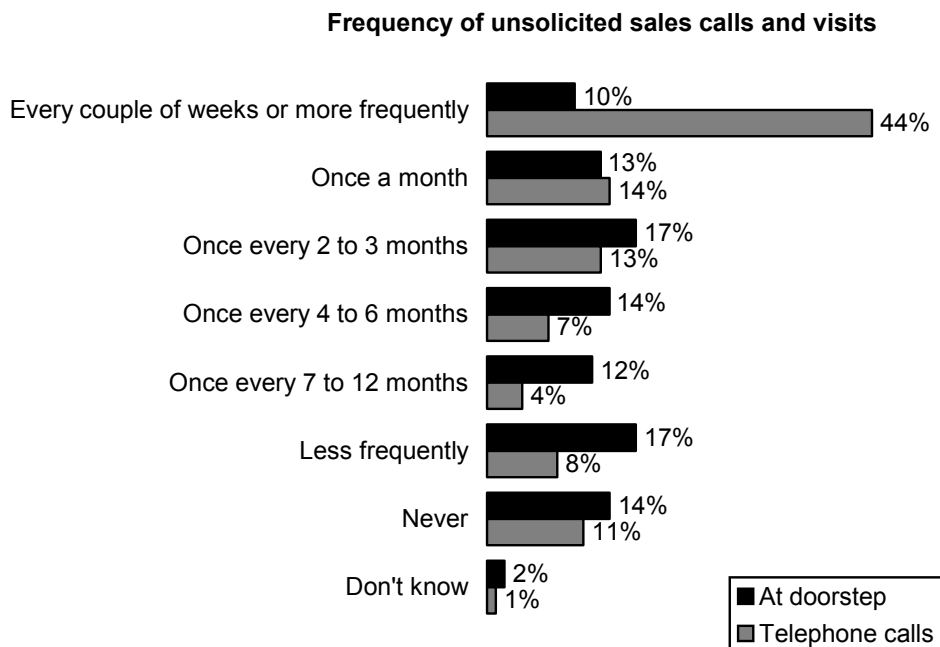
2.23 Those purchasers who were dissatisfied with any aspect of the sales process (17%) were further asked if they had reported the problem or made a complaint. Of those dissatisfied, a quarter (25%) had made a complaint. This was much higher amongst mid to high value purchasers. Just one fifth of those making a complaint felt the complaint had been resolved to their satisfaction.

### 3 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

#### General attitudes towards door to door selling

##### Frequency of unsolicited sales calls

3.1 The frequency with which door-to-door salespeople call at the door unannounced and the frequency of unsolicited telephone sales calls is summarised in the chart below.



Base: All non-purchasers asked contact interview and purchasers asked main interview (5,376)

3.2 The latter activity is clearly much more commonplace. Over 2 in 5 (44%) adults claim to receive such telephone calls every fortnight or more. Over a 12-month period, the mean average number of unsolicited telephone sales calls was 14. The frequency of unsolicited personal calls by a salesperson at the door was less commonplace. Nevertheless, some 1 in 4 (24%) claimed to receive such calls every month or more. Over a 12-month period, the mean average number of such visits was 6. Those

who had purchased goods or services in-home in the last 6 months were more likely to have received calls (at the doorstep or by phone) on a more frequent basis than non-purchasers.

- 3.3 The frequency of unsolicited sales calls, either at the door or by phone, was broadly comparable across all sections of the population with some exceptions. Those aged 55+ were less likely to recall receiving frequent doorstep visits, whilst this group were the most likely to receive more frequent unsolicited telephone calls. It is also interesting to note that higher income groups were generally more likely to recall receiving both types of sales calls on a more frequent basis than other groups.

### **Purchases made from catalogue in last six months**

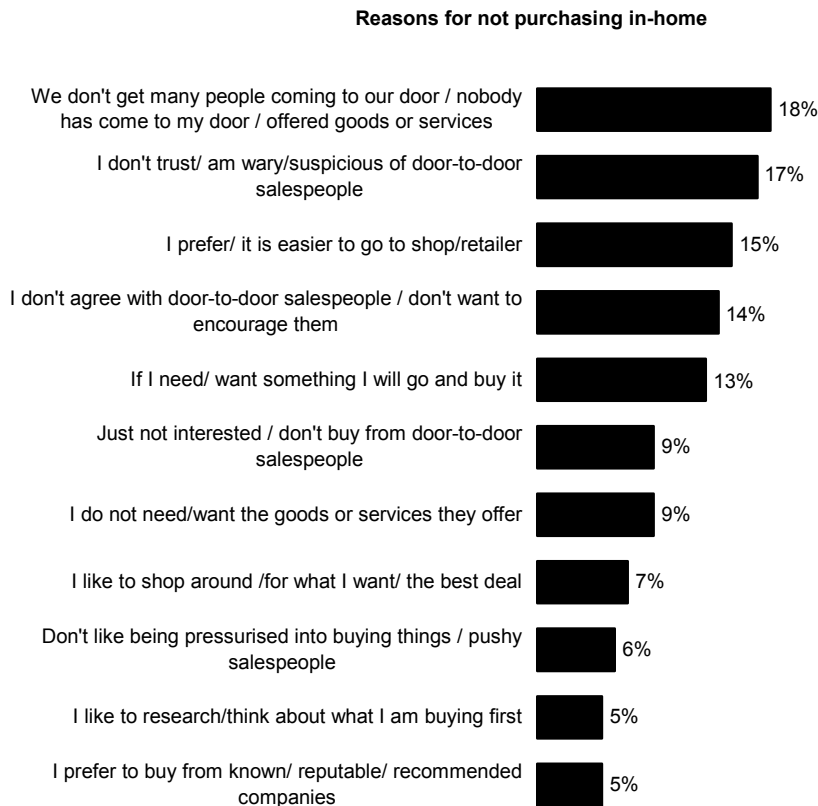
- 3.4 Whilst outside the strict remit of the study, information was also collected in the course of the interview about purchases made from catalogues left at the door or placed by a salesperson. Where a salesperson is not present when the selection of goods or services is made, such purchases are understood not to constitute in-home selling for the purposes of the research. Some 27% of adults claimed to have purchased a product (or service) in this way in the last 6 months. In the majority of such cases (75%) the most recent purchase was of a value of under £35.
- 3.5 Those who had purchased any goods or services in-home in the last 6 months (and where the sale had been agreed there and then) were more likely to claim to have also purchased from catalogues in the last 6 months (39%). Those aged 35+, females, low-mid income groups and those from C2DE socio-economic groups were all more likely to have purchased from a catalogue in the last 6 months.

### **Incidence of ever purchasing in-home**

- 5.6 Some 39% of adults claimed to have ever purchased from a door-to-door salesman or representative, where the transaction was agreed in their home. This was consistent amongst both men and women. Those aged 35-54 were most likely to have purchased in this way (at 43% compared to 36% of 18-34 year olds and 37% of those aged 55+).

3.7 It was also noted that upscale groups (ABC1's 44%, C2DE's 34%), those with higher household incomes (< 17.5K 38%, 17.5-35K 44%, > 35K 49%), those educated to degree level (O levels or below 35%, A levels 41%, Degree 46%) and those with difficulties shopping in the high street (45% compared to 38% of those not reporting any such difficulties), were all more likely to have purchased in this way.

3.8 Those never purchasing in this way (61%) were asked about their reasons for not doing so, the results of which are summarised in the chart below (mentions of 5% or more):

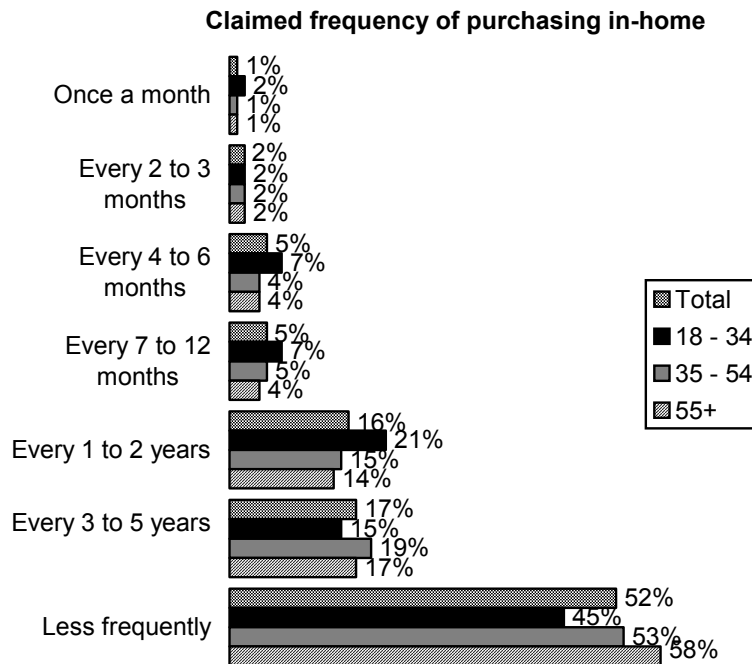


Base: Top mentions + 5%. All respondents who have never bought ANY goods or services from a door-to-door salesperson or representative (3,038)

3.9 It is evident that a general wariness of door-to-door salespeople, a dislike of this type of approach and a preference for other traditional sales channels (allowing greater choice and price comparisons) represent the key drivers for not purchasing in this way.

### Frequency of purchasing in-home

3.10 The chart below gives a breakdown of the claimed frequency of purchasing in-home amongst those who said that they ever do so, split by age.



Base: All respondents who have ever purchased in-home (2,296), 18 – 34 (480), 35 – 54 (1140), 55+ (676)

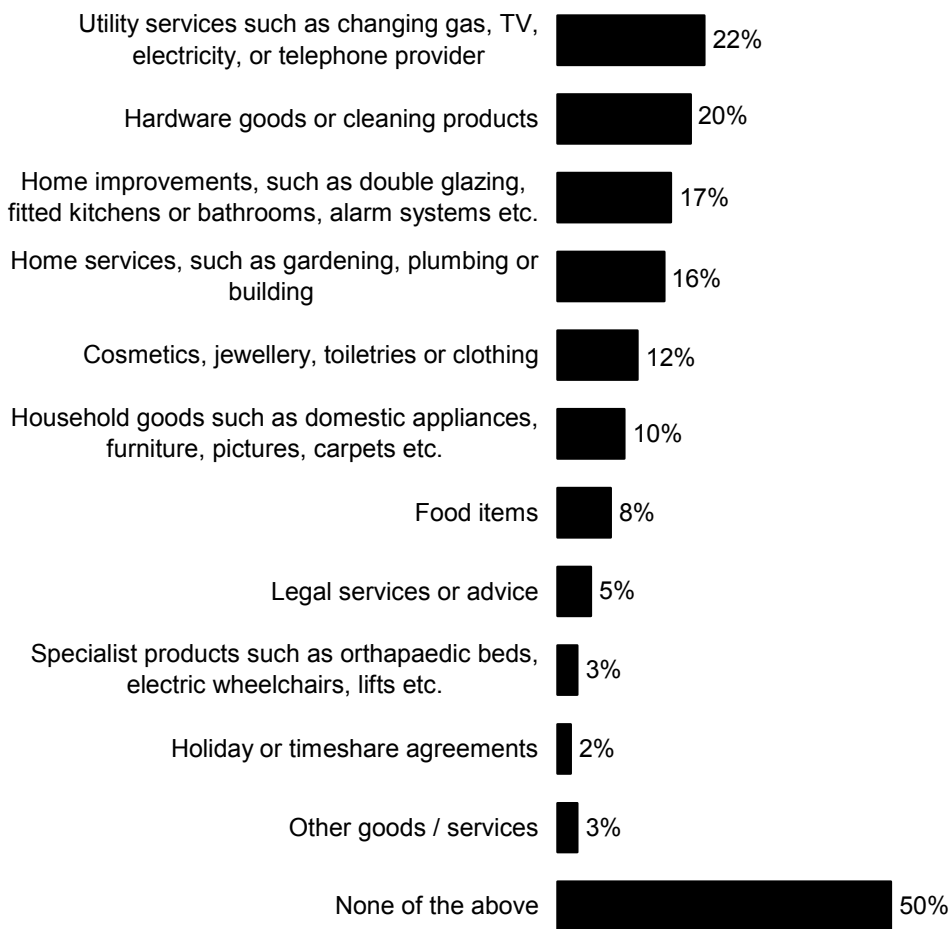
3.11 Only a minority of those ever buying in this way do so with any regularity (8% stating this was once every 6 months or more). The mean average reported was once every 19 months. However, amongst those that had purchased something in the last 6 months the frequency of purchasing was reported to be once every 5 months on average. Those who had purchased low value products under £35 in the last 6 months were found to be the group purchasing most frequently, at once every 4.5 months. The most frequent such purchases were typically cleaning

products, toiletries or food. Females and those aged 18-54 tended to purchase on a somewhat more frequent basis than other groups.

### Types of goods would consider purchasing

3.12 Respondents were questioned about the broad categories of goods or services they would consider buying in-home. The results are summarised in the chart below.

