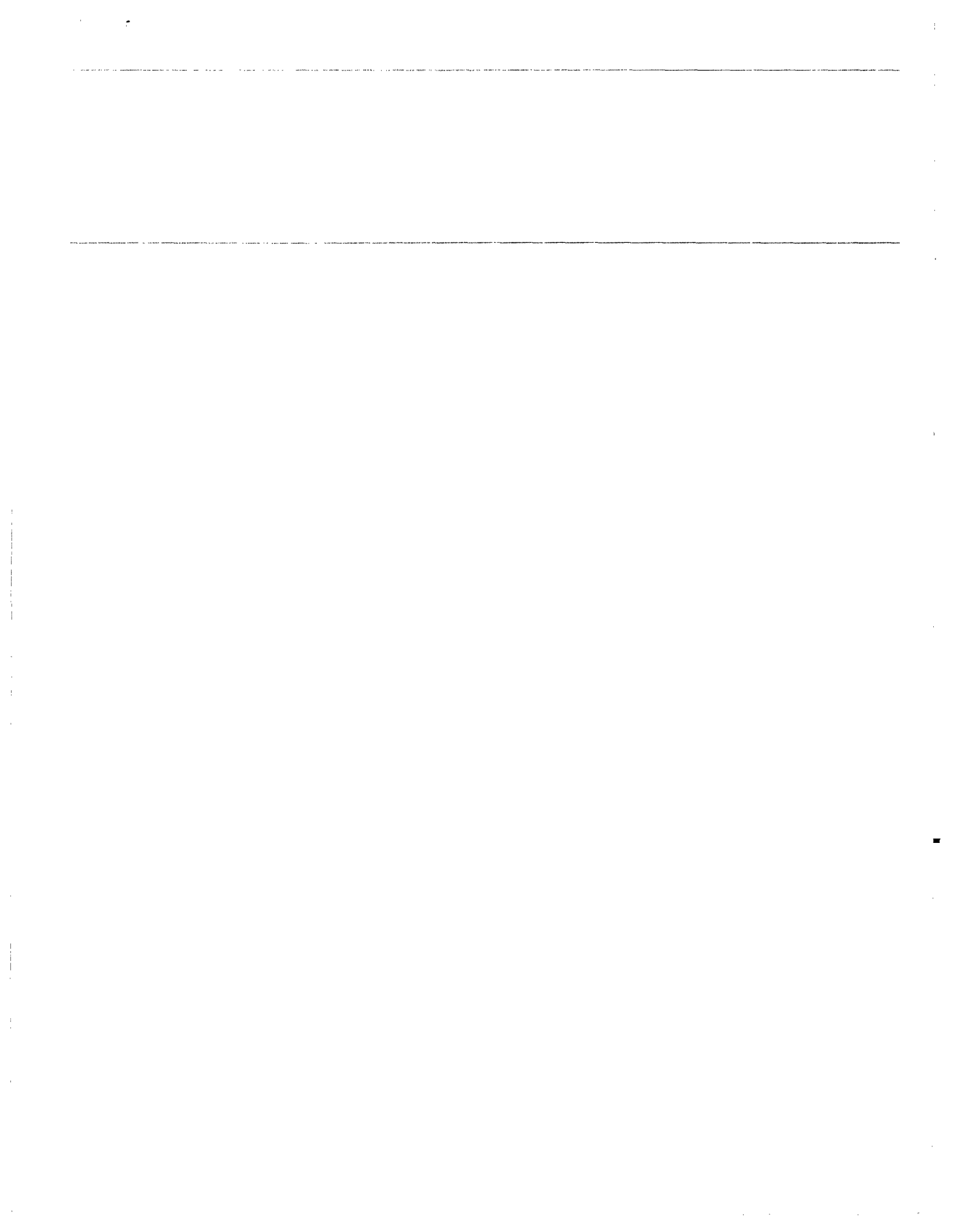


Tracking Customer Satisfaction in a Competitive Environment



148115





United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

General Government Division

B-249140

November 12, 1992

The Honorable William S. Broomfield
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Broomfield:

This report responds to your request that we evaluate the reliability of the United States Postal Service's Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) survey and assess the Postal Service's business practice of not publicly disclosing all CSI results. Based on large numbers of constituent complaints about mail service, you and other Members of Congress have publicly expressed doubts about the validity of the high customer satisfaction rate reported by the CSI survey.

Background

Under the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970, the Postal Service is required to provide prompt, reliable, and efficient universal mail service to a customer base that is extremely diverse, ranging from individual households to large businesses and government entities. In an increasingly competitive environment in which the Postal Service rates lower in customer satisfaction than some of its direct competitors,¹ Postal Service officials recognize that it must do a better job of increasing customer satisfaction by improving service performance. The Postal Service's goal is to obtain 100 percent customer satisfaction over the next several years. Marvin Runyon, the new Postmaster General, said in a July 14, 1992, statement to postal executives that to achieve higher levels of customer satisfaction the Postal Service must improve its "accountability, credibility and competitiveness."

Before fiscal year 1991, the Postal Service used several external measurement systems, such as the National Tracking Study, Division Attitude Survey, and Roper Polls, to assess customer satisfaction. These surveys provided general feedback about customer perceptions of post offices and the quality of services provided, but they did not provide specific information needed by local managers to help them identify service areas needing improvement. As a result, the Postal Service developed and implemented the CSI, which is designed to track residential customer satisfaction with Postal Service offices at the local level—the

¹In our March 1992 report to Congress entitled *U.S. Postal Service: Pricing Postal Services in a Competitive Environment* (GAO/GGD-92-49), we discuss the competitive threat facing the Postal Service and the constraints and obstacles that affect its efforts to compete effectively.

170 management sectional centers (MSC).² The Postal Service has under development another customer satisfaction index that is intended to monitor the satisfaction level of business customers, which account for 88 percent of the Postal Service's mail volume.

The CSI is administered under contract by Opinion Research Corporation. Each quarter it mails a questionnaire to hundreds of thousands of households asking them how they would rate their overall satisfaction with the Postal Service's mail service (Poor/Fair/Good/Very Good/Excellent) and 37 additional questions on specific service areas from letter carrier and window clerk service to parking space availability, complaint handling, and employee courtesy. Quarterly reports are prepared for all MSCs, field divisions, regions, and headquarters. The Postal Service publicly discloses the national and MSC overall satisfaction ratings but not the ratings received on specific service factors, either nationally or locally. Since implementation of CSI in the first quarter of fiscal year 1991, the Postal Service has reported that 85 percent or more of the households surveyed quarterly have rated the Postal Service's overall performance as excellent, very good, or good (favorable), and 15 percent or less rated it fair or poor (unfavorable).

Results in Brief

The CSI is an independently administered, statistically valid survey of residential customer satisfaction with the quality of service provided by the Postal Service. Extensive research and development went into designing the user-friendly questionnaire; the sampling methodology used is sound; and sufficient controls are in place to ensure the integrity of the results.

