

**PERCEPTION OF POSTAL SERVICE
QUALITY**

2002

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1. SUMMARY

The aim of this study is to evaluate the satisfaction of consumers of postal services during 2002, following similar studies conducted by ANACOM.

This study covers the use, quality and prices of the postal services provided by CTT - Correios de Portugal, S.A.

The results were obtained by way of an opinion poll. The fieldwork and data processing were effected by a specialist company. The study is based on a sample of 1080 interviews conducted between 23/04/02 and 12/05/02. The results presented have a reliability factor of 95% and a sampling error of 3%.

1.1. The Main Results

The main conclusions of this study were as follows:

1. On a scale from 1 to 20, postal services had **an average score of 14.3**. This result is slightly higher than in 2001, when the score was 14.0. Progress over the past 5 years is considered to have been positive by most interviewees (91%).
2. Approximately **29% of interviewees state that they do not use the current Postcode format**. Of these, 37% justify this conduct by the fact that they are unaware of the new codes.
3. The following was noted with regard to the **use of post offices** and other postal infrastructures:
 - a) Most interviewees stated that **they rarely visit a post office (37%)**, or only two or three times a month (26%);
 - b) Approximately **60% of interviewees choose to use only one post office near their home**, while 15% use only post offices near their

- workplaces. Of those who opt for a post office away from their home/workplace, 25% state that it is not easy to locate post offices;
- c) So far as the time of day when interviewees visit post offices is concerned, **the busiest period is between 9h and 12h** (40% for the country as a whole and 90% for Madeira and the Azores). Approximately 85% of interviewees stated that post office opening hours are acceptable. So far as preference for other opening times is concerned¹, the periods most mentioned are Saturday morning (41%), lunchtime (29%) and the evenings until 20h00 (28%);
- d) **The most used services are the posting of letters and the payment of services.** Approximately 45% of interviewees state that the services available at post offices are sufficient. The remaining interviewees suggest that additional services, such as Internet access should be available (in accordance with the concerns voiced by the European Council, which took place in Lisbon from the 23rd to the 24th of March 2000 and the “Internet Initiative”, which establishes Internet access in post offices as an objective), an ATM service, sale of newspapers and magazines, loading of mobile telephones, services adapted to the needs of the elderly and illiterate, the sale of vehicle tax stamps, banking services, investment services, sale of fiscal stamps, etc. should be available;
- e) So far as the information displayed in post offices is concerned, **price information was considered to be the least visible by 37%** of those interviewed. Information regarding the main services and the latest collection times for priority and non-priority mail were also considered not to be very visible by a significant percentage of those interviewed (30%, 27% and 24%, respectively). It should be

¹ Multiple response accepted

noted that 85% and 82% respectively of interviewees in the Azores considered that the information regarding the last collection times for priority and non-priority mail were not very visible;

- f) **Approximately 68% of interviewees stated that it was difficult to locate automatic stamp vending machines.** According to the most recent data available (2000) there are 590 automatic stamp vending machines in Portugal.
 - g) **Most interviewees (79%) that the number of mail collection units (postboxes at post offices and outdoor postboxes) is sufficient,** although 45% of those interviewed in Madeira and the Azores disagreed. According to the data most recently available regarding outdoor postboxes (1998), there are approximately 22500 outdoor postboxes in Portugal;
 - h) **Most interviewees were unaware of the existence of customer support services,** i.e. the free customer support telephone service (76%), the CTT page on the Internet (67%) and the existence of a complaints service at post offices (54%).
4. So far as customer attendance at post offices is concerned, most interviewees state that the **staff are of good appearance (75%) and are pleasant and helpful (73%).**

It should also be noted that **the queuing time perceived by interviewees is more than 10 minutes in 37% of cases.** Approximately 43% and 49% of interviewees in the Greater Lisbon region and Madeira and the Azores respectively, mention this queuing time.

It should be noted that the average queuing time determined by the CTT within the ambit of the Universal Postal Service Quality Agreement in 2001 was 4h:05m.

So far as **maximum perceived queuing time is concerned, the average was between 26 and 30 minutes (22%)**, followed by between 11 and 15 minutes (20%).