#### Goods and services respondent would consider purchasing in-home

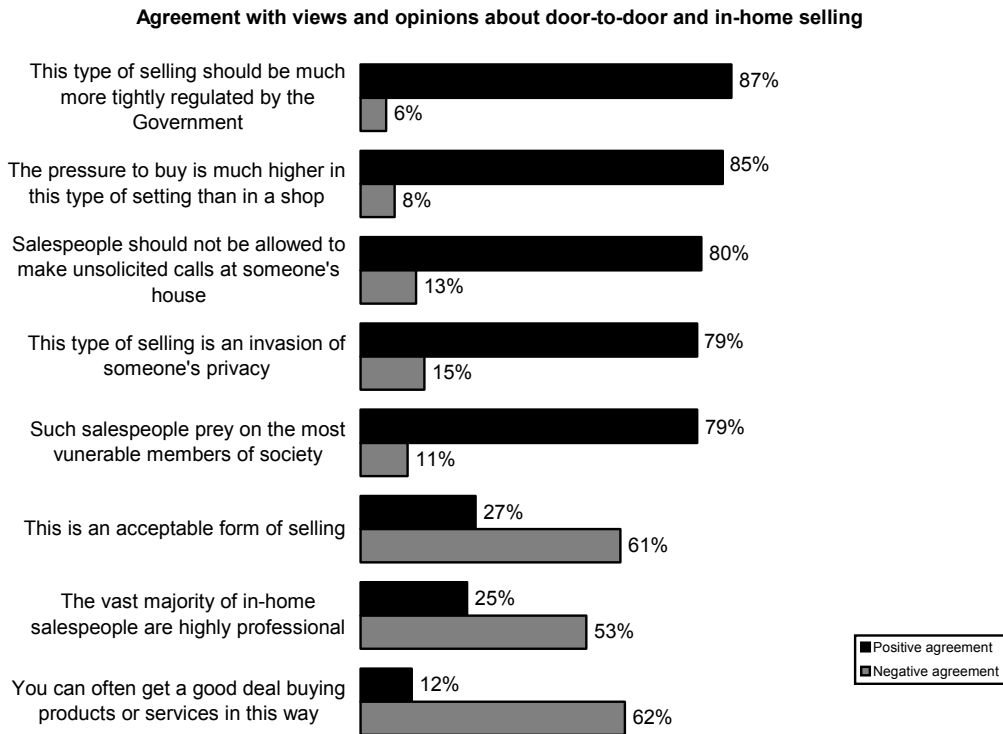


Base: All non-purchasers asked contact interview and purchasers asked main interview (5,376)

3.13 A majority (50%) claim they would not readily consider purchasing any such goods through this channel<sup>2</sup>. The types of goods and services most frequently mentioned related to categories typically associated with this sector (e.g. hardware or cleaning products, cosmetics, household goods, home improvement and home services).

### General Attitudes to door-to-door selling

3.14 Those who had not purchased any goods or services in-home in the last 6 months (extended to 12 months in the case of purchases over £500) were asked a series of questions about their general attitudes to this type of selling. In the chart below the proportion of those agreeing and disagreeing with each statement is shown.



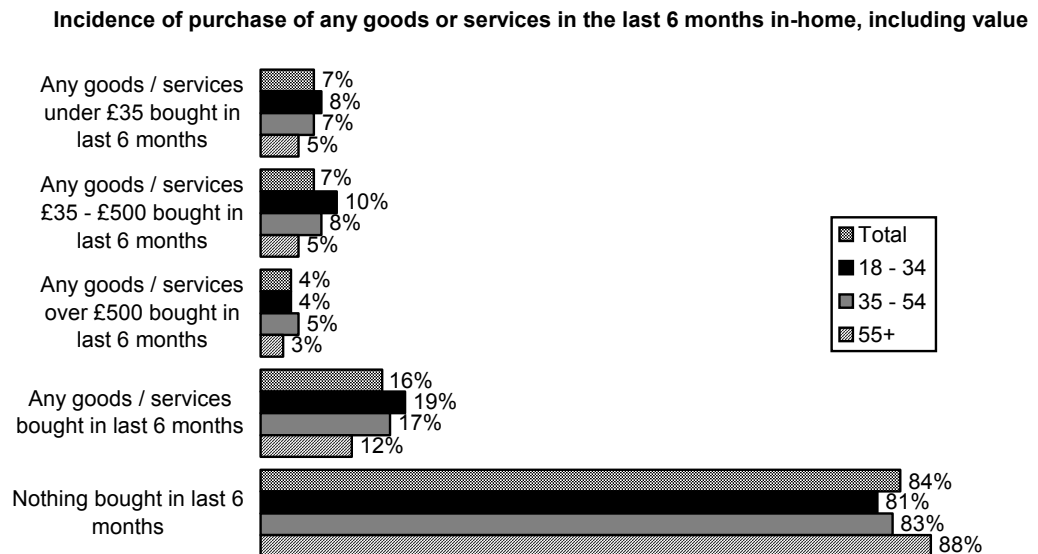
Base: All non-purchasers asked contact interview (4,245)

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that the question was of an opt-in type rather than asking which goods or services they would definitely not consider.

- 3.15 It is clearly evident that a majority feel that this form of selling should be more tightly regulated and this was broadly consistent across all sections of the population. In fact, 4 in every 5 believed that unsolicited sales calls at the doorstep should not be allowed, feeling that this represented an invasion of someone's privacy. There are clearly concerns that vulnerable groups are most at risk in this situation and that the pressure to buy is significantly greater than in a shop.
- 3.16 Only some 1 in every 4 felt door-to-door selling was an acceptable form of selling, with a similar proportion feeling that the vast majority of such salespeople are highly professional and that you could often get a good deal buying products or services in this way.
- 3.17 It was interesting to note that the results were broadly consistent amongst those who had never purchased in this way compared to those that had done so (albeit not in the last 6/12 months). There was also broad agreement across all demographic groups, although younger people (under 34 years of age) were somewhat less critical than other age groups. Women and those with lower educational backgrounds tended to be more negative about the practice than other groups.
- 3.18 The above findings clearly illustrate the strong feelings held about the practice of door to door selling and the reasons why a majority of the population choose not to buy through this channel.

## Recent purchasing experience and value of goods purchased

3.19 The chart below summarises the incidence of the purchase of any goods or services in the last 6 months (including value) from a door-to-door salesperson or representative who visited the home and where the sale was agreed there and then, split by age.



Base: All respondents (9,662), 18 – 34 (2067), 35 – 54 (4435), 55 + (3160)

3.20 As illustrated above, some 16% of adults claimed to have purchased any goods or services in this way. Those aged 55+ were the least likely to have done so, whereas those aged 18-34 were the most likely to have done so (12% of 55 year olds compared to 19% of 18-34 year olds). The incidence of purchasing in the last 6 months was comparable amongst both men and women, although the latter did so on a more regular basis.

3.21 Those educated to degree level, higher income groups (over 17.5K household income), and ABC1 socio-economic groups were somewhat more likely to have made in-home purchases in the last 6 months, as were those with health problems or other difficulties that prevented them from easily shopping in the high street.

3.22 Women were found to be more likely to have purchased goods with a value of under £35 (women 8%, men 5%), whilst the reverse was true for higher value goods over £500 (women 3%, men 5%).

### Types of goods or services purchased in-home in last 6 months

3.23 The chart below shows the broad categories of goods and services that were purchased in the previous 6 months from a salesperson or representative in-home.



Base: All respondents (9,662)

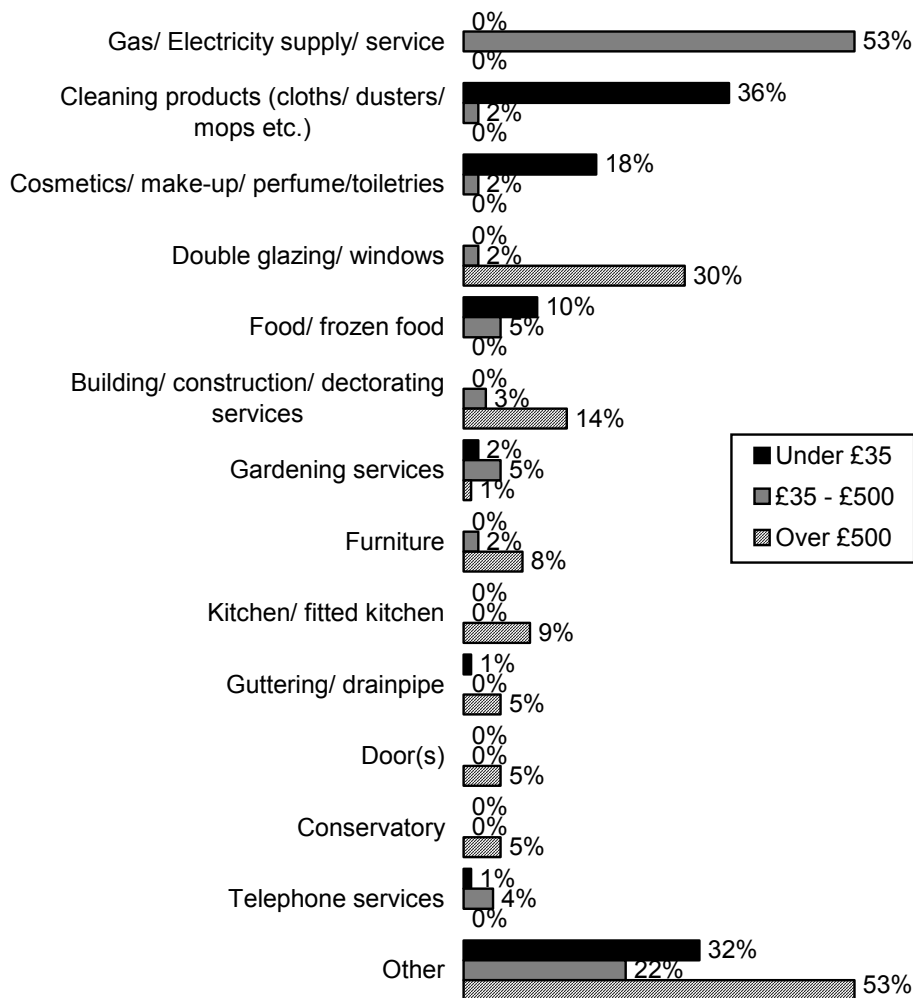
3.24 It is evident that a diverse range of goods and services are bought through the channel and the role of door-to-door selling in the utilities sector (principally gas and electricity) is clearly apparent. Nevertheless

the traditional goods and services associated with this sector still appear to account for much of the activity. The sale of specialist goods (e.g. orthopaedic beds, hearing aids etc.) was very limited.

### Most recent goods or services purchasing

3.25 The chart below shows the most recent goods or services purchased in relation to the price band selected amongst those eligible for the main interview.

**Most recent product or service purchased in-home in last 6 months**



Base: All buying goods/ services in last 6 months, under £35 (535), £35 – (568), Over £500 (255)

3.26 The mid-value group is clearly dominated by those taking out a utilities contract, whilst high value purchases were frequently associated with home improvement services (double glazing, fitted kitchens, building work etc.). In the case of low value purchases, this was most likely to relate to basic domestic goods (cleaning products, food etc.) or personal items such as cosmetics.

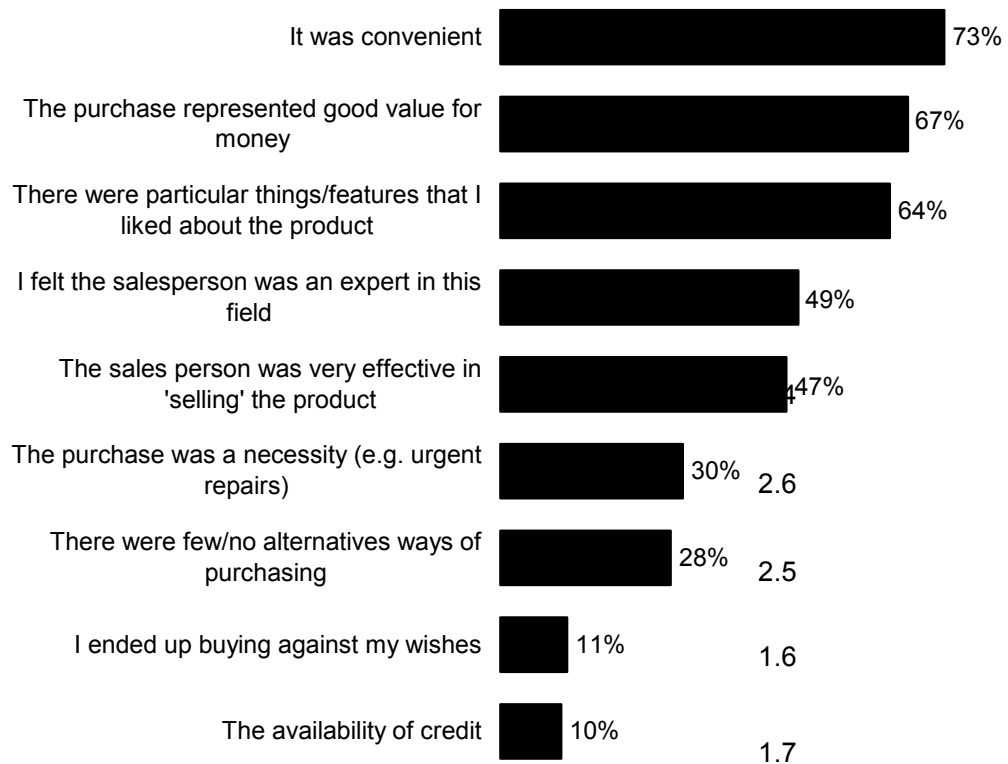
### **Buyers in the last 6 months/12 months**

3.27 The following section focuses on those who have purchased from a door-to-door or in-home salesperson in the last 6 months (for high value goods interviewed up to last 12 months). As seen in section 3.1.7, some 16% of adults claimed to have purchased in this way. For ease of commentary hereafter we shall refer to this group as *recent purchasers*. The following sections will firstly look at motivation for purchasing in this way, then move onto the whole purchase process and experience and finally focus on the outcome of the purchase and overall evaluations.

### **Motivation for purchase**

3.28 In order to gain an understanding of the motivation behind purchasing in-home, recent purchasers were read out a number of reasons for purchasing in-home and asked how important each one had been in their decision to purchase in-home on the relevant occasion. Respondents indicated the importance of each reason using a 5 point scale, whereby 1 was 'not important' and 5 was 'very important'. The chart below shows the responses from all respondents rating each statement as important (4-5 on the 5 point scale), as well as the mean scores (out of 5).