The publicly released CSI results on how satisfied household customers are with the Postal Service's overall performance do not necessarily reflect how satisfied these customers are with each independent service aspect, based on our review of 20 detailed reports for individual MSCs. Our review of the 20 MSC reports showed that the survey respondents generally rated the Postal Service's overall performance higher than they rated specific service dimensions. For example, 7 of the 20 MSCs received favorable overall performance ratings ranging from 90 to 94 percent. However, the performance ratings they received in a number of important service dimensions were substantially lower than the overall performance score. To illustrate, one MSC with an overall favorable rating of 92 percent

²An MSC is a designated postal facility whose manager has responsibility for all post offices within an assigned ZIP Code area.

received approval ratings of 64 percent for waiting time in line for window service, 72 percent for conveniently located mail boxes, 67 percent for consistent delivery time of nonlocal mail, and 78 percent for consistent delivery time of local mail.

The Postal Service uses the CSI to evaluate management performance and to identify service areas that need to be improved. As part of the postal management performance appraisal system, postal managers are evaluated on the progress made in improving customer satisfaction as reflected in their CSI scores. In addition, the Postal Service has implemented an employee incentive awards program to improve the quality of service, which is based on the CSI year-end ranking of the employee's field division and year-to-year improvements in the employee's field division CSI scores. The Postal Service also has encouraged local managers to reexamine their current operations, on the basis of CSI results, and develop their own programs to improve service performance scores.

The Postal Service's practice of publicly reporting the national and local overall performance ratings, but not the ratings on specific service dimensions, is permitted under the provisions of the Postal Reorganization Act. The act provides that the Postal Service does not have to disclose information that it considers to be of a commercial nature. Postal Service competitors, such as Federal Express and United Parcel Service, also do not disclose detailed information they collect from their customers on their performance.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The objectives of this review were to (1) determine the validity of the CSI in measuring customer satisfaction, (2) examine how the Postal Service uses the CSI results, and (3) assess the validity of the Postal Service's reasons for not disclosing all CSI results.

To assess the technical merits of the CSI survey, we reviewed the questionnaire, sampling methodology, and statistical procedures used to compile the CSI results. We also interviewed Postal Service officials in the Consumer Affairs Department who helped design and test the CSI and officials from Opinion Research Corporation who administer and report the survey results. Our assessment and discussion of the CSI survey instrument, study methodology, and reporting procedures are presented in appendix I.

We used published Postal Service reports for our analysis of the overall CSI results. The Consumer Affairs Department also provided us with copies of 20 MSC reports for the second quarter of fiscal year 1992. They selected 4 high-scoring MSCs, 4 low-scoring MSCs, and 12 MSCs scoring near the national average. The MSCs represented four of the five postal regions. The department purposely excluded MSC reports from one region so that national statistics could not be computed on specific service quality factors. They also masked information in the reports that would identify the individual MSCs.

We discussed with Postal Service Consumer Affairs and Operations Systems and Performance officials how operational improvement goals are set at the MSC level based on the CSI service factor ratings. We also interviewed Operations Support officials about their national improvement efforts and contacted five MSC managers to find out how they used the CSI reports to improve operational performance. The five MSC managers we contacted were those for Washington, D.C.; Toledo, Ohio; Memphis, Tennessee; Suburban Maryland; and Gulfport, Mississippi.

With regard to the release of CSI results, we contacted four Postal Service competitors to discuss (1) their procedures for measuring performance and customer satisfaction and (2) their use and disclosure of the data. The companies were Associated Mail and Parcel Centers, Federal Express, Tribune Alternative Delivery, and United Parcel Service. These Postal Service competitors provide a variety of competitive services including overnight delivery, parcel delivery, delivery of unaddressed advertisements and free samples, box rentals, and window service. We also discussed the legal and policy positions on this matter with the Postal Service Law and Consumer Affairs Departments and reviewed the provisions of the Postal Reorganization Act and Code of Federal Regulations. The Postal Service provided written comments on a draft of this report. These comments have been incorporated where appropriate and appear in their entirety in appendix III.

We did our review at Postal Service headquarters in Washington, D.C., between February and July 1992 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

CSI Is a Valid Survey for Measuring Customer Satisfaction

The CSI is a statistically valid survey for measuring customer satisfaction with the quality of postal services. The survey is independently administered by Opinion Research Corporation under a 30-month, \$5 million contract with the Postal Service. The CSI questionnaire was

designed after an extensive research and development phase involving focus groups with customers in every postal region; face-to-face interviews with a sample of postal regional, divisional, and MSC managers; telephone interviews with a nationwide sample of households; and a pilot test administered in 28 MSCs.

The CSI questionnaire is a 4-page document containing a question on overall satisfaction with the Postal Service and 37 additional questions covering various postal service areas, customer problems and good experiences, and suggestions for improving service to customers (see app. II for a copy of the questionnaire). Much of the questionnaire involves asking postal customers to rate aspects of services offered on a 1 to 7 scale—in which 1 equals poor, 2 to 3 equals fair, 4 equals good, 5 to 6 equals very good, and 7 equals excellent. The Postal Service has considered a rating of good or higher to indicate that customers are satisfied with the service, but Postmaster General Runyon recently said that the Postal Service has to be “better than good” to stay competitive.

Every quarter, Opinion Research Corporation randomly selects households from a national sample frame of households in all 50 states and the Caribbean and sends each a questionnaire. The survey is designed to obtain a minimum of 1,067 usable questionnaires for each MSC, which provides a margin of error of ± 3 percentage points at a 95-percent confidence level. Opinion Research Corporation prepares the CSI reports and mails them directly to the MSCs, divisions, regions, and headquarters.

Appendix I provides additional information on the questionnaire’s design, the sampling methodology, processing and analysis of the questionnaires, and the CSI reports produced from the data.