It should be noted that the longest queuing time detected by CTT in 2001 within the ambit of the Universal Postal Service Quality Agreement was 4h54m.

5. So far as the **use of postal services** is concerned it was noted that:
- a) Approximately **50% of interviewees sent one or less letters a month**. It should be noted that approximately 14% of those interviewed do not post correspondence. The main reason given for this low level of use of the postal services is the preference for the telephone (55%);
 - b) **Approximately 59% of interviewees state that they use the post office parcel service**. The price charged for this service is considered fair by 74% of those interviewed;
 - c) **Only 21% of interviewees are aware of the standard delivery period for non-priority mail (D+3, in which D is the day of posting)**;
 - d) **Only 49% of interviewees are aware of the standard delivery period for priority mail (D+1)**;
 - e) **There appears to be a lower level of satisfaction in Madeira and the Azores with regard to the quality of the priority mail service**. In fact only 52% of those interviewed state that the standard delivery period (D+2) is complied with by the CTT.
 - f) Approximately 20% of those interviewed state that they knew the price of a letter sent by non-priority mail weighing up to 20 gr., in force in 2001 (€ 0.28). However only 40% of the said interviewees knew the correct price. Given the quality of the service provided,

84% of those interviewed considered that the price is fair. Of the remaining interviewees, 89% considered the price to be too high;

- g) Approximately 16% of interviewees stated that they knew the price of a priority mail letter weighing up to 20 gr. in force in 2001 (€ 0.43). However 25% of those interviewed misstated the price. So far as the quality of the service is concerned, 81% of those interviewed considered the price to be fair. Of the 9% who disagreed, 90% considered it to be too high.

1.2. Recommendations

It is recommended in the light of the conclusions related above that the CTT take the following measures, with particular emphasis on Madeira and the Azores, to:

- Publicise information regarding the new post codes using appropriate means;
- To give greater publicity by the appropriate means, i.e. at post offices and on the CTT web page, of the characteristics, prices and quality of the various mail services;
- Promote the dissemination of the standard delivery periods of non-priority and priority mail, collection times at post boxes in the street and at other post boxes and to affix information at all post boxes of non-priority mail indicating special post boxes for priority mail;

- Promote the use of the free customer support telephone service and the CTT web page and give greater publicity to the complaints service access numbers;
- Reduce queuing time at post offices by promoting postage stamp sales at locations other than post offices, i.e. at stamp vending machines, when appropriate;
- Study the possible reorganisation of the number of mail collection points and increased publicity of the existing mail collection points, by appropriate means.

2. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to evaluate consumer satisfaction with postal services in 2002. It should be noted that similar studies have been conducted by ANACOM since 1992.

Special emphasis was given in this study to the perception of service quality in Madeira and the Azores.

The main aspects focused on in the gathering of opinions were as follows:

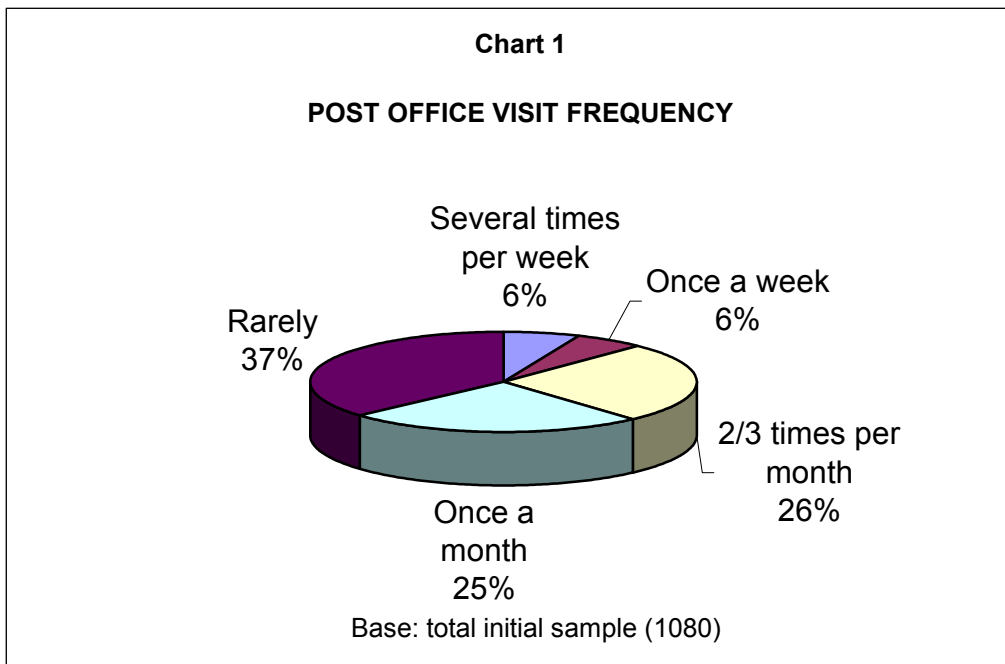
- Level of use of postal services and post offices;
- Perception regarding post offices, i.e. with regard to location, opening hours, condition and attendance of the public;
- Perception regarding postal services, particularly with regard to the collection of mail, the quality of the delivery service and service prices;
- Overall evaluation of postal services.