**Importance of reasons for buying in-home on recent occasion**  
Mean Scores

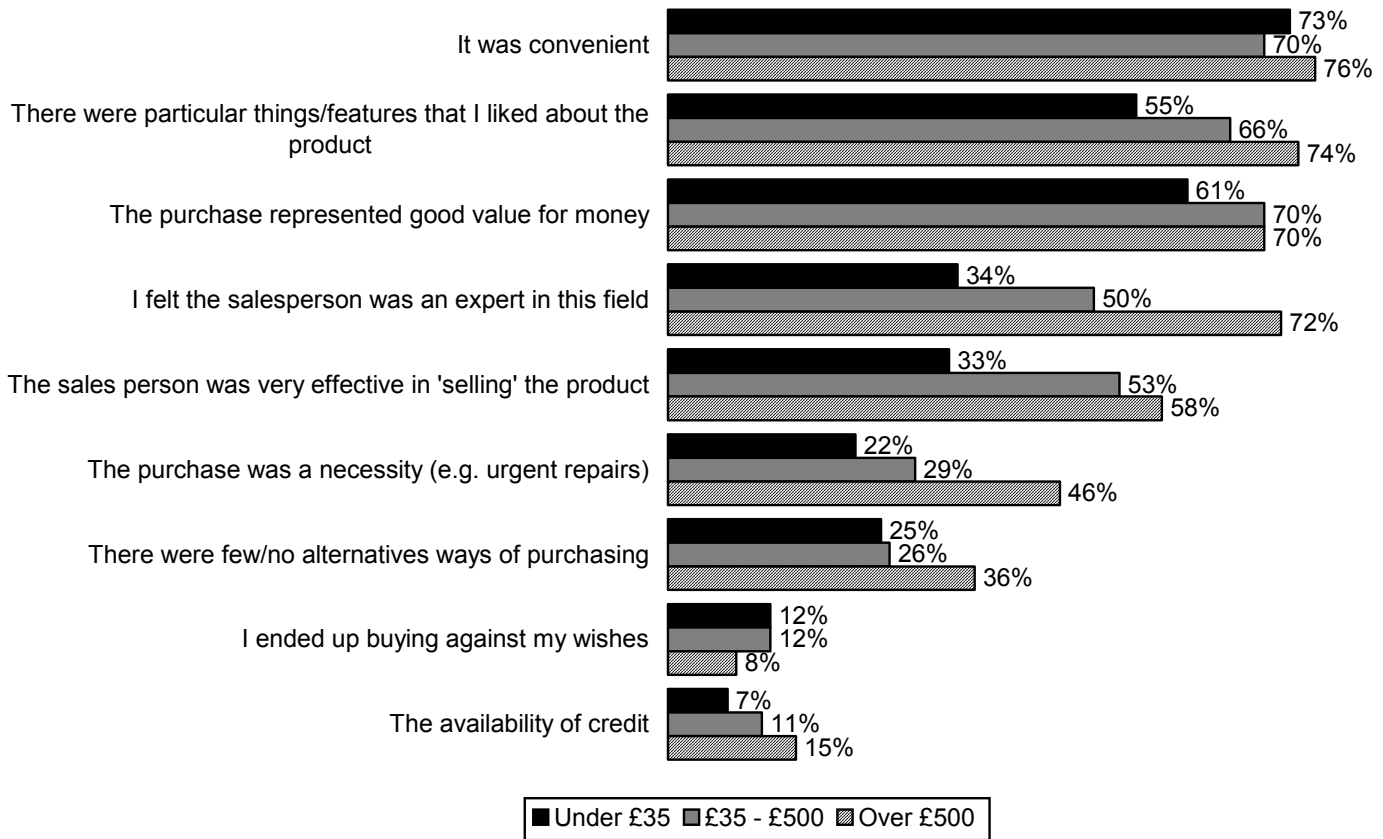


Base: All respondents (1,131)

3.29 At an overall level, convenience is clearly a key motivator with three quarters of respondents (73%) feeling this was important when making the decision to purchase in-home. Value for money and particular product/service features were also important motivators for two thirds of respondents (67% and 64% respectively).

3.30 Close to half of respondents (47%) felt the fact that the salesperson was very effective in 'selling' the product/service was an important reason for purchasing in this way on the relevant occasion. Linking with this, 1 in 10 respondents (11%) actually felt purchasing against their wishes had been an important feature on this occasion.

### Importance of reasons for buying in-home on recent occasion, split by product value



Base: Under £35 (429), £35 - £500 (483), Over £500 (219)

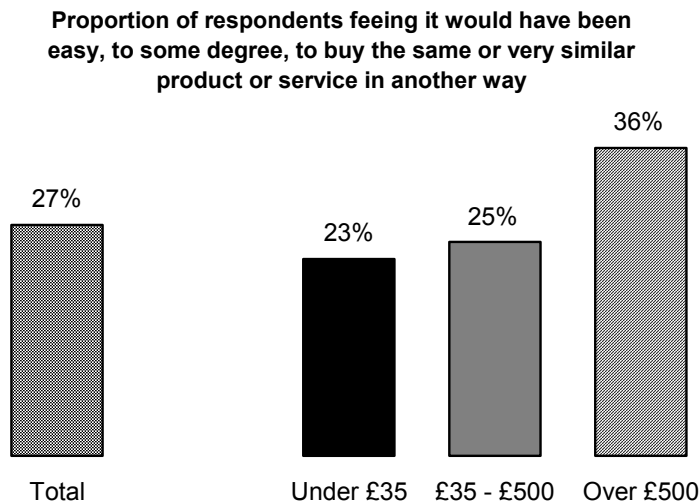
3.31 There are some interesting differences in motivation to purchase by the three value sub-groups, as illustrated in the chart above.

3.32 There are a number of aspects that show a pattern of becoming more important motivators for in-home purchase, the more expensive the product/service purchased. The product/service having particular attractive features, the salesperson being an expert in their field, and the purchase being a necessity are all motivational features that become more important in line with the increasing value of the product/service.

3.33 For the high value goods (valued over £500), the fact that there are no alternatives is a more important motivator relative to the other value groups, with 36% rating this as an important motivator compared to 26% and 25% for medium and low value purchases.

3.34 The availability of credit, the purchase representing good value for money, and the salesperson being effective in 'selling' the product are all more important motivational features for mid to high value goods valued over £35, compared to those valued under £35.

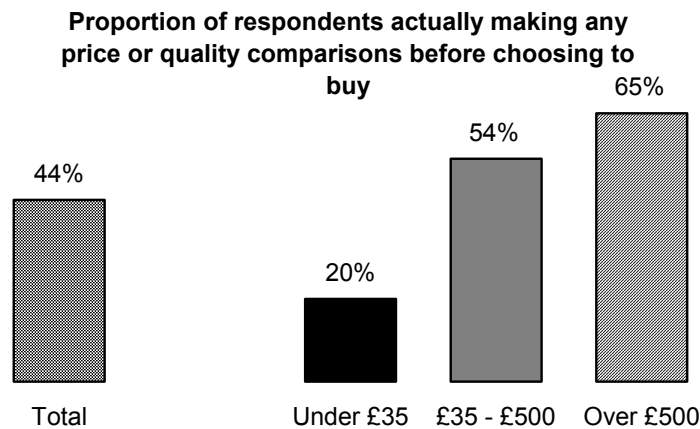
3.35 As illustrated in the initial chart, a quarter of door-step/in-home buyers (28%) mentioned there being 'few or no alternatives ways of purchasing' as an important motivational reason for purchasing in-home. This factor was investigated in more detail. The chart below shows the proportion of respondents who felt it would be easy (either very or fairly) to have purchased the product in another way (e.g. on the high street or through another supplier), split by product value.



Base: All respondents (1,131), under £35 (429), £35 - £500 (483), over £500 (219)

3.36 Overall, a quarter of respondents (27%) felt it would have been easy to have purchased the product through an alternative channel. A higher proportion of those purchasing goods valued over £500 felt this way, compared to those purchasing mid to low value goods, with a third feeling it would have been easy (36%).

3.37 When asked, over two fifths (44%) of respondents reported that they had actually made some price or quality comparisons before choosing to buy. Again there are marked differences by product value, as shown in the chart below.



Base: All respondents (1,131), Under £35 (429), £35 - £500 (483), Over £500 (219)

3.38 Unsurprisingly, those purchasing higher value goods were much more likely to have made some pricing comparisons compared to those purchasing goods valued under £35.

3.39 As males were more likely than females to purchase high value goods it is not surprising that males also proved more likely to make price comparisons compared to females (48% vs. 40%). Those making a purchase as a result of a solicited call were more likely to have made price comparisons compared to unsolicited purchases (58% vs 40%).

3.40 The main reasons for not making any price comparisons varied across different value products. For high value purchasers over £500 the main reasons were:

- I was happy with the price (19%)
- I have previous experience of the salesperson/company (14%)
- I was already aware of price comparisons (13%)

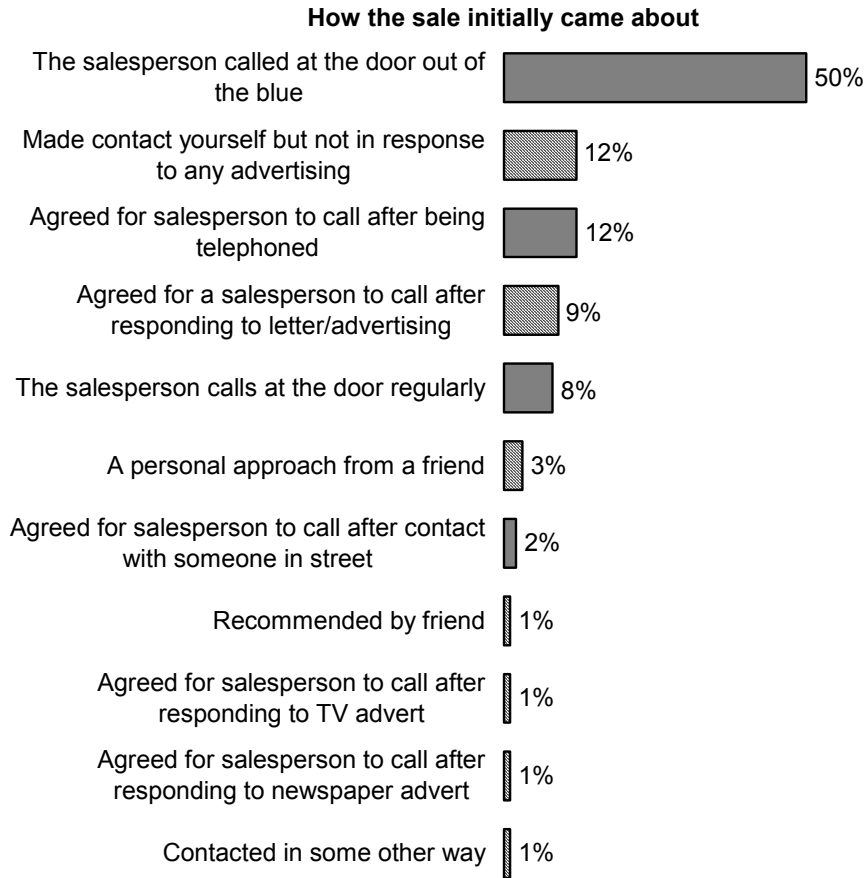
3.41 For lower value goods under £500 the reasons focused more on convenience;

- I did not have time, had to complete transaction at door (10% amongst £35 - £500)
- It was convenient/easy to buy there and then (12% amongst under £35)

## Purchase process/experience

### The initial contact

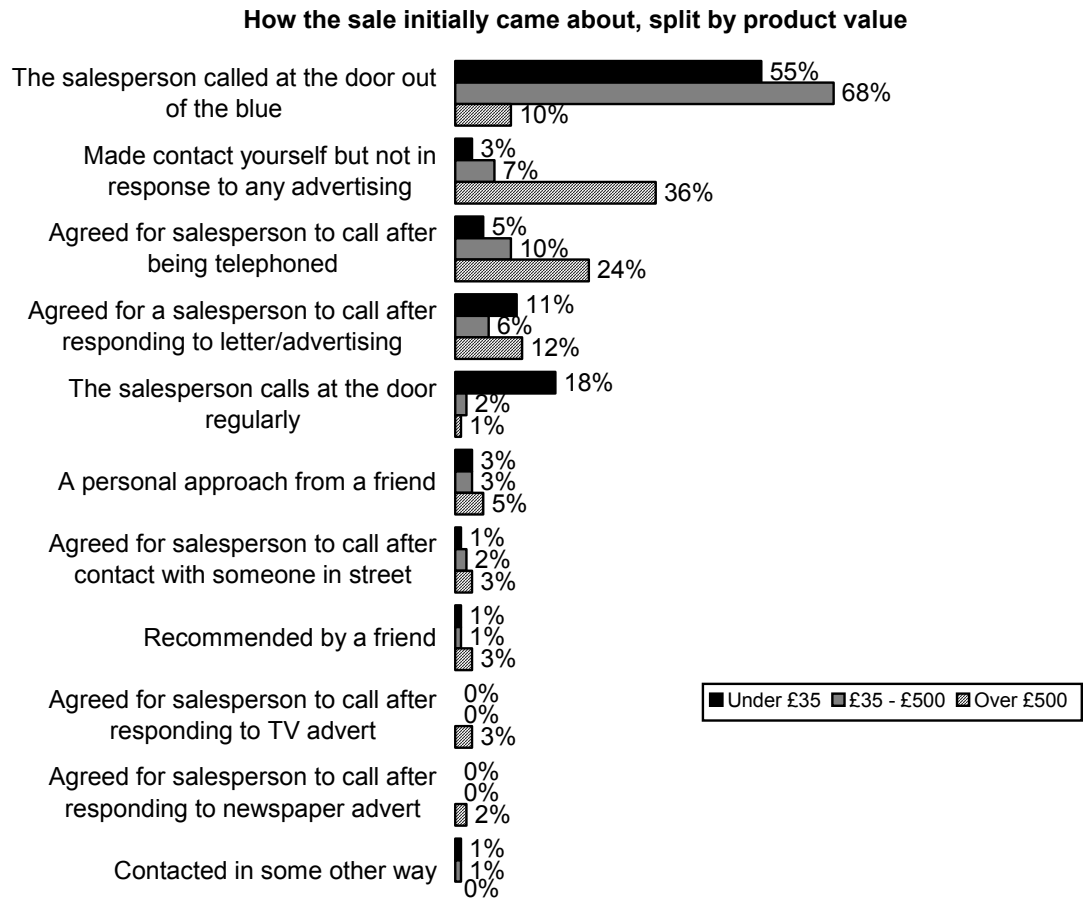
3.42 Recent purchasers were asked a range of questions about the whole in-home sales experience, initially being asked how the in-home sale had originally come about.