Postal Service’s Overall Performance

One of the principles of a Total Quality Management (TQM) program,³ which the Postal Service is in the process of implementing, is to focus the resources of an organization massively and virtually single-mindedly on satisfaction of its customers. A valid and detailed customer satisfaction survey is an important component of a TQM strategy. The CSI measures and monitors levels of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the overall performance of the Postal Service. The CSI also provides postal management at all levels a valid measurement of customer satisfaction on a variety of major service quality factors. These factors relate to

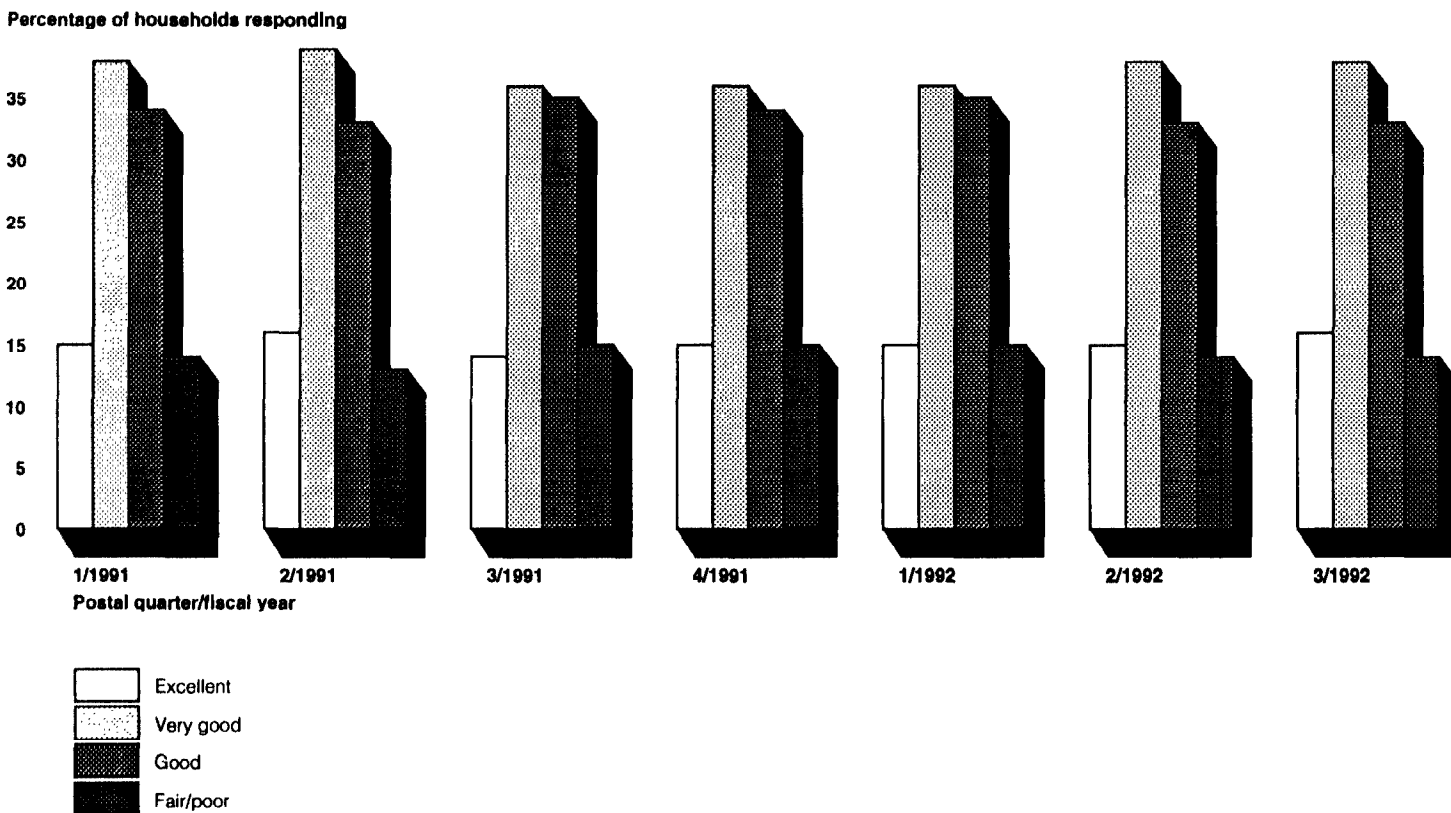
³TQM is a way of ensuring customer satisfaction through the involvement of all employees in an organization in learning how to reliably produce and deliver quality goods and services.

responsiveness, reliability, carrier service, post office box service, forwarding/change of address, complaint handling, telephone experience, window service, lobby service, and post office property. If the Postal Service lacked an instrument like the CSI, it would be difficult for the Postal Service to evaluate how well it is meeting its commitment to quality service.⁴

Eighty-seven percent of the respondents to the most recent CSI survey (third quarter of fiscal year 1992) rated the Postal Service good, very good, or excellent on its overall service. Overall, the Postal Service has received a national approval rating of 85 percent or better since the first quarter of fiscal year 1991. As figure 1.1 shows, over the past 7 quarters, about 14 percent of the respondents rated the overall service excellent, about 37 percent rated the service very good, and about 34 percent rated it good. Fourteen percent or less of the households responding rated the overall service unfavorably (about 2 percent said it was poor and about 12 percent said it was fair).

⁴Another independent system the Postal Service is using to evaluate how well it is serving customers is the Price Waterhouse External First-Class Measurement System. This quarterly survey measures the delivery time of First-Class Mail from deposit to delivery (collection box to mail slot). In our March 1991 testimony before the House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, we said that the Postal Service is to be commended for improving its service measures by engaging independent, outside firms to conduct the surveys and making the results public (Operational Performance of the United States Postal Service, GAO/T-GGD-91-9, Mar. 5, 1991).

Figure 1: National CSI Results



For the most recent CSI results (third quarter of fiscal year 1992), table 1 shows the top 10 and bottom 10 MSCs rated on overall performance. Generally, customers in large metropolitan areas rated overall Postal Service performance lower than customers in smaller Postal Service areas.

**Table 1: Third Quarter Fiscal Year 1992
Top 10 and Bottom 10 Performing
MSCs Rated on Overall Performance**

Top 10	Rating	Bottom 10	Rating
Hartford, CT	95	Chicago, IL	68
Brockton, MA	94	New York, NY	71
Honolulu, HI	94	Los Angeles, CA	76
Springfield, MA	94	Brooklyn-Queens, NY	77
Anchorage, AK	93	Caribbean, PR/VI	81
Manchester, NH	93	Clarksburg, WV	81
Middlesex, MA	93	Corpus Christi, TX	81
Providence, RI	93	Miami, FL	81
Youngstown, OH	93	Springfield, MO	81
Erie, PA	92	Washington, D.C.	81
New Brunswick, NJ	92		
Rochester, NY	92		
White River Junction, VT	92		
Worcester, MA	92		

The Postal Service's overall performance ratings generally have improved. A comparison of third quarter fiscal year 1992 CSI ratings of the 114 MSCs that had a rating for the same period last year shows that overall performance for 96 MSCs improved, 11 did not change, and 7 declined. Of the 96 MSCs that improved their performance rating, 31 raised their scores by 4 to 8 percentage points, 22 by 3 percentage points, 24 by 2 percentage points, and 19 by 1 percentage point. Generally, those MSCs that made the most improvement were MSCs that had some of the lowest ratings a year ago. The progress they have made now places them at or near the national overall performance rating of 87 percent. While we have no definitive evidence that publication of low scores leads directly to improvement in later measurements, it is reasonable to believe that it may increase motivation to improve.

