

Addendum to YouGov Report

September 2024

Produced by YouGov on behalf of the
Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry

1 Executive summary

1.1 Sub-postmaster (SPM) survey

Did YouGov have sufficient data to compare those who had been suspended or threatened with suspension with those who had experienced unexplained discrepancies?

The two subjects of suspension / threat of suspension and experience of discrepancies were covered in separate sections of the questionnaire and the time periods do not perfectly align. We can identify those who report having experienced discrepancies since January 2020 and also stated that they have been suspended / threatened with suspension within the last 3 years. We can only identify correlation not causation. A total of eight SPMs surveyed reported being suspended or threatened with suspension in the past 3 years and all stated that they experienced an unexplained discrepancy since 2020. This does not mean the discrepancies and suspension / threat of suspension are linked, as previously noted the majority (69%) reported having experienced discrepancies since January 2020.

Did any additional information provided by SPMs responding to the survey elaborate on the circumstances for any threat of suspension being related to unexplained discrepancies?

This was not captured in any closed survey questions, but was mentioned by a few SPMs within the open ended questions:

"There were shortfalls when we first took over the post office. We had complained but we were told that the computer doesn't make mistakes. We had already put [amount redacted] in the post office till to cover discrepancies but the shortfalls were still happening. Had an audit done a few months later and we were accused of theft and threatened to be suspended if we didn't pay back the money. We [were] already told their system had flaws.. but they still accused us. Degrading us. Calling us thieves. Majority post office auditors made post masters feel like thieves."

"I sustained a loss of [amount redacted] on my first day in the Post Office whilst being trained by a PO trainer. I was responsible for that loss and had to pay that money from my own pocket. I was suspended for a month approx. [date redacted] following discrepancies at my branch. I was reinstated but was given no explanation as to why those discrepancies occurred. I felt worried and uncertain for many years afterwards and fearful it would happen again. I have since received compensation with which I am satisfied."

"I had short fall of [amount and dates redacted]. Now I have been suspended. I haven't taken any penny from the post office I have put my own money of [amount redacted] in to post office when the first short fall happened."

Does the information available in the data allow YouGov to inform the Inquiry what proportion of those who had been suspended or threatened with suspension also reported experiencing unexplained discrepancies?

Please see above.

1.2 Horizon Shortfall Scheme (HSS) survey

Was the YouGov survey able to differentiate outcomes for those who were legally represented and unrepresented?

Yes – in some places this is possible, as outlined below.

Is the data gathered sufficient to identify any differentiation in the value of any claim pursued? (What proportion of the individuals who sought legal advice during the application process identified the value of their claim as less than £20,000? More than £100,000?)

Those who did not seek legal advice at the application stage were more likely to value their claim at less than £20,000 (45% vs. 9% of those who did). There was not a significant difference for those between £20,000 - £200,000 (22% sought legal advice vs. 25% did not).

About one in five (21%) of those who sought legal advice valued their claim at £200,001 or more (compared to 10% of those who did not seek it). It is worth noting that those seeking legal advice were more likely to say they did not know or could not remember the value of their claim (20% vs. 11%) or select prefer not to say (29% vs. 9%).

Is the data gathered sufficient to identify whether those in receipt of legal advice were more or less likely to have made an application for an interim payment? (Figure 43)

There were no differences in the proportion saying they made an application for an interim payment. Among those who sought legal advice during the application process this was 14% - the same proportion for those who did not seek it.

Those who sought legal advice at this stage were more likely than those who did not to say they intend to apply for:

- A fixed sum payment of £75,000 (51% vs. 37%)
- An interim payment for part of their claim (45% vs. 18%)

These figures are among those who have not applied already.

Among those with an outcome, was there any differentiation in the proportion of those who were net dissatisfied amongst those who had obtained legal advice and those who had not? (Figure 48)

Those who received legal advice at any stage of the process were more likely than those who did not to be dissatisfied with:

- The amount of information provided about how the outcome was determined (66% vs. 47%)
- The offer amount (77% vs. 56%)
- The time it took to reach an outcome (71% vs. 50%)

As noted earlier in the document, we can only identify correlation and not causation.