Base: All respondents (1,131)

3.43 The vast majority of in-home sales (71%) were unsolicited, that is the salesperson *initially* approached the respondent, and this was generally 'out of the blue' (50%). Unsolicited visits are those shaded red in the above chart.

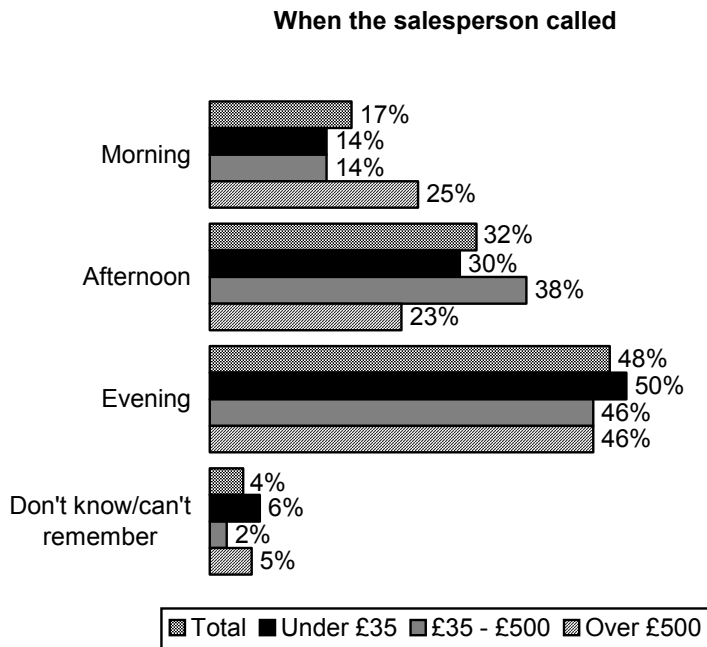
3.44 There are some key differences in whether the visit was solicited or unsolicited by product value, as illustrated in the chart below.



Base: Under £35 (429), £35 - £500 (483), Over £500 (219)

3.45 Purchases of high value goods were significantly more likely to have been the result of solicited visits, that is the respondent *initially* contacting the salesperson. Six in every 10 (62%) of the high value purchasers were solicited, compared to 2 in every 10 of the mid and low value purchases (18% and 19% respectively).

3.46 The chart below illustrates the time of day that the salesperson called, split by product value.

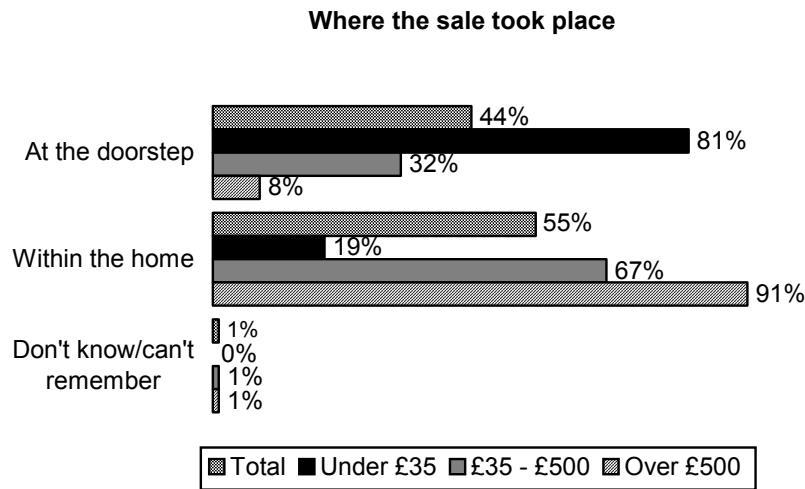


Base: All respondents (1,131), Under £35 (429), £35 - £500 (483), Over £500 (219)

3.47 Around half of all visits take place in the evening (48%) and this is broadly consistent across all product values.

3.48 Those purchasing high value goods appear slightly more likely to be visited in the morning compared to lower value goods (25% compared with 14% respectively), and less likely to be visited in the afternoon (23% compared to 38% for mid value goods and 30% for low value goods). However, it must be remembered that the majority (62%) of high value goods are solicited visits; hence the respondent would have agreed the time for the visit. Unsolicited visits were more likely to take place in the afternoon compared to solicited visits (36% vs. 18%).

3.49 The chart below illustrates where the actual sale took place, be it on the doorstep or in the home, split by product value.



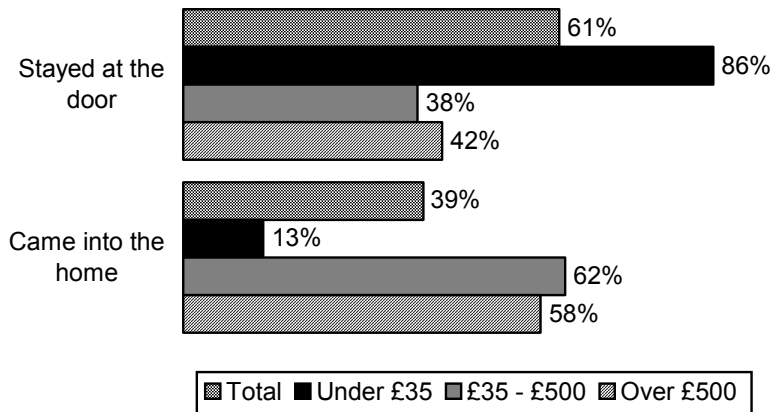
Base: All respondents (1,131), Under £35 (429), £35 - £500 (483), Over £500 (219)

3.50 As would be expected, the higher the value of the purchase, the more likely the sale was to have taken place in the home.

3.51 Lower value purchases tended to take place on the doorstep (81%), whereas mid value and high value purchases were more likely to take place in home (67% and 91%).

3.52 Respondents who received a visit out of the blue or a call at the door at a regular time, were asked further details about the salesperson in terms of whether they remained on the doorstep or came into the house, as shown in the chart below.

**Whether salesperson remained at the doorstep or came into the home**

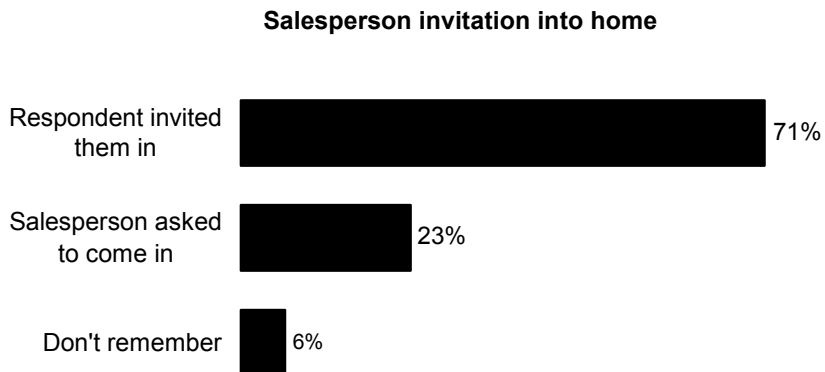


Base: Salesperson called out of the blue or at a regular time (682), Under £35 (319), £35 - £500 (339), Over £500 (24)

3.53 Overall, a salesperson calling out of the blue/on a regular basis is less likely to come into the home. Similarly to the differences noted across the value groups for all in-home purchases, it is with the low value purchasers that the salesperson is far less likely to be invited into the home.

3.54 Amongst those visits where the salesperson remained at the door just 4% actually asked if they could come into the home at any stage, although this rose to 7% amongst mid value purchasers and 26% for high value purchases, compared to 2% for low value purchases.

3.55 Where the salesperson did actually enter the home, respondents were asked if they had invited them in.



Base: All where salesperson called out the blue and came into house (263)

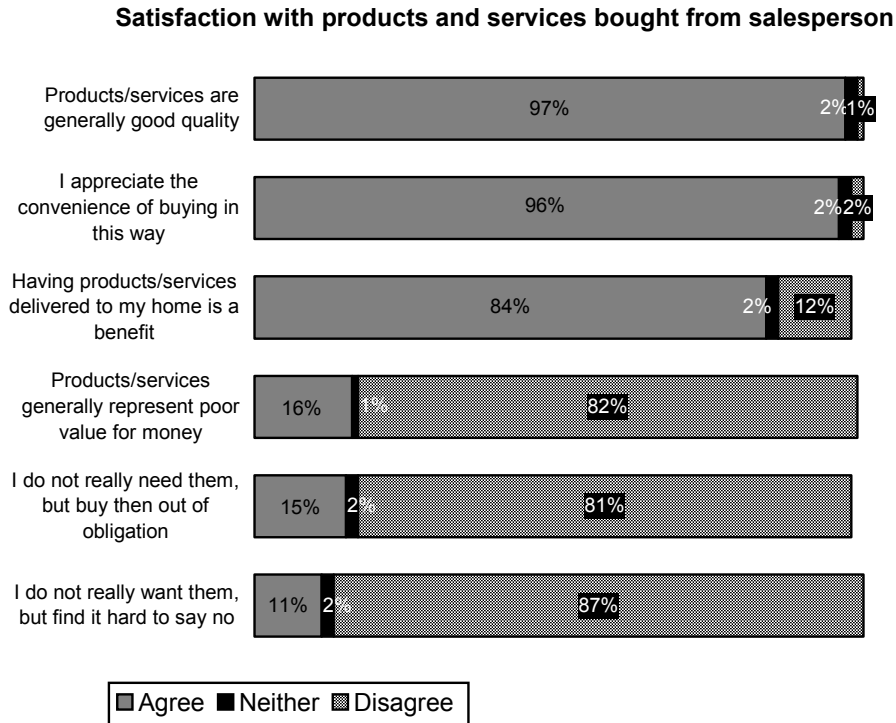
3.56 Approaching three quarters (71%) of all salespeople who entered the house did so as a result of being invited in. Base sizes are too small to look at comparisons between the product value groups.

3.57 Of the quarter (23%) of cases where the salesperson asked if they could come in, 3 in every 10 (30%) purchasers felt this was an intrusion, which translates into 2% of all respondents.

## Repeat visits

- 3.58 One in every 5 (20%) recent purchasers had been visited by the salesperson before. Not surprisingly, this was much more likely amongst low value purchasers compared to mid or high value purchasers (41% for low value purchasers compared to 8% respectively for mid and high value purchasers). Of those that had been visited by the salesperson before (243 respondents), 8 in every 10 (81%) had also purchased from them before.
- 3.59 The majority of repeat purchasers had 'repeat-purchased' on 1 to 3 occasions in the last 12 months (58% - on average respondents had done so on 4 occasions). Base sizes across the mid and high level value sub-groups are too small to allow for any sub-analysis.
- 3.60 Those purchasers who received 4 or more visits from the salesperson in the last year (79 respondents) were further asked to estimate the regularity of these visits across the year. Respondents felt the salesperson visited them an average of 18 times a year, with the most common interval for the visits being monthly (47%). In 99% of cases these respondents felt the frequency of visits during the last year had remained the same as the previous year.
- 3.61 Expressed as proportions of all recent purchasers, 20% had received previous visits from the same salesperson, 16% had bought from them previously, while 7% had done so on more than three occasions in the last year, increasing to 16% among low value purchasers (compared to 2% for mid value and 1% for high value purchasers).
- 3.62 Regular doorstep purchasers (those who have bought something on 4 or more occasions from the same salesperson in the last year) were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements, in order to gauge satisfaction levels with goods and services purchased on the doorstep. As would be expected, these regular purchasers were mainly from the under £35 value category.

3.63 The chart below illustrates those who agreed or disagreed to some degree with the various statements. It much be remembered that a number of the statements were positive and a number negative<sup>3</sup>.



Base: All previously buying from a particular salesperson on 4 or more occasions in last year (79)

3.64 Unsurprisingly, regular purchasers were generally positive and appear satisfied with the products and services purchased from their doorstep, with 97% agreeing to some extent that the products and services purchased are generally of a high quality. Convenience seems to be a key motivation for purchasing in this way, with 96% agreeing that they appreciate the convenience of purchasing in this way.

3.65 However, contrasting to some extent with this last finding, only 84% agree that having the products and services delivered to their home is a benefit. In fact, 1 in 7 respondents did agree that they do not really

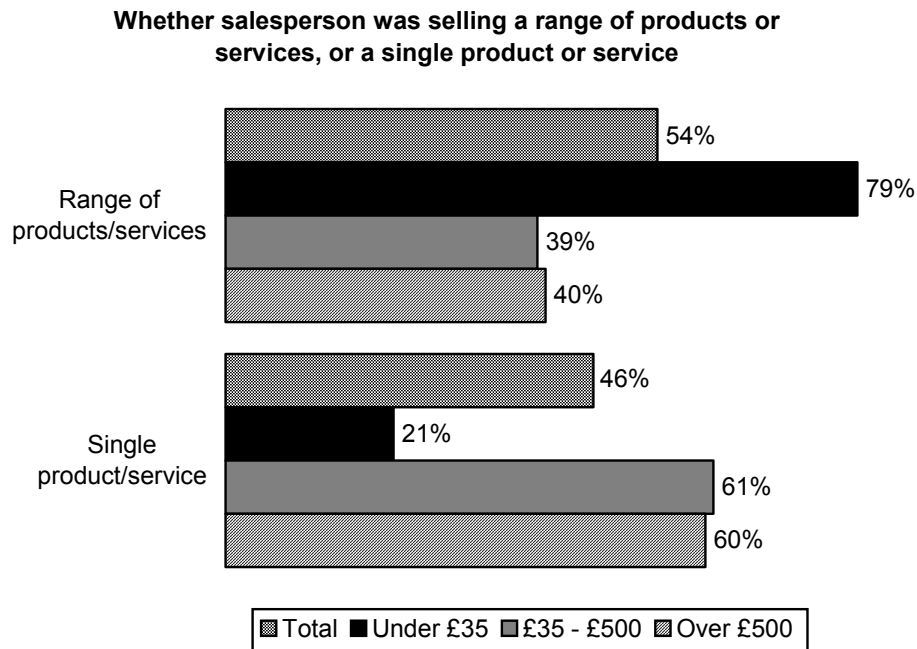
<sup>3</sup> The responses do not total 100% as a varying proportion felt unable to comment on the statements.

need the products or services, but buy them out of a sense of obligation (15%), and, linking with this finding, 1 in 10 agreed that they found it hard to say no to the salesperson (11%).