3. DETAILED ANALYSIS

3.1. Level of use of post offices and postal services

3.1.1. Use of post offices

Most interviewee's state that they visit post offices rarely (37%), or 2 to 3 times per month (26%).



So far as the time of day when those interviewed visit post offices is concerned, the busiest period is between 9h and 12h (40%), followed by the period between 14h and 17h (33%) and the period between 12h and 14h (11%).

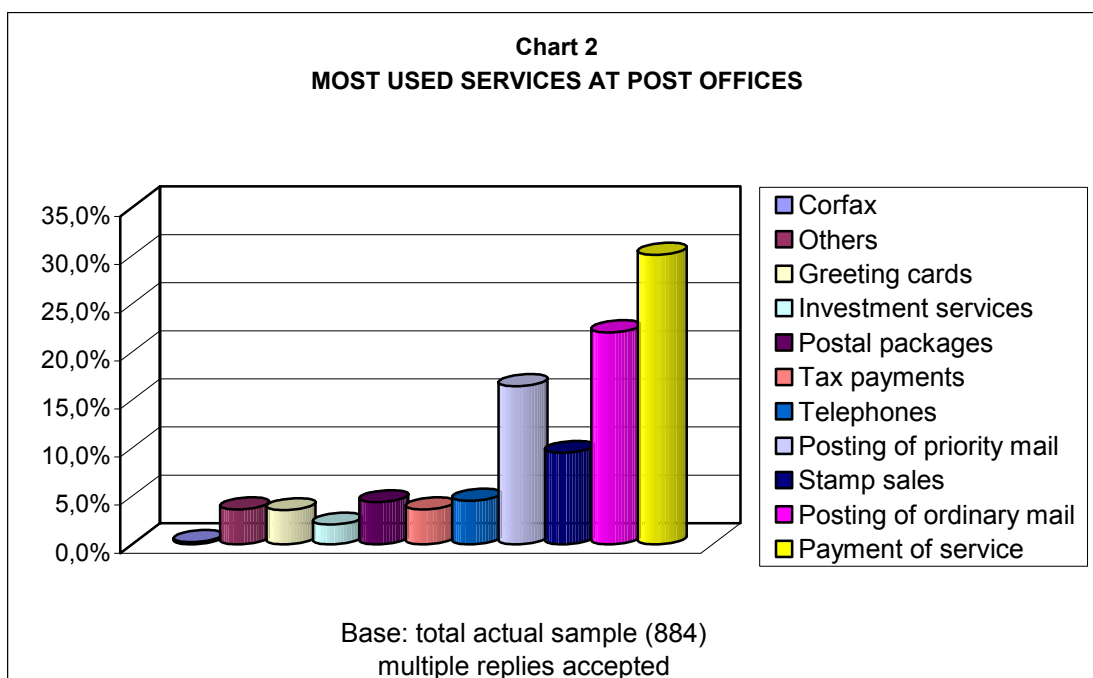
The busiest period in Madeira and the Azores is from 9h to 12h for 90% of all replies.

