

The Benefits of Regulation:

A public and business perceptions survey

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Background: what we produced, and how

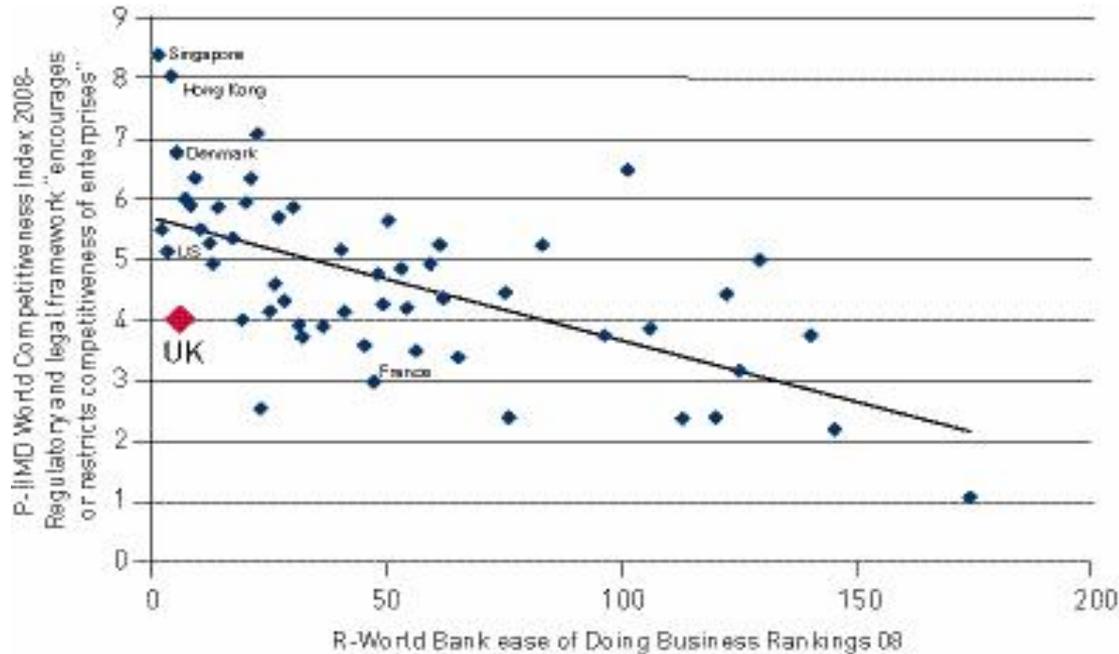
Processes



Outputs



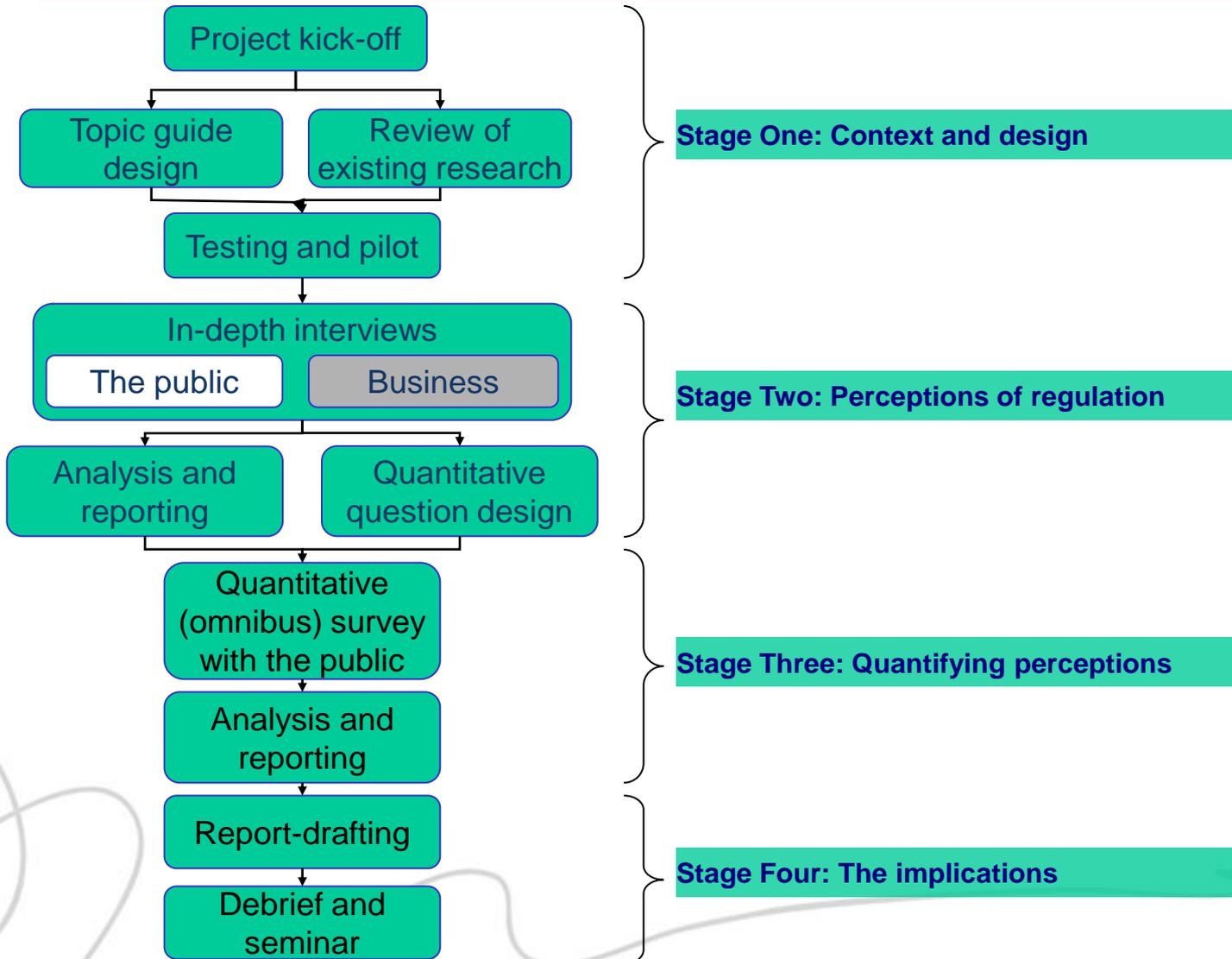
The perception – reality gap



Aims of the perceptions research

- To better understand how people experience regulation through their work and personal lives
- To understand more about what shapes perceptions of regulation
- To identify ways Government can improve perceptions of regulation

Our approach



Qualitative phase –samples

Business Sample

- Business owners / representatives from a spread of sectors
- 15 from southern England, 10 from northern England
- Business size ranging from < 50 / 51 – 250 / >251 employees