Base sizes within the value sub-groups are too small for any sub-analysis.

**Products/service sales format**

3.66 Respondents indicated whether the salesperson was selling a range of products or services (such as a range of hardware products), or just a single item (such as gas supply or a single appliance). The chart below shows the spread of product types by value.

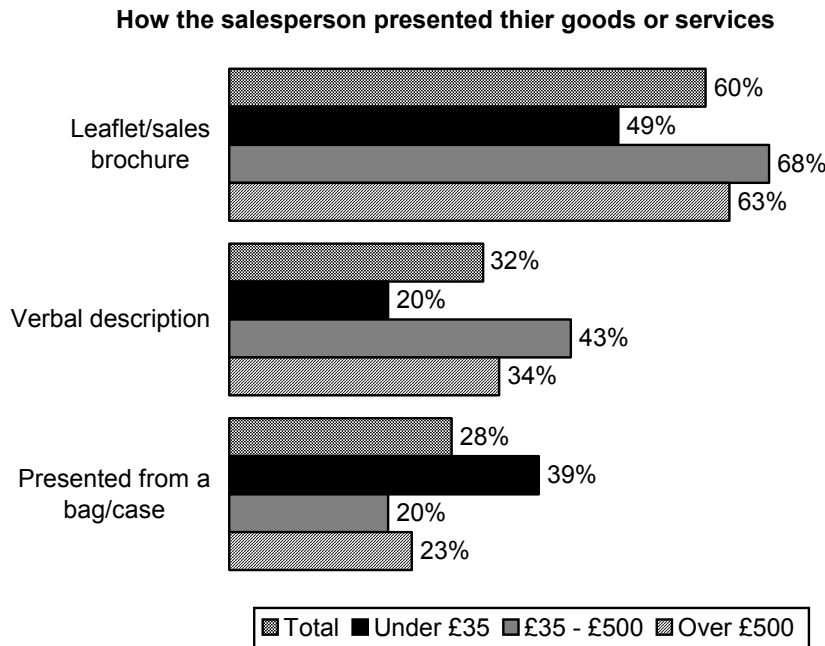


Base: All respondents (1,131), Under £35 (429), £35 - £500 (483), Over £500 (219)

3.67 Products respondents generally included in the 'range of Products/services' category were cleaning products (96%), cosmetics and toiletries (89%) and, to a lesser extent, frozen foods (67%). Single products/services generally included utility services (69%), double glazing (68%) and general home improvements (59%).

3.68 Overall, there was a fairly even split between those offering a range of products (54%) and those offering a single product (46%). However, there were notable differences across the 3 purchase value groups. As might be expected, those purchasing lower value goods were far more likely to have been shown a range of products (79%), whereas those purchasing mid and high value goods were more likely to have been shown a single item (61% and 60% respectively).

3.69 The chart below illustrates the different techniques the salesperson used to present their goods or services, respondents indicated all of the methods that the salesperson used.



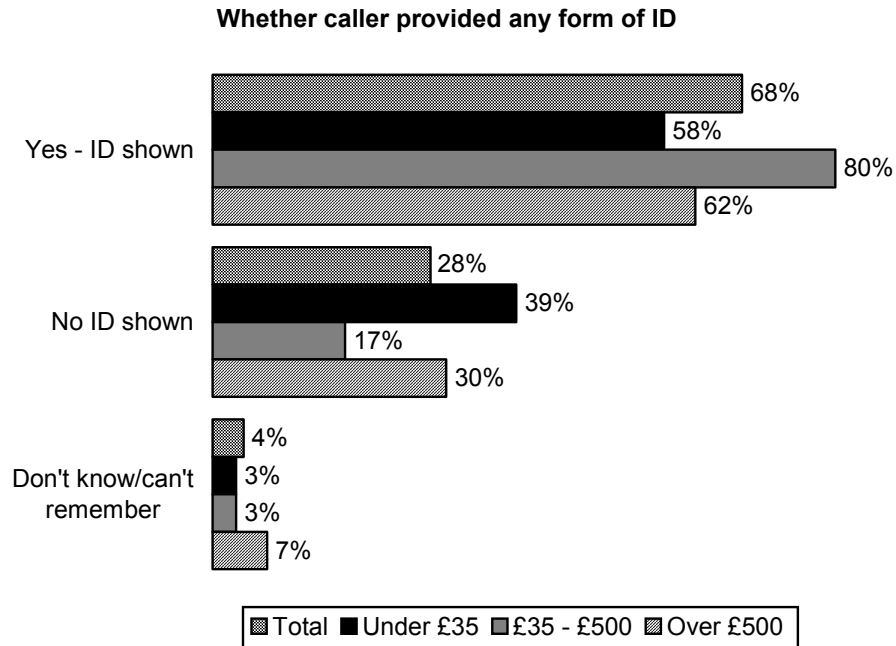
Base: Top mentions + 3%. All respondents (1,131), Under £35 (429), £35 - £500 (483), Over £500 (219)

3.70 Overall, the majority (60%) of salespeople presented their goods or services in the form of a leaflet or sales brochure. This is consistently the more common technique for all values groups, although there is some variation.

- 3.71 A leaflet or sales brochure was most commonly shown to those purchasing goods or services in the mid to high price range (68% and 63%), with a verbal description also being more popular amongst these product groups compared to low value goods (43% and 34% vs. 20%). Lower value goods were more likely to be presented from a bag or case (39%).
- 3.72 There were some differences by specific product groups, with utility services and cosmetics and toiletries more likely to be presented through a leaflet or sales brochure (82% and 87%), cleaning products were most likely to be presented from a bag or case (56%), while frozen food products were most likely to be presented from a vehicle/van (39%).
- 3.73 Salespeople offering a range of products were more likely to present their goods/services from a bag or a case compared to those offering a single item (33% vs. 22%). In contrast those offering a single item were more likely to present their goods/services through a verbal description (44% vs. 22%).
- 3.74 Salespeople generally just used one of the above methods to present their goods or services (73%), however 1 in every 5 used two techniques, while a small proportion (6%) used 3 or more techniques to display their goods or services. Those selling low value goods were more likely to use just one technique, compared with those selling medium and high value goods (85% compared with 68% and 63%).

## Salesperson ID

3.75 Overall, in the majority of cases (68%) the salesperson did show some form of identification, as the chart below demonstrates, split by product/service value.



Base: All respondents (1,131), Under £35 (429), £35 - £500 (483), Over £500 (219)

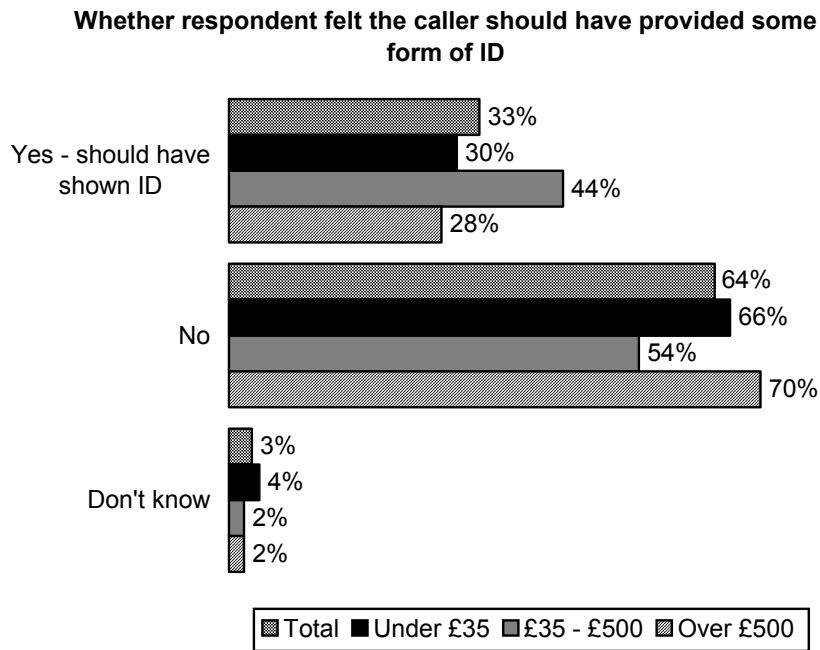
3.76 ID was more likely to be shown to those making a mid value purchase (80%) compared to high value (62%) and low value (58%) purchases. This is largely driven by the fact that a large number of the mid value purchases are for utility services, as ID was shown in 94% of cases where utilities were purchased

3.77 Male purchasers were more likely to have been shown ID compared to females (74% vs. 63%), as were unsolicited calls compared to solicited calls (73% vs. 59%).

3.78 The majority of those shown ID (95%) were confident that it was legitimate and had no concerns about it. Just 4% did have concerns,

and this increased to 15% amongst those who were dissatisfied with the sales process overall. Clearly it may be the case that the legitimacy of the salespersons ID is judged based more on the final outcome rather than the original impression.

3.79 A quarter of respondents were not shown any form of ID and these respondents were asked if they felt the salesperson should have shown some form of ID. The results are shown in the chart below, split by product value.



Base: All where identification was not provided (322), Under £35 (166), £35 - £500 (89), Over £500 (67)

3.80 Unsolicited visits were more likely to have shown some form of ID (73% compared to 59% of solicited visits).

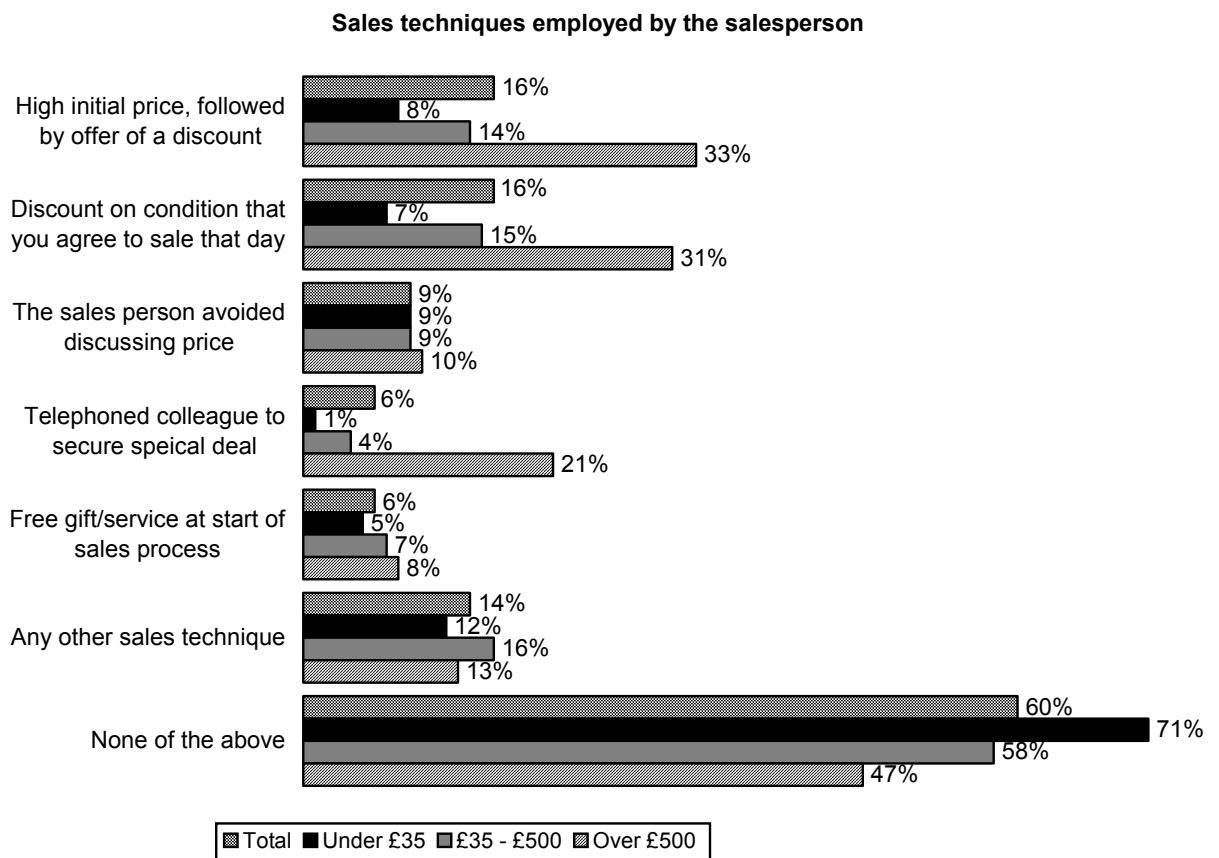
3.81 Overall, a third of those who were not shown any ID by the salesperson felt that they should have been shown ID. This is higher amongst those in the mid value product range (44%) compared to low and high value products (30% and 28%).

3.82 Those in the high value product range were significantly more likely to feel that it was not necessary that the salesperson provided any ID,

compared with mid value purchasers (70% vs. 54%). This is consistent with the fact that high value product sales were those most likely to be solicited.

## Sales Techniques

3.83 Recent purchasers were also asked about any sales techniques that were used during the sales process. Respondents were read out a number of possible sales techniques and asked to indicate whether or not this technique had been used by the salesperson.



Base: All respondents (1,131), Under £35 (429), £35 - £500 (483), Over £500 (219)

3.84 Sales techniques were much more likely to be adopted for high value sales, with over half (53%) of all high value purchasers feeling a sales

technique had been employed compared to 42% for mid value goods and 29% for low value goods.