3.1.2. Use of postal services at post offices²

The services most used at post offices are those related to the posting of letters (50%) and payment of services (39%).

In Madeira and the Azores, the services most used at post offices are posting of letters (60%) followed by payment of services (50%).

The response in the Azores, where the service most used is the posting of non-priority letters and greetings cards should be noted. None of those interviewed referred to the send of mail by priority mail.



44% of those interviewed state that they have used the telephone service available at post offices. Of these, 60% state that the service is well organised in terms of queuing, both to make and pay for telephone calls. The following were some of the suggestions made to improve the service:

² Multiple response accepted

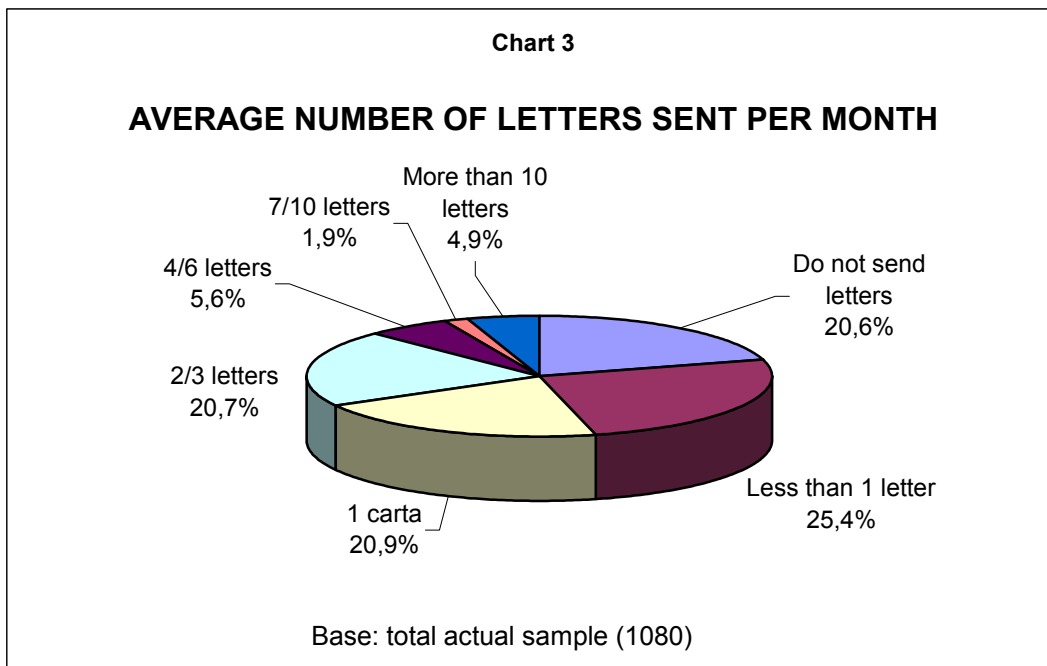
- The provision of a counter for the telephone service; the provision of telephone boxes for reasons of noise and privacy and the provision of a coin operated telephone.

Approximately 45% of those interviewed consider that the services available at post offices are sufficient (66% of those interviewed in Madeira and the Azores considered the existing services to be adequate). The remaining interviewees suggested that the following additional services be provided at post offices: Internet access; ATM service; sale of newspapers and magazines; loading of mobile telephones; services more adapted to the requirements of the elderly/illiterate and sale of vehicle tax stamps; banking services, investment services; sale of fiscal stamps.

3.1.3. Use of postal services

Approximately 50% of those interviewed send no more than one letter per month. Approximately 14% of those interviewed stated that they do not send correspondence by mail.

The main reason stated for the low level of the use of postal services is a preference for the telephone (55%).



3.1.4. The new post codes

Approximately 17% of those interviewed did not know the number of digits that comprise the current postcode format (7). Approximately 71% of those interviewed answered this question correctly.

In Madeira and the Azores the percentage of those interviewed that were unaware of the number of digits in the new postcode was 35%.