In addition to the overall performance rating, the CSI asks a series of 37 additional questions relating to the reliability and responsiveness of the delivery of the mail, carrier service, post office box service, mail forwarding, window and lobby service, telephone service, complaint handling, and post office property. Postal Service management considers the ratings to these questions to be sensitive information of potential value to its competitors. For example, the Postal Service believes that disclosing any information about specific problems with window service would be of value to Mail Box, Etc., which offers similar services, such as parcel shipping. Therefore, the Postal Service does not publicly disclose this

information and restricts Postal Service management's access to it for internal use. What this information generally shows at 20 MSCs is discussed in the section that follows.

Postal Service's Rating on Service Quality Factors at 20 Management Sectional Centers

The results of the 20 MSC reports we reviewed were based on the second quarter of fiscal year 1992 survey of 23,667 postal customers out of an estimated 11.2 million households located within the MSCs' service areas. Nearly all the survey respondents rated the Postal Service on questions relating to responsiveness, reliability, and carrier service. Only those respondents who had used some of the other services within the last 3 months, such as mail forwarding, were asked to respond to questions related to these services.

Our review of the 20 MSC reports showed that the overall performance scores were generally higher than the scores received on specific service dimensions. Only 4 of the 20 MSCs had 15 percent or more of their respondents within their service area rate overall performance unfavorably. However, the majority of the 20 MSCs received unfavorable ratings greater than 15 percent on at least 26 of the 37 questions asked (see table 2).

Table 2: Unfavorable Ratings of Service Factors for the 20 MSC Reports GAO Reviewed

Service quality factors	MSCs receiving dissatisfaction ratings greater than 15 percent	
	Number of MSCs	Dissatisfaction range
Overall performance	4	18% - 30%
Responsiveness		
Value for the price	19	18% - 37%
Keeping up with the times	16	16% - 36%
Overall communications	13	16% - 41%
Conveniently located mail boxes	20	18% - 38%
Willing to help customers	6	16% - 34%
Mail in good condition	2	16% - 17%
Reliability		
Delivery time, nonlocal mail	20	19% - 41%
Delivery time, local mail	17	16% - 34%
Consistency, nonlocal mail	20	19% - 44%
Consistency, local mail	16	17% - 39%

(continued)

Service quality factors	MSCs receiving dissatisfaction ratings greater than 15 percent	
	Number of MSCs	Dissatisfaction range
Carrier services		
Delivery time of day	19	17% - 34%
Delivery at same time	20	16% - 32%
Correct delivery	16	16% - 35%
Helpfulness of carrier	2	17% - 17%
Appearance of carrier	0	NA
Post office box service		
Delivery to correct box	15	16% - 35%
Delivery by scheduled time	4	18% - 28%
Mail forwarding		
Delivery in reasonable number of days	19	22% - 52%
Forwarding to correct person	20	16% - 52%
Prompt start-up	19	16% - 52%
Complaint handling		
Speed of response	20	55% - 83%
How well they dealt with you	20	45% - 79%
Making it easy to complain	20	26% - 66%
Telephone experience		
Speed of answering phone	16	19% - 62%
Ease of getting through	16	18% - 63%
Ability to help you	12	16% - 48%
Accuracy of information	10	16% - 45%
Courtesy on phone	6	18% - 47%
Window service		
Waiting time in line	20	16% - 74%
Convenient window hours	20	16% - 38%
Courtesy of clerks	5	17% - 35%
Helpfulness of clerks	5	17% - 35%
Lobby service		
Stamps available in machines	20	17% - 37%
Machines in working order	18	18% - 39%
Convenient lobby hours	9	16% - 36%
Post office property		
General inside appearance	4	19% - 30%
Available parking	19	17% - 68%

NA = not applicable.

In summary, although most of the 20 MSCs received an overall approval rating of 85 percent or higher, a substantial number of households did not approve of the services they received in several important service areas. Some efforts under way by the Postal Service to improve customer satisfaction are discussed in the next section.

Postal Service Use of CSI

Each quarter, Opinion Research Corporation sends CSI reports to all MSCs, divisions, regions, and headquarters containing summary statistics for each question on the questionnaire. The reports compare MSCs to other MSCs within a division, divisions to other divisions in the region, and regions to each other. The Postal Service's primary use of the reports is to assess at the division and MSC levels key operations needing improvement and to set organization goals for improving customer satisfaction over the next several years. In order to assist local managers to achieve their targeted goals, the CSI reports identify those service areas where managers need to spend more time and effort improving current operations and where changes to operations can do the most to influence customers' perceptions of overall service performance. In assessing performance and improvement potential, the Postal Service's analysis focuses on the very good and excellent customer satisfaction ratings. In support of their efforts, the Postal Service has implemented a series of servicewide innovations to enhance and expand mail distribution and retail services. Appendix I provides some examples of actions taken at the local level to improve customer satisfaction. In a future assignment, we will assess more fully how the results are used in practice.

To further encourage quality and foster teamwork, the Postal Service recently started to reward its employees for national financial improvements and division-level increases in customer satisfaction. Under the Striving for Excellence Together (SET) program, the Postal Service makes annual payments to employees based on (1) the improved financial performance of their division, (2) the division's overall ranking based on the CSI, and (3) the improvement that the division made in its overall CSI rating. Improved CSI scores also have been made a part of the postal manager performance appraisal system.

In addition to the extensive internal distribution of the CSI results, the Consumer Advocate (the head of the Consumer Affairs office) announces the national and local overall CSI performance scores during the open session of the Postal Service Board of Governors' monthly meeting. Each quarter, a press release on the CSI results along with a brochure showing

the overall national and local performance scores is widely distributed to the national and local news media. Many local newspapers carry stories showing how the local service compares to national performance. The internal and external publicity given to individual MSC performance coupled with the SET program and performance appraisal system provides substantial motivation for employees and managers to improve low performance scores.

Postal Service Competitors Use Similar Methods for Measuring Customer Satisfaction

The postal competitors we contacted—Associated Mail and Parcel Centers, Federal Express, Tribune Alternative Delivery, and United Parcel Service—collectively provide a variety of services that compete with the Postal Service. These include overnight delivery, parcel delivery, delivery of unaddressed advertisements and free samples, box rentals, and window service. Like the Postal Service, they also use independent contractors to assess customer satisfaction. Their goal is also to achieve 100 percent customer satisfaction for the specialized services offered, which are directed mainly to high-volume business users. In the highly competitive overnight and parcel business, only a customer rating of “completely satisfied” (very good or excellent) is acceptable to private carriers. A rating of good would be unacceptable and would likely result in business lost to other competitors. They do not release detailed information on their customer satisfaction surveys because they believe the information would be used to the advantage of their competitors in a highly competitive market.