Citizen Sample

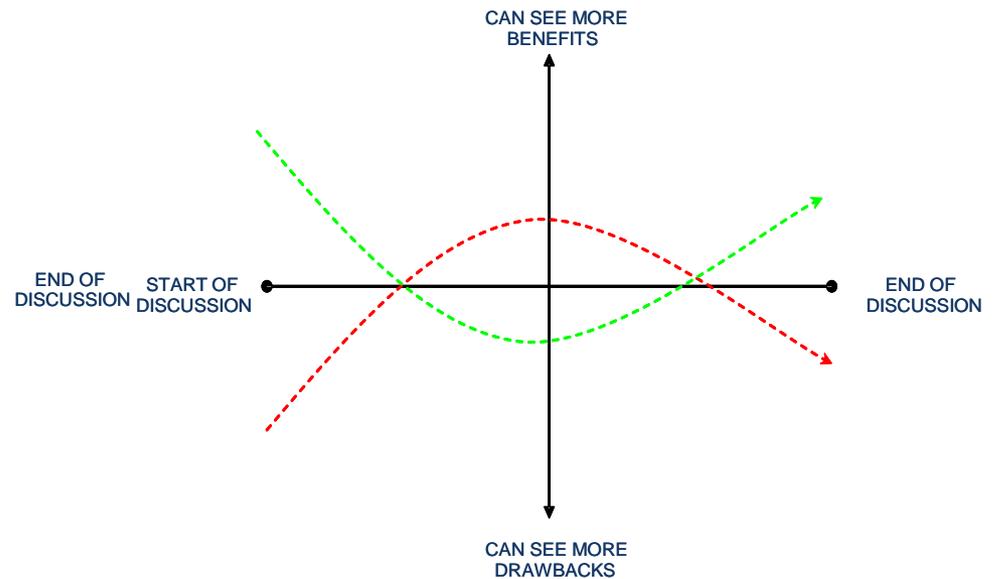
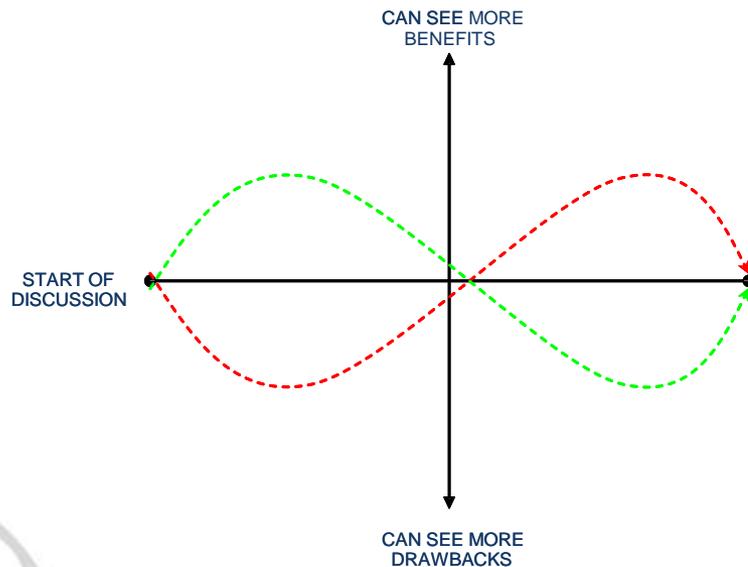
- Spread of employed / non-employed
- 13 from southern England, 12 from north
- Three income bands
- Mix of parents, smokers, cyclists