It should be noted that 29% of interviewees stated that they do not use the new postcodes. Of those who use the new postcode, 77% use it in the address of both the sender and addressee, while 8% use it for the addressee alone

37% of those who do not use the new postcodes justify this conduct by the fact that they are unaware of the new codes.

3.1.5. Customer support services

Those interviewed in this poll were asked about the use of the free customer support telephone service, the CTT web page and the complaints service at post offices.

It was concluded that most interviewees (76%) are unaware of the free customer support telephone service. Of those who are aware of the service, 23% state that they use it. Of these, 97% are satisfied with the information provided.

Approximately 33% of those interviewed are aware of the CTT web page, on the Internet.

In the country as a whole only 13% of consumers who are aware of the web page have consulted it. Those who consult it do so to discover post codes and out of curiosity. Of those who have already consulted the CTT page, 91% state that they are satisfied with the way in which information is presented on the page.

87% of those interviewed in Madeira and the Azores are unaware of the said page.

Approximately 46% of those interviewed state that they are aware of the existence of a complaints service at post offices, of which 75% have used the service. The main reason for complaints was related to missing mail. Of those who complained, 65% were satisfied with the way in which their complaints were dealt with.

3.2. Post offices

3.2.1. Location of post offices

Approximately 60% of interviewees use only one post office near their home, while 15% use only post offices near their workplaces.

In Madeira and the Azores, 43% of those interviewed stated that they only use post offices near where they live.

Of those who opt to use post offices away from where they live/work, 25% state that they experience difficulty in locating post offices.

86% of interviewees state that the post offices they frequent are suitably located.

3.2.2. Post office opening hours

Approximately 86% of interviewees considered that current post office opening hours are satisfactory.

Of the various preferences for other post office opening hours³, the most important is Saturday morning (41%), lunchtime (29%) and the end of the afternoon until 20h00 (28%).

3.2.3. Condition of post offices

So far as the condition of post offices are concerned, opinions were mostly favourable, as 99% of those interviewed considered the condition of post offices to be “good” or “reasonable”.

3.2.4. Materials available at post offices

40% of interviewees were unaware that pens and glue were available at post office counters.

It is noteworthy that 12% of interviewees were unaware that telephone directories are available for consultation at post offices.

³ Multiple response accepted

3.2.5. Information displayed at post offices⁴

So far as the information displayed at post offices is concerned, price information was considered by 37% of those interviewed to be less visible. Information regarding the main services and last collection times for non-priority and priority mail are also considered not to be very visible by a significant percentage of interviewees (30%), 27%) and 24%) respectively. According to 84% of those interviewed, post office opening hours information is the most visible information at post offices.

It is noteworthy that in the Azores, 85% and 82% respectively consider that information regarding the last collection times for priority and non-priority mail respectively is not very visible.

3.2.6. Attendance at post offices

3.2.6.1. Appearance and conduct of staff

Approximately 75% of interviews consider that post office staff are of good appearance, despite the fact that they do not wear uniform. Only 2% of those interviewed considered that post office staff are of poor appearance.

So far as the affability and helpfulness of post office staff in attendance on the public is concerned, 73% of those interviewed express a favourable opinion, while 4% have a negative opinion.

So far as work distribution and organisation is concerned, the method preferred was the system of specific counters for each type of service (61%. This option was justified on the grounds of rapidity and practicality.

In Madeira and the Azores most interviewees (60%) preferred a separate counter for each service.

⁴ Multiple response accepted

79% of all interviewees considered that there should be a numbered ticket system to establish the order in which people are attended. This system is considered to be more practical, more organised and “prevents people from being attended out of turn”.

3.2.6.2. Queuing times

In 37% of cases the perceived queuing time of interviewees was greater than 10 minutes. Approximately 43% and 49%, respectively of those interviewed in the Greater Lisbon Region and Madeira and the Azores mention this queuing time.

31% of all interviewees mentioned a queuing time of between 7 and 10 minutes, while 23% mentioned a queuing time of between 4 and 6 minutes.

So far as the maximum perceived queuing time is concerned, replies centred on a period of from 26 to 30 minutes (22%), followed by an interval of from 11 to 15 minutes (20%).