Federal Express, a 1990 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award winner, provided us with the most information on the scope and methodology of its customer satisfaction survey. According to the information provided, a total of 2,400 telephone interviews are made quarterly to assess customers' views on domestic service, export service, drop boxes, and service centers. A total of 53 attributes are measured, such as overall satisfaction, value for the price, on-time pick-up, and on-time delivery. This information is then used to identify service areas where management needs to improve service. Federal Express reports that about 94 percent of customers contacted are completely satisfied with the overall service. It considers information on how customers rated specific services to be proprietary, and thus the information is not publicly released.

Public Disclosure of CSI Results

The Postal Service is an independent agency of the executive branch of the federal government that is mandated to operate in a businesslike

manner. As part of the Postal Reorganization Act, Congress made the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (5 U.S.C. §552) and other “open government” laws applicable to the Postal Service.⁵ However, in an effort to balance the divergent objectives of having the Postal Service operate both as a business and public entity, Congress also included a provision in the Postal Reorganization Act (section 410(c)) that exempts from mandatory disclosure Postal Service records that fall within six categories. The second category (section 410(c)(2)) allows the Postal Service to withhold “. . . information of a commercial nature, including trade secrets, whether or not obtained from a person outside the Postal Service, which under good business practice would not be publicly disclosed.”

The Postal Service’s regulations issued on this matter state that information under 410(c) includes (1) “reports of market surveys conducted by or under contract in behalf of the Postal Service” and (2) “records compiled within the Postal Service which would be of potential benefit to persons or firms in economic competition with the Postal Service” (39 C.F.R. §265.6(b)(3)(iv) and (vi), respectively). Postal Service officials consider the CSI results to be service performance measures and the detailed information to be records of potential benefit to persons or firms in economic competition with the Postal Service.

The Postal Service reporting policy on the CSI is to make overall national, regional, division, and MSC satisfaction results public as they become available every quarter. Postal Service officials believed that these service performance results would not be as useful to their competitors as would the results of specific service factors, particularly at the MSC level. At the MSC level, however, Postal Service officials believed that releasing detailed information in identifiable geographic delivery areas reflected by the ZIP Codes of each MSC would enable competitors to target and expand their business activities where there is customer dissatisfaction. They pointed out that the Postal Service’s policy of keeping information of a commercial nature confidential is within its legal discretion and consistent with the practices of its competitors.

While full disclosure of the detailed CSI results on specific service factors would enhance the Postal Service’s credibility and accountability to Congress and its customers, it is questionable whether this would actually have a therapeutic effect on service. Under the theory of TQM, service providers determine as accurately and fully as possible what their customers expect and how they evaluate the service they are provided. It

⁵Postal Reorganization Act, 39 U.S.C. §410(b)(1).

does not require that shortfalls be publicized. Rather, TQM envisions that employees will analyze and use data on performance from the customer's perspective to make continuous improvement. The concept requires removing impediments to collecting and using objective data, and full disclosure can be such an impediment.

Public institutions will inevitably have critics ready to seize whatever evidence they can find that will support their criticisms. It is not difficult to foresee that low scores on specific service factors at individual MSCS would be local news accorded a good deal of attention and criticism. Such criticism could be demoralizing to employees and lead to defensiveness, particularly if they saw little attention given to incremental improvements in performance that are often the best prospects facing managers bent on progressive change. This factor would apply much less strongly, and perhaps not at all, to the release of national data on specific service indicators.

We know of no other government institution that has gone to the lengths the Postal Service has in measuring customer satisfaction (and dissatisfaction) with its services and in putting the measurements to use internally. Other executive branch institutions, should they consider comparable objective measurements, would no doubt be deterred by the certain prospect that the results—"warts and all"—would be releasable under the Freedom of Information Act. Indeed, Postal Service officials responsible for operations were reluctant to implement the CSI and other such measurements precisely because they feared prejudicial disclosure of the results.

Agency Comments

The Postmaster General provided written comments on a draft of this report (see app. III). He said that while the Postal Service agreed with the report's principal findings and overall assessment of the CSI, it was concerned that the report left the impression that there is a flaw in the survey's design because "the report implies a discrepancy between higher overall satisfaction scores and lower scores on the individual service dimensions." The Postmaster General explained that an overall rating higher than the ratings for subordinate attributes is "more the norm than the exception" and "the higher rating simply reflects respondents' normal tendency to be more critical of specifics than overall performance."

The Postal Service's explanation is plausible. Research has shown that, generally, questions asking for an overall rating elicit a higher positive

response than questions asking for ratings on specific components, particularly when the overall question is placed first in sequence. We note that this is the sequence and arrangement used in the CSI—that is, there is one question on overall satisfaction and it is placed ahead of 37 other customer satisfaction questions. Thus, we agree that the difference is not necessarily the result of a flaw in the survey design; but we point out that the results released by the Postal Service are not a complete summary of customer satisfaction because they summarize the responses received to only one of the 38 customer satisfaction questions in the survey.

As arranged with your office, unless you publicly announce the contents of the report earlier, we plan no further distribution until 5 days from the date of this letter. At that time, we will distribute copies of this report to the Postmaster General, the Board of Governors of the U.S. Postal Service, the House and Senate postal oversight committees, and other interested parties. Copies will also be made available to others upon request.

If you have questions about this report, please call L. Nye Stevens, Director, Government Business Operations Issues, on (202) 275-8676. The major contributors to this report are listed in appendix IV.

Sincerely yours,



Richard L. Fogel
Assistant Comptroller General

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Abbreviations

CSI	Customer Satisfaction Index
DBA	Database America
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
MSC	Management Sectional Center
SET	Striving for Excellence Together
TQM	Total Quality Management

CSI Is a Valid Instrument for Measuring Customer Satisfaction

This appendix describes the process used to develop the CSI questionnaire, including the sampling methodology; the processing and analysis of the questionnaires; and the CSI reports produced from the data. The questionnaire is designed to measure the satisfaction of household customers with all phases of postal service, to document problems and obtain suggestions for improvement, and to compare various management units' performance.

The Survey Instrument Design

The questionnaire was designed after an extensive research and development phase involving focus groups with customers in every postal region; face-to-face interviews with a sample of Postal Service headquarters, regional, divisional, and MSC managers; telephone interviews with a nationwide sample of households; and pilot tests in MSCs. The 4-page questionnaire contains 37 questions covering postal service areas, customer problems and good experiences, and suggestions for improving service to customers. Overall, the questionnaire format is user friendly, and the questions are clear and easy to understand (see app. II for a copy of the questionnaire).

In 1989, GAO was asked to critique an early version of the CSI questionnaire. We provided the Postal Service with detailed comments concerning all aspects of the instrument. In our critique we covered several issues, including the effect of question ordering on responses, the complexity of the form and question wording, and the necessity of thoroughly pretesting the questionnaire.