- 3.85 Salespeople selling high value goods were more likely to employ a larger number of sales techniques, with 3 in every 10 (30%) employing between 2 and 4 sales techniques, compared to 16% for mid value sales and 9% for low value sales.
- 3.86 Where more than one sales technique was used there did seem to be a number of techniques that were frequently used together, these were:
- a high initial price subsequently followed by the offer of a discount
  - any form of discount that was available on condition that the sale was agreed that day
  - a telephone call to a colleague or superior in order to secure some special deal or discount.
- 3.87 For example, in the case where a high initial price subsequently followed by the offer of a discount was used in 4 in every 5 cases (82%) a telephone call to a colleague was also made, in order to secure some special deal or discount, and in 3 in every 5 cases (60%) an offer of a discount was also given, on the condition that the sale was agreed that day.
- 3.88 The key techniques that were used for high value sales were a high initial price, subsequently followed by the offer of a discount (33%), a discount available on the condition that the sale was agreed that day (31%), and, to a slightly lesser degree telephoning a colleague or superior in order to secure a special deal or discount (21%). Albeit to a lesser degree, these techniques were also significantly more likely to be employed for a mid value sale compared with than a low value sale.

- 3.89 Sales techniques were less likely to be employed with female purchasers, compared to males (36% vs. 43%), although it must be remembered that females are more likely to be involved in low value sales. Sales techniques were also less likely to be employed with solicited visits compared with unsolicited visits (34% vs. 42%).
- 3.90 Sales techniques were more likely to be employed in purchases where the respondent was informed of their cancellation rights (43% vs. 35%) where respondents had made price comparisons (43% vs. 37%) and where respondents were dissatisfied with the overall sales process (66%).

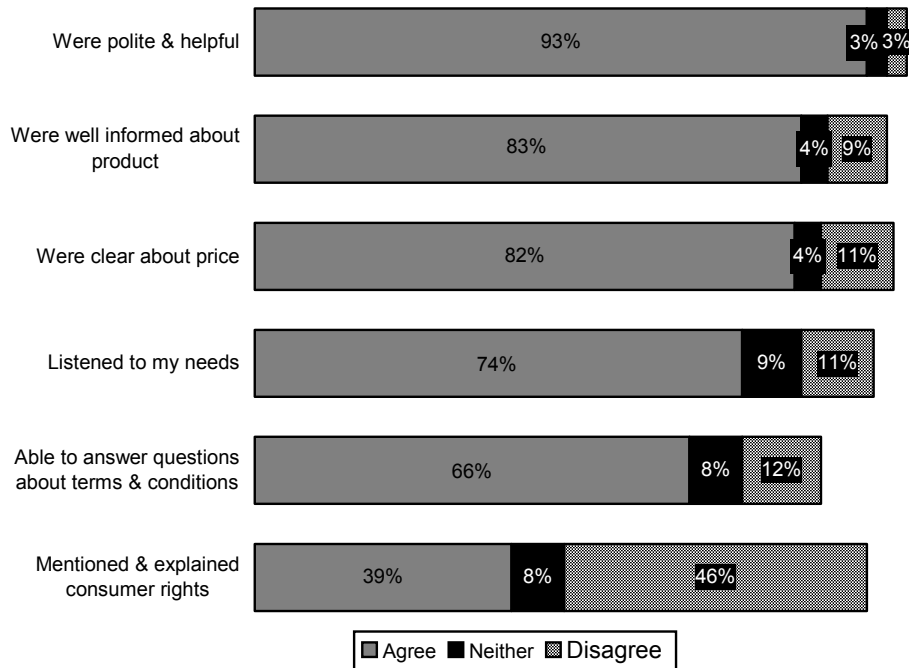
### **The salesperson's behaviour**

- 3.91 Respondents were also asked about the behaviour of the salesperson during the sales process. A number of statements were read out and respondents rated their level of agreement with each one.
- 3.92 The chart below shows the statements that recent purchasers tended to agree with to some degree<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> The responses do not total 100% as a varying proportion felt unable to comment on the statements.

### Agreement with statements regarding salesperson's behaviour



Base: All respondents (1,131)

3.93 Overall, salespeople are most likely to be perceived to behave in a polite and helpful manner (93% agreement), to be generally well informed about the product they are selling (83% agreement) and to be clear about the price (82% agreement). Although to a lesser extent, the majority of respondents agreed that the salesperson had listened to their needs (74% agreement) and was able to answer questions about terms and conditions (66% agreement). Much fewer respondents agreed that the salesperson had mentioned and explained their consumer rights (39% agreement).

3.94 There were a number of differences by product value, with higher value purchasers generally more favourable in their judgements of the salesperson. Lower value purchasers less likely to agree that the salesperson was well informed about the product (72% agreement compared to 89% and 92% for mid and high value goods), and that the salesperson was able to answer questions about terms and conditions

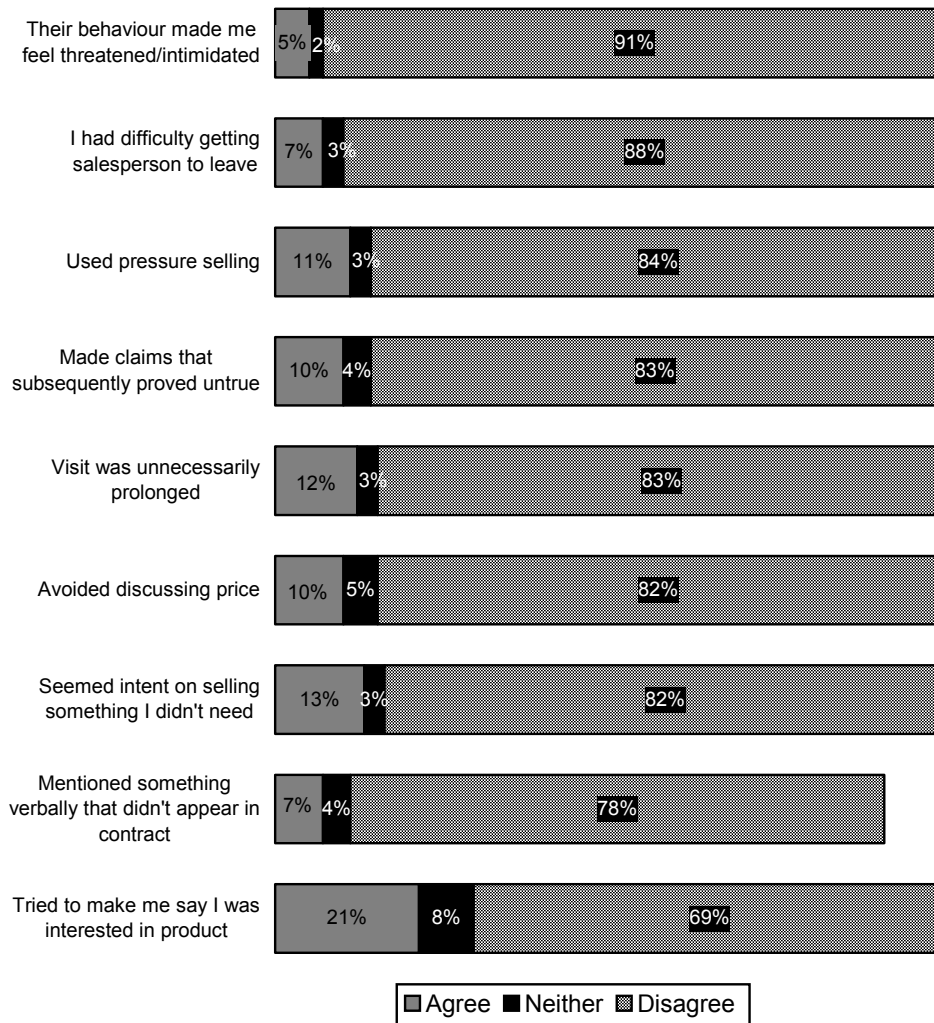
(46% agreement compared to 77% and 79% for mid and high value goods).

3.95 The higher the value of the goods purchased, the more likely respondents were to agree that the salesperson listened to their needs (94% agreement for high value goods compared with 75% for mid value and 62% for low value goods).

3.96 Purchasers of high value goods were more likely to agree that the salesperson clearly explained the price compared to low value goods (85% vs. 79%). Whereas purchasers of mid value goods were more likely to agree that the salesperson mentioned and explained their consumer rights (52% vs. 42% for high value and 24% for low value goods).

3.97 The chart below shows the key statements that respondents disagreed with. It should be noted that all the statements are critical of the salesperson and tend to focus on the most concerning aspects of a salesperson's conduct; hence even low levels of agreement are cause for concern<sup>5</sup>.

**Disagreement with statements regarding salesperson's behaviour**



Base: All respondents (1,131)

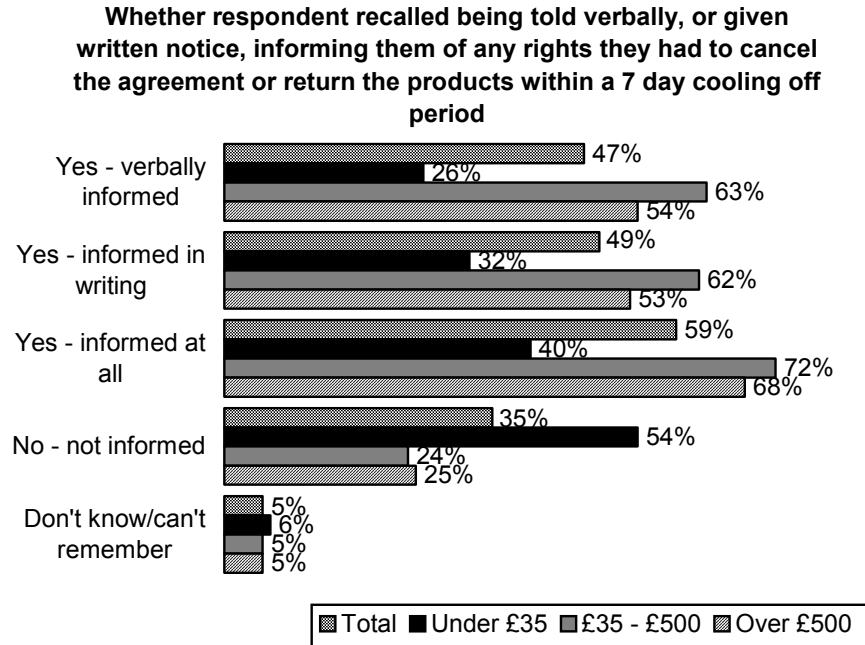
<sup>5</sup> The responses do not total 100% as a varying proportion felt unable to comment on the statements.

- 3.98 Focusing on the proportions agreeing with these negative appraisals, overall, significant minorities clearly have had negative experiences in all areas. The main area appears to be the salesperson attempting to convince the respondent that they do have an interest in the product or service with 1 in every 5 agreeing that this was the case. Perhaps of more concern are perceptions of using pressure selling, making claims that were subsequently found to be untrue, unnecessarily prolonged visits, avoidance of price discussions and the salesperson seeming intent on selling the respondent something they didn't need. In all these case between 1 in 10 and 1 in 8 respondents showed agreement.
- 3.99 Again, there were a number of differences by product value. Those being sold low value goods were less likely to agree that the sales visit was unnecessarily prolonged (8% agreement compared with 13% and 17% for mid and high value goods), that the salesperson used pressure selling (8% compared with 12% and 15% for mid and high value goods) and that the salesperson made claims that were subsequently found to be untrue (4% compared with 14% and 11% for mid and high value goods).
- 3.100 Although not always statistically significant, the general pattern appears to be that low value recent purchasers tend to hold less critical perceptions regarding the salesperson's behaviour than their higher value counterparts. The notable exception to this general trend was that those purchasing low or mid value goods proved much more likely to agree that the salesperson seemed intent on selling them something they didn't need (17% and 15% agreement, compared with 3% for high value goods).
- 3.101 The behaviour of the salesperson on solicited visits was generally rated more positively than the views held by people receiving unsolicited visits.
- 3.102 Overall, 1 in every 20 recent purchasers indicated that they actually felt threatened or intimidated to some degree by the salesperson. This was slightly higher amongst mid value purchasers (7% compared to 4% for low value and 2% for high value purchases), and amongst unsolicited

visits compared to solicited visits (6% vs. 2%). Linking to this, a similar proportion experienced some difficulty in getting the salesperson to leave.

## Cancellation Procedures

3.103 Respondents were asked if they recalled being verbally told by or receiving written notice or documents from the salesperson about any rights they had to cancel the agreement or return the products within a 7-day cooling off period. The chart below summarises what respondents were told, split by purchase value.



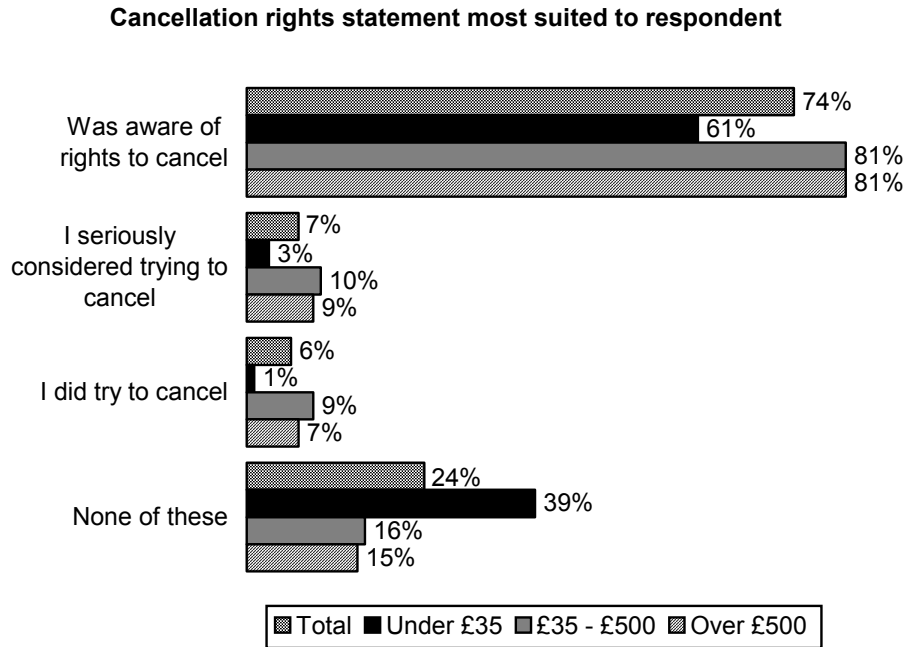
Base: All respondents (1,131), Under £35 (429), £35 - £500 (483), Over £500 (219)

3.104 Overall 6 in every 10 respondents (59%) recalled being informed in some way of their cancellation rights. Those purchasing mid or high value goods were more likely to be informed about their cancellation rights compared to low value goods, with 72% of mid value and 68% of high value purchasers being informed, compared with just 40% of low value purchasers. The majority of those purchasing utilities (90%) were informed in some way of their cancellation rights.