In 55% of cases, the queuing time was considered to be reasonable. There is however a significant number of people who considered the queuing time to be long (28%).

3.3. Postal services

3.3.1. Mail Collection

Most interviewees (70%) consider the number of mail collection locations (post offices and post boxes) to be sufficient, although the contrary opinion of 45% of those interviewed in Madeira and the Azores should be noted.

Approximately 13% of all those interviewed were unaware of the existence of special post boxes for priority mail.

3.3.2. Parcel service

Approximately 41% of those interviewed state that they have never used the postal parcel service.

Of those who used the service, 60% have positive opinions regarding the state of the correspondence and parcels received.

Approximately 57% of all those interviewed state that they are aware of the existence of a parcel delivery service to the home, for an additional fee. 57% of those interviewed in Madeira and the Azores stated they were unaware of this parcel delivery service.

29% of those interviewed were aware that the time limit for the collection of mail and parcels at a post office can be extended by payment of an additional fee.

Given the quality of the service provided, the charging of this fee is considered fair by 73% of those interviewed. The main reason of those who do not consider the charge to be fair is that it is too high (87%). The remaining objectors consider that the service quality is low.

So far as possible parcel distribution errors are concerned, 15% of interviewees state that they have experienced parcel delivery errors, i.e. regarding the addressee and the delivery address.

3.3.3. Mail delivery service quality

3.3.3.1. Delays in the Delivery of Non-priority Mail

Approximately 49% of those interviewed stated in relation to the standard non-priority mail delivery period that they are aware of the number of days envisaged for the delivery of letter by non-priority mail (3 days). In Madeira and the Azores, 66% of those interviewed stated that they did not know how many days are envisaged for the delivery of a letter by non-priority mail.

So far as the total number of interviewees is concerned, of those who state that they are aware of the delivery period for non-priority mail, only 42% are aware of the correct period. In Madeira and the Azores this percentage drops to 33%.

Approximately 84% of all those interviewed consider that the level of quality to which the operator is committed is achieved. In Madeira and the Azores this percentage drops to 46%.

3.3.3.2. Priority mail delivery period

Approximately 63% of those interviewed state that they are aware of the number of days envisaged for the delivery of a letter sent by priority mail. It should be noted that 64% of those interviewed in Madeira and the Azores state that they are unaware of this period.

81% of those who state they are aware of the priority mail delivery period are aware of the correct period.

Most of those interviewed in Mainland Portugal (91%) consider that the priority mail delivery standards are complied with. In Madeira and the Azores, only 52% of interviewees state that these delivery periods are complied with.

3.3.4. Non-priority and Priority Mail Tariffs and the acquisition of postage stamps

3.3.4.1. Non-priority Mail Prices

Approximately 20% of those interviewed state that they know the price of a letter weighing 20 grams sent by non-priority domestic mail. However only 40% of these knew the price of the stamp in 2001 (€ 0,28). It is noteworthy that 90% of those interviewed in Madeira and the Azores stated that they do not know the said price.

Given the quality of the service provided, 84% of those interviewed consider that the price charged for this service is fair, while 89% of those who consider the price not to be fair do so because they think it is too high.

3.3.4.2. Priority Mail Prices

Approximately 16% of those interviewed state that they are aware of the price of sending a letter weighting up to 20 grams by domestic priority mail in 2001 (€ 0,43), this result is only 11% in Madeira and the Azores.

However only 25% of those interviewed, who stated they were aware of the price of this service, knew the real amount thereof.

Given the quality of the service provided, 81% of those interviewed consider that the price is fair. The percentage of interviewees who reply thus in Madeira and the Azores is 83%. 90% of those who did not consider the price to be fair considered the price to be too high.

3.3.4.3. Automatic stamp vending machines

Approximately 68% of those interviewed state that they experience difficulty in locating automatic stamp vending machines. In Madeira and the Azores, this percentage is 79%.

Post offices are essentially the location where these machines are most frequently found⁵ (78%), followed by public highways (32%) and near to post offices (20%).

Approximately 81% of those interviewed do not normally purchase stamps from automatic vending machines, while 87% are unaware that a discount can be obtained if blocks of 10 non-priority or priority mail stamps for letters weighing up to 20 grams are purchased from automatic stamp vending machines.