Most of our suggestions were incorporated into the final version of the CSI questionnaire. The only suggestion that we made that was not incorporated involved our concern about the placement of the item asking for an assessment of the Postal Service's overall performance as the first element of question 1, that is, before asking about the specific elements, such as delivery of mail in good condition and the willingness of Postal Service employees to help customers. We felt that the overall performance item should be placed at the end of the list of elements provided in question 1 rather than at the beginning because this would allow respondents to consider or be reminded of a number of different Postal Service performance elements before coming to a conclusion concerning overall performance. We believed, however, that any decrease this might cause in the overall performance rating would not be significant and should not be a cause for concern. Postal Service officials told us that a study conducted during the CSI testing phase showed no significant

difference in the ratings received on overall performance when the question was asked either at the beginning or the end of the questionnaire.

Opinion Research Corporation administers the questionnaire for the Postal Service under a \$5 million dollar, 30-month contract. It uses subcontractors for the questionnaire mailing and the handling of returned questionnaires. The implementation of the survey began with 40 MSCs in the first quarter of fiscal year 1991, and more MSCs were added each quarter until all MSCs were included in the fourth quarter of fiscal year 1991. All MSCs are now included in each survey.

Sampling Methodology

The universe for the CSI study is the entire United States (50 states) and the Caribbean—Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Opinion Research Corporation purchases household names and addresses from Database America (DBA), which maintains a consumer file of more than 85 million households. A random sample is constructed from this universe to provide a minimum of 1,067 usable household returns for each of the 170 MSCs for each quarter of the year. After the sample is drawn, a repetitive scheme is used to assign sampled units to maximize the dispersion of the sample geographically within each MSC and ensure uniform variation over years and quarters and across MSCs. The maximum size sample selected for each MSC (except the Caribbean) was 52,000 household addresses. This number included an allowance for vacant and condemned housing and addresses not usable for other reasons. A much higher number of sample pieces was selected for the Caribbean because of known address delivery problems.

Dual language packets containing two questionnaires (one in English and one in Spanish) and a cover letter with English on one side and Spanish on the other side are mailed to all sample units in 5-digit ZIP Codes in which Hispanics are reported to represent 50 percent or more of the population. The sample selection representing Hispanic populations was made at the beginning of the project, using 1980 Census data, and it will be updated with the availability of 1990 Count 4 Census data in 1992.

DBA subcontracts the questionnaire printing and mailing to Mailmen, Inc. During the “stuffing” stages, DBA representatives and Mailmen, Inc., staff randomly check questionnaire packets from each mailing tray to verify inclusion of all contents, proper folding, and correct placement of the mailing address in the window of the envelope. Opinion Research Corporation matches the total number of pieces mailed against the sampled households.

Handling of Returned CSI Questionnaires

Questionnaire recipients are provided with postage-paid envelopes for returning the questionnaires to a post office box in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Questionnaires that cannot be delivered because of vacancies, insufficient addresses, etc., are returned to a separate post office box in New Brunswick, New Jersey. A third subcontractor, Information Systems, Inc., collects these questionnaires and records a final disposition of "undelivered" on the quarterly Opinion Research Corporation sample tape.

The first step in analyzing questionnaire responses involves questions 11 through 15, which concern problems customers have had in the past 3 months. These responses are typed verbatim and transmitted to the Postal Service along with the names, addresses, and phone numbers of the customers who requested contact. The Consumer Advocate Office staff review these responses and determine whether the problem is the result of a national policy or a local procedure. If it is the result of a national policy, the Consumer Advocate acts on the problem; if it is a local procedural problem, the information is forwarded to the appropriate MSC for action. Postal officials told us that all individuals responding to these questions are contacted by a postal employee. This information is also entered into the Consumer Service Card Database for tracking and statistical purposes.

The coding of open-ended questions (questions 12, 18, and 19) occurs next. A team of 10 to 12 coders and 2 supervisors is responsible for performing a content analysis of each question and assigning the responses to 1 of 13 categories that were established during the pilot study. During the coding process, 25 percent of each coder's work is checked by the supervisor. Coders are instructed to use two or more codes if the concern covers more than one of the categories or the coder cannot clearly identify the nature of the problem. Therefore, the problem identified may be shown in two separate areas of the final report.

After coding, the questionnaires are scanned and entered into the database. The respondent identification numbers are verified via a check digit algorithm, and 10 percent of all questionnaires are double-scanned and checked for scanning accuracy and consistency.

Response Rate

The Postal Service and Opinion Research Corporation anticipated a response rate to the CSI of about 20 to 25 percent. With this fact in mind, the sample size was made large enough to provide at least 1,067 usable questionnaires for each MSC. This number of responses provides a margin of error of ± 3 percentage points at a 95-percent confidence level. Prior

response rates are used to project the number of mailings needed to anticipate the return of at least 1,067 usable questionnaires.

Approximately 22 percent of the households that received a questionnaire completed and returned the questionnaire. A study of the nonrespondents, conducted during the CSI testing phase, found that nonrespondents often had a higher opinion of the Postal Service than respondents. The study also found that while the nonresponse rate was high, it was uniform across MSCs, and, as a result, the bias should be uniform and not materially affect comparisons across MSCs. Further, the bias appears to be always in one direction—the bias decreased the percentage who believed the post office was doing a good job. Given the large nonresponse rate, the possible effects of bias in the interpretation of results needs to be monitored closely. Postal Service officials said that they agree and are making every reasonable effort to monitor the situation.

Data Cleaning and Analysis

Data analysis is performed using computer programs which were developed during the CSI pilot study. The programs include logic checks for valid responses and checks to ensure that skip patterns in the questionnaire were followed correctly. Since customers generally do not use all the services provided by the Postal Service, a complete questionnaire is defined to be one in which 80 percent of the applicable questions are answered.

The CSI results are weighted to adjust for the disproportionate sample design and to project to the total number of households in each MSC, division, region, and national total. When all 170 MSCs were included in the study (fourth quarter fiscal year 1991), weights were introduced to reflect the fact that the percentage of eligible survey respondents per MSC was not equal across all MSCs.

As a part of the pilot study, Opinion Research Corporation did a factor analysis that summarized the 37 attributes described in the questionnaire into 10 factors (see table I.1). The relative importance of each factor is determined through regression analysis. The modeling was done at the national level until all MSCs were in the study. Each of the 10 factors is assigned an improvement potential score to help managers identify where they should spend more time and effort in making improvements.