3.105 Respondents aged 18 – 34 were more likely to recall being informed of their cancellation rights compared with older respondents, aged 55 or over (64% vs. 54%).

3.106 Respondents receiving a solicited visit were also slightly more likely to be informed about their cancellation rights compared to unsolicited visits (65% vs. 58%).

3.107 Respondents were also read out a number of statements regarding the issue of cancellation and asked which best applied to them, as shown in the chart below split by purchase value.



Base: All respondents (1,131), Under £35 (429), £35 - £500 (483), Over £500 (219)

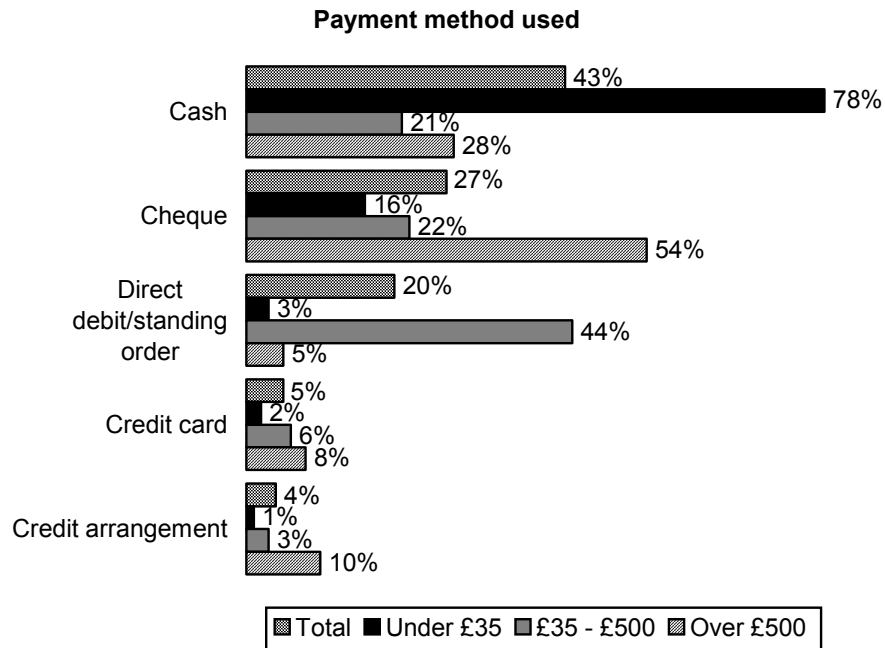
3.108 Consistent with the higher likelihood of their being informed of their cancellation rights by the salesperson, higher proportions of mid and high value purchasers claimed to be aware of these rights. Furthermore, mid and high value purchaser were also more likely to have either seriously considered cancelling, or actually attempted to cancel, compared to low value goods. Those purchasing as a result of an unsolicited visit were also more likely to have considered cancelling or to have tried to cancel compared to solicited visits (9% vs. 3% for those considering cancelling, and 7% vs. 2% for those who tried).

3.109 In total 85 respondents (7%) seriously considered cancelling the contract. Of these, two fifths (15 respondents) were unsuccessful in cancelling their contract, with the types of reasons for this being:

- I had already paid (4 respondents)
- They talked me round (3 respondents)
- I had signed the contract (2 respondents)
- They refused to let me cancel (1 respondent)

## Payment methods, contracts and receipts

3.110 The following chart demonstrates how respondents paid for their purchase, split by purchase value.



Base: Top mentions + 4%. All respondents (1,131), Under £35 (429), £35 - £500 (483), Over £500 (219)

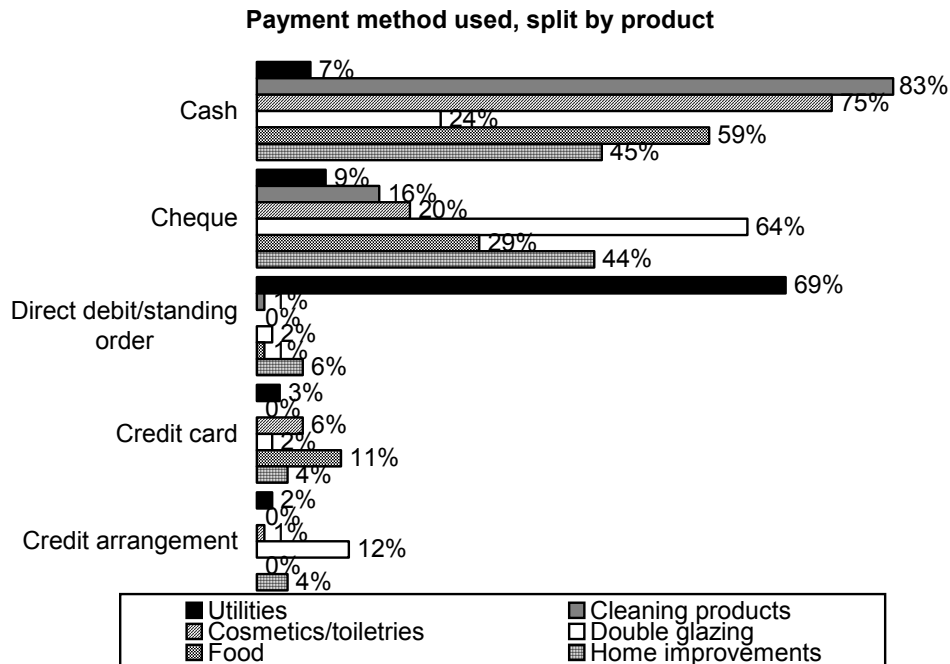
3.111 The large majority (95%) of respondents paid for their goods or services using just one means of payment, while a small minority used two means of payment. This was more common amongst mid and high value purchasers compared to low value purchasers (3% and 7% compared with 1%).

3.112 There are some key differences in payment method by product value. Unsurprisingly cash is the most common payment method for low value goods, with 78% of purchases paid for in this way. Cheque is the next most common payment technique for low value goods, with 16% choosing to pay in this way.

3.113 Perhaps surprisingly, over a quarter (28%) of high value goods are paid for with cash. The most common payment method for these goods is cheque (54%). A credit arrangement is also more likely to have been set up with high value goods compared with mid and low value goods (10% vs. 3% and 1%).

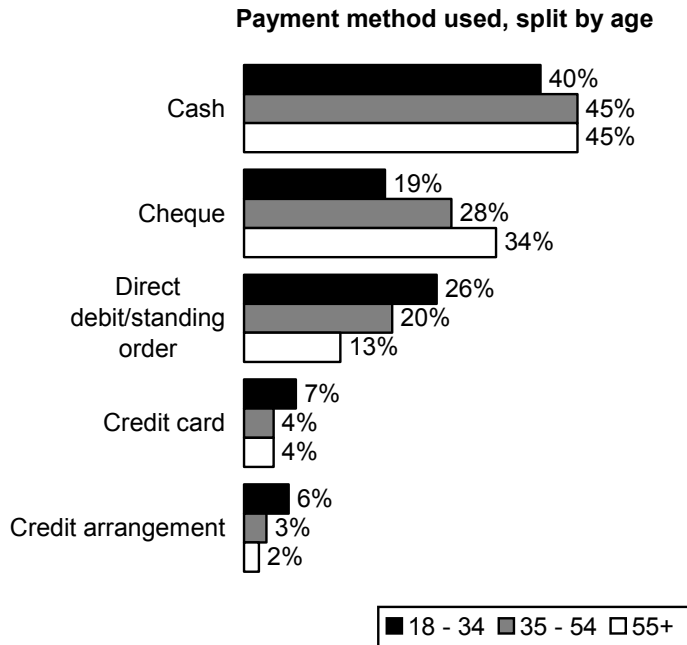
3.114 For mid value goods direct debit is the most commonly cited payment technique, with 44% of respondents mentioning this. This is related to the high proportion of utilities being purchased within this value range, with 69% of these purchases being paid for by direct debit.

3.115 The chart below illustrates the different payment technique used depending on product purchased.



Base: Top mentions + 4%. Utilities (284), Cleaning products (163), Cosmetics/toiletries (94), Double glazing (76). Food (71), Home improvements (222)

3.116 The chart below demonstrates differences in payment technique by age.



Base: Top mentions + 4%. 18 – 34 (284), 35 – 54 (545), 55 + (302)

3.117 Generally younger respondents, aged under 35, appear more likely to pay by direct debit (26%), whereas respondents aged over 35 are more likely to pay by cheque (30%).

3.118 Females were more likely than males to pay by cash (51% vs. 35%), clearly relating to the fact that females are more likely to purchase low value goods.

3.119 Just under half (45%) of all respondents were required to sign any form of contract. As would be expected this increased for those purchasing goods priced over £35. Over 6 in every 10 mid and high value purchasers (64% and 62%) were required to sign a contract, compared with just 13% of low value purchasers.

3.120 Three quarters (73%) of all respondents received some form of receipt or proof of purchase. Again, as would be expected, this was significantly more likely to have happened the more expensive the product was. The vast majority of high value purchasers received a

receipt (92%), compared to 4 in every 5 (79%) mid value purchasers and over half of low value purchasers (56%).

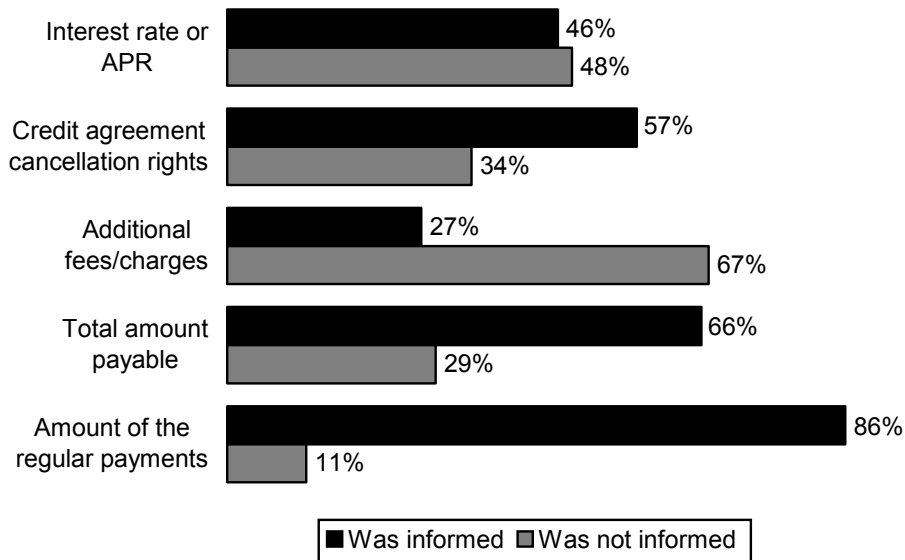
### **Credit facilities**

- 3.121 Respondents were also asked if they were offered any credit terms or facilities in order to pay for the goods. One fifth (19%) of respondents recalled being offered this facility. This increased to half (49%) of all high value purchasers and 16% for mid value goods, and just 5% of low value goods. The offer of credit facilities was also particularly high among double glazing sales (54%).
- 3.122 A third (36%) of those offered credit facilities (80 respondents) actually took up the offer and 1 in 10 of those offered the facility (11%) felt the salesperson had applied pressure for them to take up such credit facilities. Base sizes are too small to enable any sub-analysis. Of those that did feel pressure was applied (just 24 respondents), 4 felt that 'a great deal of pressure' was applied.
- 3.123 Those that did take up the offer of credit facilities (7% of all buyers) were asked whether they remembered being informed about certain important items of information in relation to the credit facilities, as illustrated in the chart below<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> The responses do not total 100% as a varying proportion felt unable to comment on the statements.

**Information respondents remember being mentioned in relation with the credit deal**

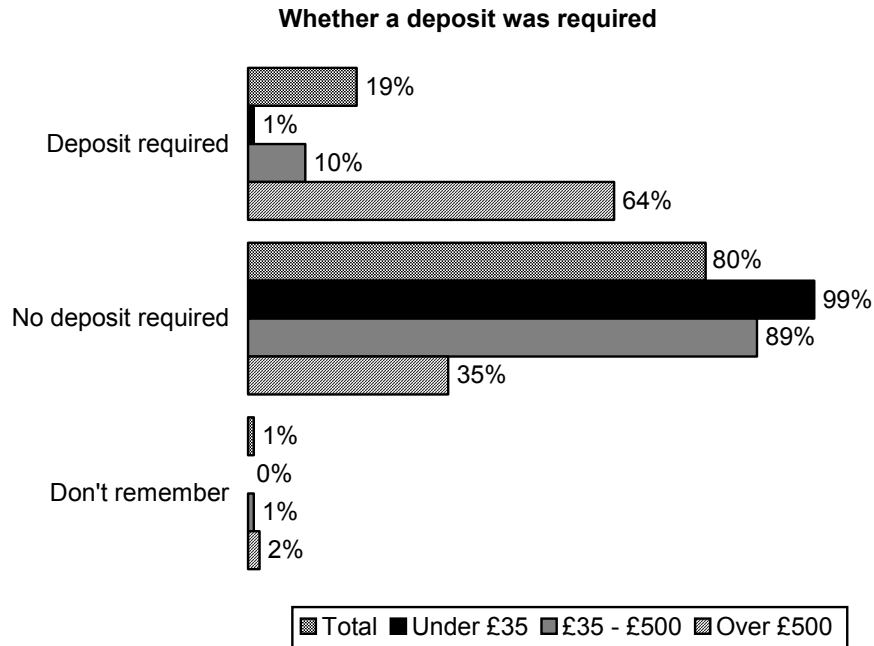


Base: All taking up credit facilities (72)

3.124 While the large majority of those who took up the credit facilities (86%) did recall being informed about the amount of their regular payments, only two thirds (66%) remembered being informed about the total amount they would have to pay.