3.3.5. Daily mail delivery

Most of those interviewed (88%) consider the current number of daily mail deliveries to be adequate. Of those who disagreed, most (90%) considered that there should be two deliveries a day, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon.

3.3.6. Credibility of the services provided

When questioned about the credibility of the postal services provided, i.e. with regard to confidentiality of mail, most interviewees (96%) stated that they are credible.

3.3.7. Distribution of magazines

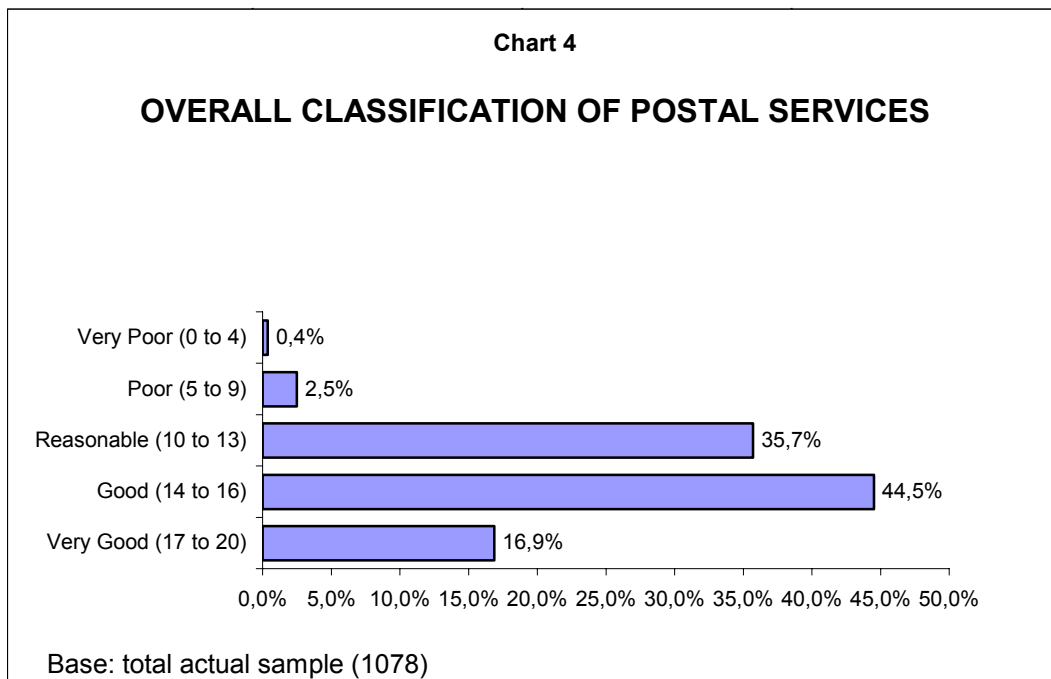
Approximately 54% of those interviewed state that they do not receive magazines by mail. Of these, 95% are satisfied with the service. Those who are not satisfied with the service frequently mention that the magazines are folded double and that they are frequently torn.