Appendix I
CSI Is a Valid Instrument for Measuring
Customer Satisfaction

Table I.1: Service Quality Factors

1. Responsiveness	6. Mail forwarding
Value for the price	Delivery in reasonable number of days
Keeping up with the times	Forwarding to correct person
Overall communications	Prompt start up
Convenient mail boxes	7. Complaint handling
Willing to help customers	Speed of response
Mail in good condition	How well they dealt with you
2. Reliability	Making it easy to complain
Delivery time, nonlocal	8. Telephone experience
Delivery time, local	Speed of answering phone
Consistency, nonlocal	Ease of getting through
Consistency, local	Ability to help you
3. Carrier service	Accuracy of information
Delivery time of day	Courtesy of phone
Delivery at same time	9. Window service
Correct delivery	Waiting time in line
Helpfulness of carrier	Convenient window hours
Appearance of carrier	Courtesy of clerks
4. Post office box service	Helpfulness of clerks
Delivery to correct box	10. Lobby service
Delivery by scheduled time	Stamps available in machines
5. Post office property	Machines in working order
Available parking	Convenient lobby hours
General inside appearance	

CSI Reports

Each quarter, standardized reports are sent to MSC Postmasters, Division Postmasters, Regional Postmasters, and the Consumer Affairs Department at headquarters. The report presents data results based on all 170 MSCs. Summary statistics for the MSC total, division total, region total, and national total are weighted to represent the household population size in each management unit.

Responses to the questionnaire are grouped according to the 10 factors discussed in table I.1. The reports provide

- a summary of the MSC's overall performance for the quarter,

- a standing of each service quality factor compared to the best MSC nationally,
- principal drivers of performance for the MSC and improvement potential of service factors,
- a summary of performance over time,
- cross-tabulations on the components of each service area,
- verbatim comments from customers who listed a problem and considered it important enough to request contact by a postal official, and
- verbatim comments from customers who offered suggestions to improve the Postal Service's performance.

Some examples of actions taken by local managers to improve customer service follow.

- In an effort to improve the rating for courtesy of window clerks, one MSC provided courtesy training to all window clerks, changed their titles to Customer Service Representative, and provided each window clerk with 100 business cards. The MSC believed that courtesy training alone would not be enough, and that providing business cards and a new title would enable the employees to feel better about themselves as postal employees. The employees selected the new title themselves.
- In an effort to meet the Postal Service's announced objective of not having customers wait in line more than 5 minutes for window service, one MSC posted signs to this effect in the post office lobby. The signs serve two purposes by (1) reminding postal employees of their obligations to meet the 5-minute objective and (2) serving notice to customers to expect a wait, but the wait should not exceed 5 minutes. The MSC also implemented the Postal Service's Lobby Director program. The Lobby Director is a specially trained, uniformed employee who assists customers awaiting service during heavy volume periods. In facilities to which a Lobby Director is assigned, customers no longer have to wait in line for general information or to retrieve accountable mail.
- One MSC experiencing route adjustments sent letters to each household explaining the rationale for the adjustment and the anticipated effect on delivery time the customer would experience. Consumer affairs representatives were stationed temporarily in each of the post offices where the effect on customers was seen to be the most pronounced. This allowed trained persons to assist customers through the transition and freed the delivery management personnel to concentrate on resolving the operational problems.
- One MSC modified a post office lobby to allow customers after-hours access to their post office boxes. The MSC learned of the limited access

Appendix I
CSI Is a Valid Instrument for Measuring
Customer Satisfaction

while investigating the reasons for high levels of dissatisfaction with post office box service. The same MSC has also extended window service at several post offices.

- One MSC instructed its employees to stop transferring customers from one department to another when they called the post office with a problem. After learning that customers that called the post office with a problem were unhappy with the number of times that they were transferred, the MSC instructed its employees to take the caller's phone number, get the answer to their question, and then call the customer back.

CSI Questionnaire



THE POSTMASTER GENERAL
Washington, DC 20260-0010

Dear Postal Customer:

Your opinions are important to the United States Postal Service. For that reason you are being asked to participate in a nationwide survey. By answering the enclosed questionnaire, you can tell us what you think of our services.

Your household has been randomly selected to represent your area. Your answers will give your local post office, and the national U.S. Postal Service, important information about where we need to improve service.

One person in the household should fill out the questionnaire -- the person who most often mailed your letters, picked up the daily mail, went to the post office, or bought stamps in the last three months. Please answer the questions based on your *own* experiences in the last three months. Feel free to add another sheet of paper if you run out of space in the questionnaire.

Feel free to complete the questionnaire in whichever language you prefer, Spanish or English. You will find two versions enclosed.

Please don't delay; your responses are very important and will be kept confidential. Mail the completed questionnaire directly to our research consultants, Opinion Research Corporation, in the postage paid envelope provided.

We thank you in advance for your help.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marvin Runyon".

Marvin Runyon

U.S. Postal Service Customer Survey

Q5

To Be Completed by the Adult who Takes Care of the Mail

Directions:

- Mark **one** box for each item with a small "X" like this not with a check mark .
- If you don't know how to answer or the question doesn't apply, mark an "X" in the "Don't Know" box
- Base answers on your **household experience during the past three months**

Right Wrong

1. Overall Performance (in the past three months)

We would like your opinion of the U.S. Postal Service's performance during the past three months on some general topics. Use a seven-point scale, where 1 means "Poor," 4 means "Good," and 7 means "Excellent." Please remember that you can mark any box between 1 and 7 or the "Don't Know" box.

Please rate the U.S. Postal Service on . . .

	(Poor—Fair)			Good	(Very Good-Excellent)			Don't Know
	1	2	3		4	5	6	
a. Its overall performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Delivery of the mail in good condition (undamaged)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. The length of time it usually takes a letter mailed in your local area to be delivered in your local area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. The length of time it usually takes a letter mailed in other parts of the country to be delivered in your local area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Consistency of delivering local mail in the same number of days each time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Consistency of delivering mail from outside your local area in the same number of days each time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Having conveniently located mail deposit boxes where you can mail letters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Willingness to help customers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Providing services which are a good value for the price	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Its ability to keep up with the times	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Overall communication with customers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Receiving Your Mail (in the past three months)

Please rate the U.S. Postal Service on . . .

	(Poor—Fair)			Good	(Very Good-Excellent)			Don't Know
	1	2	3		4	5	6	
a. Getting the mail to the correct street address	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Helpfulness of your local letter carrier	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Appearance of your local letter carrier	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. The time of day mail is delivered to your home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Delivery of mail to your home at about the same time each day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Appendix II
CSI Questionnaire**

3. Have you gone inside a post office during the past three months?

- Yes → Continue with question 4 No → Go to question 5

4. **Your Post Office** (in the past three months)

Think about the post office you have *been to most often* during the past three months.

Please rate *this* post office on . . .

	(Poor—Fair)			Good	(Very Good-Excellent)			Don't Know
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
a. Courtesy of window clerks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Helpfulness of window clerks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Waiting time in line	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Convenience of window service hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Availability of stamps through vending machines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Having vending machines in working order	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Convenience of hours that lobby is open beyond window service hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. General inside appearance of the building	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Availability of parking at or near the post office	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What is the ZIP Code of this post office? _____ Don't Know

5. Is any of your household's mail delivered to a U.S. Postal Service post office box?

- Yes → Continue with question 6 No → Go to question 7

6. **Mail Delivery to Your Post Office Box** (in the past three months)

Please rate the U.S. Postal Service on . . .