## Deposit

3.125 Respondents indicated whether or not a deposit was required for their purchase. The findings are illustrated in the chart below, split by purchase value.



Base: All respondents (1,131), Under £35 (429), £35 - £500 (483), Over £500 (219)

3.126 As would be expected, high value goods were most likely to require a deposit compared with lower value goods. Two thirds of high value goods required a deposit (64%) compared to 1 in 10 of all mid value purchases (10%) and just 1% of low value purchases.

3.127 On average a deposit of 16% was required and in two thirds of cases (65%) this deposit was required straight away. Of those that were required to pay the deposit immediately (40 respondents) a quarter (28%) reported feeling pressurised into paying immediately and 10 of the 40 respondents felt under a great deal of pressure.

## 4. OUTCOME OF PURCHASE AND OVERALL EVALUATIONS

### Unexpected outcomes

4.1 Respondents were asked if anything unexpected had happened after they had made the purchase, in terms of anything coming to light that they had not been informed about initially. Respondents were read out a number of things that might have happened unexpectedly after their purchase and asked to indicate which of these applied in their case.

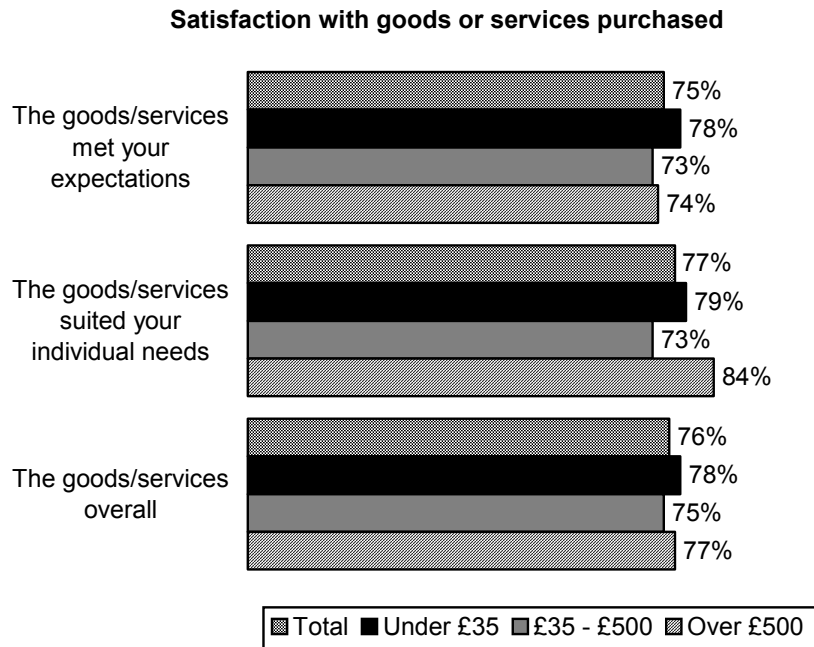
4.2 Just 1 in 5 recent purchasers (20%) claimed that something unexpected had happened after their purchase. This is less likely to be the case with low value purchases (7%) and more likely for mid value (26%) and high value (31%) purchases. The most common unexpected occurrences are shown below.

- The price of goods/services – 8% overall (increases to 11% and 10% for mid and high value purchases)
- The terms and conditions – 8% overall (increases to 10% and 13% for mid and high value purchases)
- The running cost – 4% overall (increases to 8% for mid value purchases)
- The quality of the goods/services – 2%
- Delays in receiving goods/services – 1%
- Restrictions on second hand disposal – 1%
- The terms of any credit agreement – 1%
- Price was higher than expected – 1%
- They did not cancel my previous supplier/getting 2 bills – 1%

4.3 Of those who had experienced something unexpected (230 respondents), a third (32%) claimed they would almost certainly not have purchased their goods if they had been aware of the unexpected factors before making the decision to buy (increases to 40% amongst mid value purchasers), and a further 12% claimed they would probably not have bought. A third (34%) claimed they probably or almost certainly would still have proceeded, and this was higher amongst both low value purchasers (47%) and high value purchasers (41%) compared to mid value purchasers (27%). Around 1 in every 5 purchasers was undecided on this matter.

### Overall Satisfaction with Goods/Services

4.4 The following chart illustrates how satisfied recent purchasers were with a number of aspects of the product or service that they purchased. Respondents rated satisfaction on a 5 point scale and the chart below shows those that were satisfied to some extent with each aspect, split by product value.



Base: All respondents (1,131), Under £35 (429), £35 - £500 (483), Over £500 (219)

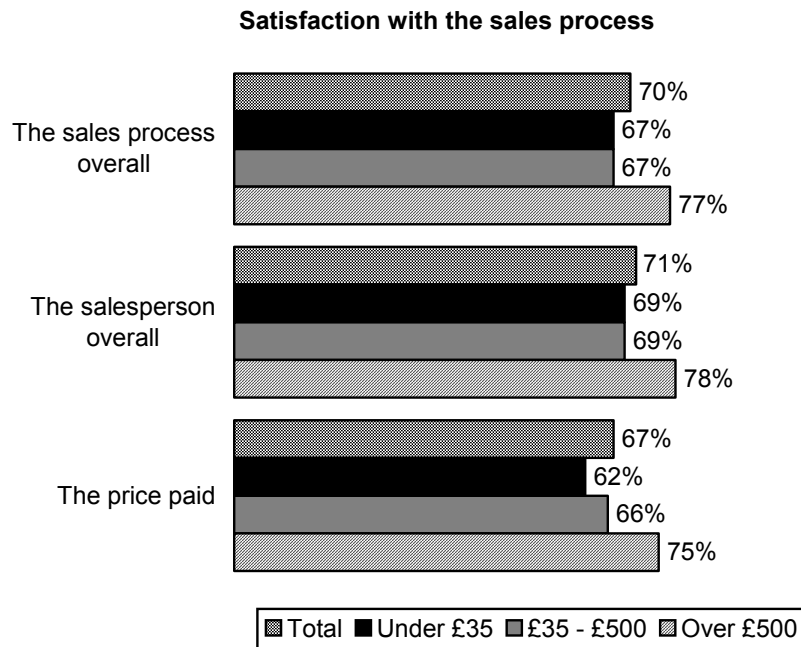
4.5 Overall around three quarters of respondents were satisfied to some extent with each of the aspects. Broadly speaking, satisfaction with goods or services does not vary to any great extent across the different purchase value groups. A slightly higher proportion of high value and low value purchasers were satisfied that goods and services met their individual needs, compared to mid value purchases (84% and 79% vs. 73%). Older respondents, aged over 55, were also more likely to be satisfied with this aspect, with 82% being satisfied compared to 75% of younger respondents.

4.6 Just under 1 in 10 (8%) of purchasers (92 respondents) were actually dissatisfied with the goods or services overall, with the main reasons for overall dissatisfaction shown below:

- Dissatisfied with the quality of goods/services – 24 respondents
- Dissatisfied with the price of goods/services – 23 respondents
- Feelings of being misled/salesperson being dishonest – 11 respondents
- Goods/services not as expected – 7 respondents
- Goods/services not really needed – 6 respondents

### **Overall Satisfaction with Sales Process**

4.7 Now moving on to the sales process and price as opposed to the goods or services themselves, the following chart illustrates how satisfied respondents were with a number of aspects of this. Once again, respondents rated satisfaction on a 5 point scale and the chart below shows those that were satisfied to some extent with each aspect, split by product value.



Base: All respondents (1,131), Under £35 (429), £35 - £500 (483), Over £500 (219)

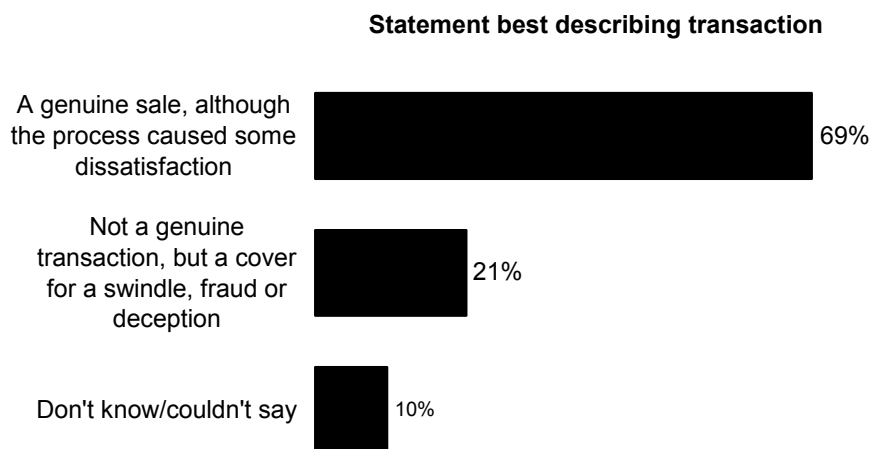
- 4.8 Overall satisfaction is generally slightly lower for the sales process compared with the goods and services purchased, with around 7 in every 10 being satisfied to some extent.
- 4.9 High value purchasers expressed higher levels of satisfaction with the aspects of the sales process overall, the salesperson overall and the price paid compared to mid and low value purchases. Consistently higher levels of satisfaction were also seen amongst those receiving a solicited visit as opposed to an unsolicited visit.
- 4.10 Females were more likely to be more satisfied with the sales process overall compared to males (73% vs. 65%). Older respondents, aged over 55, were also more likely to be satisfied with the salesperson overall compared to younger respondents (76% vs. 69%).

## Deceptive Sales

4.11 Around 1 in every 6 purchasers (17%) expressed dissatisfaction with some of the aspects of the sales process (as listed in the previous chart). In order to arrive at a clear summary of their overall view of the sales process, these purchasers (201 respondents) were asked whether they felt that:

- their experience was one which, though handled in a way which caused some dissatisfaction, was in fact a genuine transaction,
- or that the sale was not genuine but only a cover for a swindle, fraud or deception.

The chart below illustrates the responses.



Base: All dissatisfied with some aspect of the sales process (201)

4.12 In terms of all recent purchasers, this equates to 4% of all buyers (41 respondents) judging that their experience was not a genuine transaction, but a cover for a swindle, fraud or deception. This included 13 respondents who had purchased utilities and 13 who had purchased building, gardening or home improvement services and 9 purchasing cleaning products. When asked to explain this issue further the main explanations were:

- Price was higher/different to that quoted/misled on price – 11 respondents (4 of these purchasing cleaning products)
- The salesperson lied or misled me – 10 respondents (6 utility purchasers)
- Due to the sales pressure/techniques – 6 respondents (3 purchasing cleaning products)
- They did not provide enough information/explain things properly – 4 respondents

4.13 Almost three quarters (71%) of those dissatisfied with the sales process claimed that their experience had made them reluctant to purchase through an in-home sale in the future.

#### Complaints

4.14 Those purchasers who were dissatisfied with any aspect of the sales process (17%) were further asked if they had reported the problem or made a complaint. Of those dissatisfied, a quarter (25%) had made a complaint, this was much higher amongst mid to high value purchasers compared with low value purchasers (35% and 51% vs. 3%).

4.15 The main reasons for deciding not to make a complaint despite being dissatisfied were;

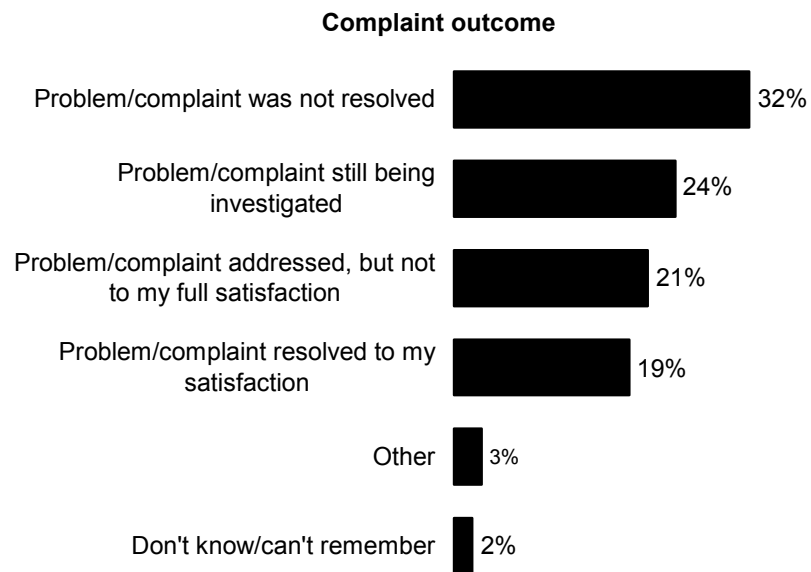
- I was not dissatisfied enough – 24 respondents
- I did not think it was worth it – 22 respondents
- I did not know how to go about reporting the problem – 14 respondents
- I did not complete the purchase – 12 respondents
- I felt it was my own fault/felt foolish – 12 respondents

- Too time consuming – 11 respondents
- Couldn't be bothered – 10 respondents
- Did not have salespersons contact details – 10 people

4.16 However nearly a quarter (23%) of those who were dissatisfied but did not make a complaint (33 respondents) said they would have liked to have made a complaint.

4.17 Of the 25% who were dissatisfied and did actually make a complaint (48 respondents), the majority (44 respondents) made the complaint directly to the salesperson or company involved. Other channels used by minorities to make their complaint included local trading standards (3 respondents), the police (2 respondents), an agency like the OFT (1 respondent) and a trade association (1 respondent).

The chart below shows the outcome of the complaint.



Base: All reporting problem/making a complaint (49)

- 4.18 Just one fifth (19%) of those making a complaint felt the complaint had been resolved to their satisfaction, with a further fifth (21%) feeling it had been addressed, but not to their satisfaction, and a third (32%) feeling the complaint was not resolved.
- 4.19 When asked how satisfied they were with the way their complaint has been handled, half (51%) were dissatisfied to some extent (38% very dissatisfied), a quarter (24%) were satisfied to some extent and 19% held neutral feelings.
- 4.20 Dissatisfied complainants (27 respondents) cited having the problem resolved fully, quickly and being kept informed as ways in which they could have been more satisfied with the handling of their complaint.