3.4. Overall evaluation of the postal service

3.4.1. Overall evaluation of the postal service

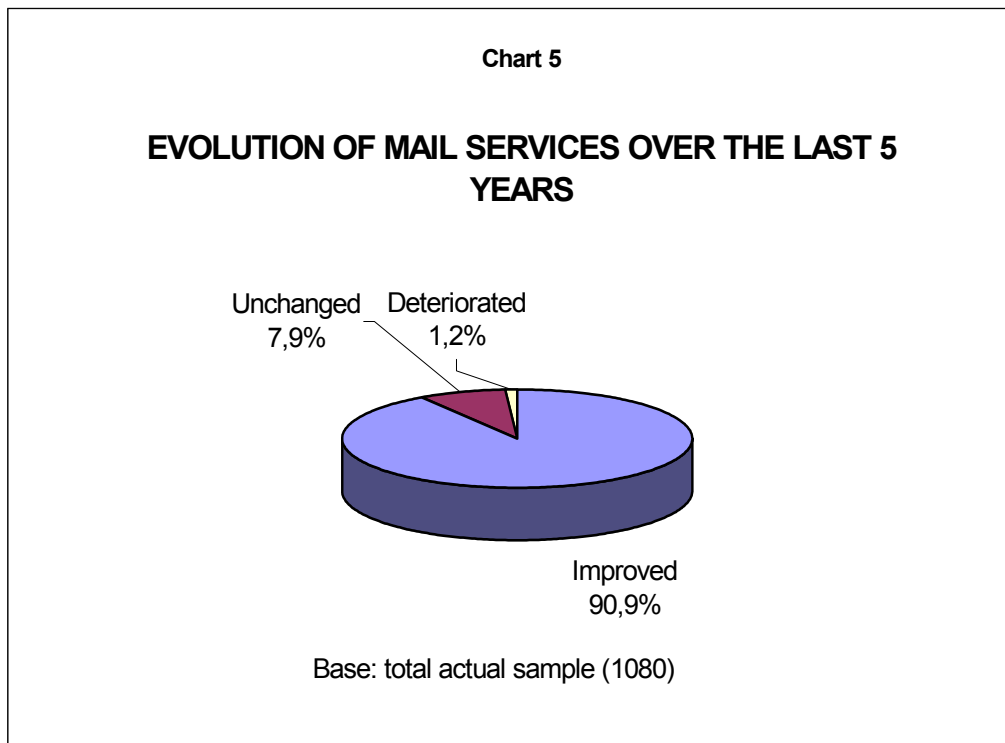
The interviewees were asked to classify postal services as a whole on a scale from 1 to 20. The average classification obtained was 14.3, which was similar to but greater than the figure in 2001, when the figure was 14.0.

⁵ Multiple response accepted



3.4.2. Evolution of postal services during the last five years

Most of those interviewed (91%) consider that postal services improved during the last five years. 8% consider that the service remained at the same level and 1% consider that the service deteriorated.



4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Population studied

The population studied is the population of Portugal (Mainland, Madeira and the Azores) aged 15 or more.

4.2. Sample

The sample comprises 1.080 individuals stratified by region (Greater Lisbon, Greater Oporto, the Rest of the Country and Madeira and Azores) and by habitat (size of the population of each locality). A number of interviews were attributed to each of the strata considered, which are the result of the crossing of these two variables, according to the proportional weight thereof in the overall population studied.

The sample is characterised by a level of confidence of 95%, and a sampling error of 3%.

Taking the 1991 Census (INE) as a reference the distribution of the sample by region and strata was as follows:

Table 1 – Distribution of the sample according to region

REGIONS	Population studied (10³)	% of the population studied	Sample	% of the sample
Greater Lisbon	1.514	19.8	243	22.5
Greater Oporto	934	12.2	156	14.4
Madeira and Azores	365	4.8	71	6.6
Rest of the Country	4.826	63.2	610	56.5
Total	7.639	100.0	1080	100.0

Table 2 – Distribution of the sample according to population strata

POPULATION STRATA	Population studied (10³)	% of the population studied	Sample	% of the sample
-2.000 inhabitants	3.788	49.6	285	26.4
2.000/5.000 inhabitants	698	9.1	112	10.3
5.000/10.000 inhabitants	485	6.3	121	11.2
+10.000 inhabitants	1.703	22.3	311	28.8
City of Lisbon	663	8.7	155	14.4
City of Oporto	302	4.0	96	8.9
Total	7.639	100.0	1080	100.0

The locations were selected at random using a systematic sampling system, with a random trigger, except for Lisbon and Oporto.

The number of interviews to be conducted in each locality selected was derived by dividing the total interviews attributed to the habitat/population strata by the population of each area selected.

4.3. Information gathering method

The method used was direct, personal and personalised interview by way of questionnaire prepared by a specialist company in collaboration with ANACOM.

The questionnaire was pre-tested (pilot survey) prior to the commencement of the fieldwork, in order to confirm that it is operational.

All interviewers were supplied with a specific instructions manual.

4.4. Information gathering

The fieldwork was conducted from 23/04/02 to 12/05/02.