	(Poor—Fair)			Good	(Very Good-Excellent)			Don't Know
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
a. Delivery of mail to your box by the scheduled time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Delivery of mail to the correct PO box	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Have you or anyone else in your household filled out a change of address card within the past three months, so your First-Class Mail would be forwarded to a different address? This includes forwarding to a temporary or vacation address.

- Yes → Continue with question 8 No → Go to question 9

8. **Forwarding/Change of Address Service** (in the past three months)

Please rate the U.S. Postal Service on . . .

	(Poor—Fair)			Good	(Very Good-Excellent)			Don't Know
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
a. Delivery of forwarded mail within a reasonable number of days	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Getting forwarded mail to the correct person	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Prompt start-up of delivery to your forwarding address	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. Have you telephoned the U.S. Postal Service within the past three months to complain or obtain information?

- Yes → Continue with question 10 No → Go to question 11

**Appendix II
CSI Questionnaire**

10. Telephone Experience (in the past three months)
Please rate the U.S. Postal Service on ...

	(Poor—Fair)			Good	(Very Good-Excellent)			Don't Know
	1	2	3		4	5	6	
a. Ease of getting through when you phoned	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Speed of answering the phone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Ability of the person who answered the phone to help you or refer you to someone who could	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Courtesy of employees on the telephone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Accuracy of information given on the phone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. During the past three months have you had any problems with the U.S. Postal Service?

- Yes** → Continue with questions 12 and 13 **No** → Go to question 16

12. If "yes," please describe the problem(s) in detail. _____

13. Did you complain to the U.S. Postal Service?

- Yes** → Continue with question 14 **No** → Go to question 15

14. Complaint Handling

Please rate the U.S. Postal Service on ...

	(Poor—Fair)			Good	(Very Good-Excellent)			Don't Know
	1	2	3		4	5	6	
a. Making it easy to complain or describe your problem	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Speed of response to your problem	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. How well they dealt with you	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. Would you like a U.S. Postal Service representative to contact you about this problem?

- Yes** → Complete the information below **No** → Go to question 16

Your full name: _____ Mr. Mrs. Ms. _____
 Daytime phone: (____) _____ Evening Phone: (____) _____

16. Right now the only way to mail a First-Class letter is through the U.S. Postal Service. But if there were another mail service which you could use to mail a letter at the same price, would you switch to another service?

- Definitely would switch Probably would **not** switch
 Probably would switch Definitely would **not** switch Don't know

17. During the past three months have you had any especially good experience(s) with the U.S. Postal Service?

- Yes** → Continue with question 18 **No** → Go to question 19

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0
 (question 12)

**Appendix II
CSI Questionnaire**

18. If "yes" please describe the good experience(s) in detail. _____

19. What if anything, could the U.S. Postal Service do to increase your overall satisfaction with its employees, its post offices, or the quality of service it provides? Please be specific.

20. Is anyone in your household employed by the U.S. Postal Service?

- Yes No

21. Is anyone in your household employed by a national company that specializes in shipping or delivery of mail or packages?

- Yes No

22. Are you . . .

- Male Female

23. How many people, both adults and children, live in this household? Please include yourself.

- One Two Three Four Five or six Seven or eight Nine or ten Eleven or more

24. Your age:

- Under 25 years 25-34 years 35-44 years 45-54 years 55-64 years 65 or older

25. Highest level of school you completed:

- Did not finish high school High school graduate Some college/technical school/trade school College graduate or beyond

26. Which of the following categories includes your total household income before taxes for 1990?

- Under \$10,000 \$10,000-\$19,999 \$20,000-\$29,999 \$30,000-\$39,999 \$40,000-\$49,999 \$50,000-\$74,999 \$75,000 or more

Your answers to these questions will be kept confidential and will only be used to identify groups of similar people for statistical purposes. The United States Postal Service greatly appreciates your help in completing this questionnaire.

Please return your questionnaire in the enclosed postage-paid envelope to:

Opinion Research Corporation, PO Box 675, New York, NY 10014-9871

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

(question 18) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0
 (question 19) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

Comments From the U.S. Postal Service



THE POSTMASTER GENERAL
Washington, D.C. 20260 0010

November 2, 1992

Mr. Richard L. Fogel
Assistant Comptroller General
United States General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001

Dear Mr. Fogel:

Thank you for providing us an opportunity to comment on the draft report entitled, U.S. Postal Service: Tracking Customer Satisfaction In a Competitive Environment. We are extremely pleased with the report's findings and its overall assessment of our Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) and our use of the survey results. In particular, we appreciate the report's strong endorsement of the CSI's statistical validity, the questionnaire's ease of use and the integrity of the results. We also appreciate that the report reinforces our belief that the CSI is a most important component of our total quality management strategy.

As the report notes, the Postal Service has had a long-standing position of publicly releasing the overall satisfaction scores while not releasing the scores for the individual service quality factors. We are pleased that the report affirms our decision in this matter and that our reasons for not releasing the individual factor scores are legitimate and in keeping with good business practice.

While we agree completely with the report's principal findings, there is one point on which we take a somewhat different view. We are concerned that the report may leave readers with the impression that there is a flaw in the survey's design since the report implies a discrepancy between higher overall satisfaction scores and lower scores on the individual service dimensions. It is our position that in surveys of this type, an overall rating being higher than the ratings of subordinate factors is more the norm than the

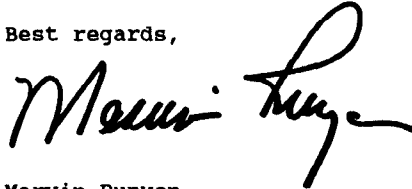
- 2 -

exception. The higher rating simply reflects respondents' normal tendency to be more critical of specifics than overall performance.

When the research for the report was being done, our field organization was based on management sectional centers, divisions and regions. We now have a new field structure based on areas and districts. The CSI summary statistics and reports of scores are being reconfigured to match the new structure so that local managers can continue to identify the service factors that need improving.

As a note, we have now received the survey results for quarter four of fiscal year 1992. The results show an overall approval rating of 87 percent. While we are gratified by our continued high approval ratings, we are by no means satisfied with them. The many changes we are making are designed to improve our customers' satisfaction with the service we give them. We fully expect that future CSI scores will reflect those efforts.

Best regards,



Marvin Runyon

Major Contributors to This Report

General Government
Divison, Washington,
D.C.

Xavier R. Richardson, Assistant Director, Government
Business Operations Issues
Barry P. Griffiths, Assignment Manager
Melvin J. Horne, Evaluator-in-Charge
James A Bell, Assistant Director, Technical/Methodological
Group
Stuart M. Kaufman, Senior Social Science Analyst

Office of the General
Counsel, Washington,
D.C.

V. Bruce Goddard, Senior Attorney

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