Qualitative interviews

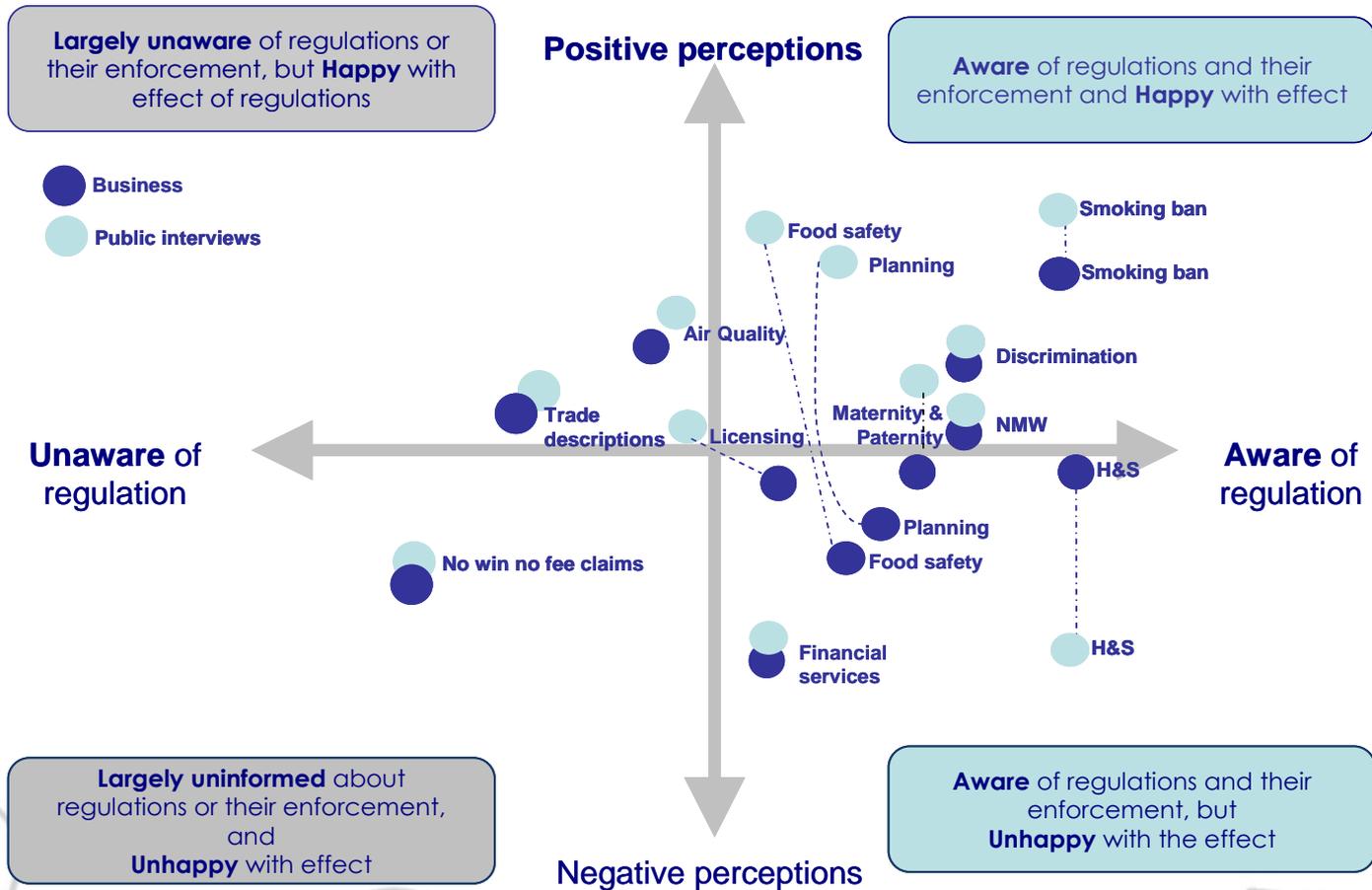
- Approx one hour per person
- Cognitive testing phase - to test associations with and understanding of regulation in preparation for quantitative phase
- Use of regulation case studies selected for greater exploration. These were related as far as possible to the project case studies
 - Eg national minimum wage, air quality, smokefree law, health and safety, food safety, maternity leave, planning, financial
- Use of a number of exercises to test impressions of these case study areas eg
 - *Imagine a society with no regulation in that area*
 - *Imagine a society with a much higher degree of regulation than currently in that area*
 - *What are your impressions on current levels of regulation in this area?*

Our findings: respondent journey

- Respondent journey from a neutral starting point
- Respondent journey from a positive or negative starting point



Our findings: 'irritants' are memorable



Our findings: Perceptions have complex foundations

“Well it’s one of those things isn’t it; as a business owner I don’t want to incur the costs if my staff need the time off but do I want the benefits for my wife if she falls pregnant? Yes of course I do!”

(Business, Managing Director, ICT & Media, 0-50 employees)

Lessons learned

- Use simple language, avoiding jargon – ‘proportionate’ was particularly difficult for people to understand
- Use one construct per question

The following question did not work...

How far do you agree with each of the following two statements?

- *There is too much regulation*
- *There is not enough protection*

Lessons learned

- Provide definitions – show cards worked well on the case study examples of regulations
- Provide a range of options – open-ended or sliding scales are good

The following question worked well...

I associate the word regulation with...

- *Protection*
- *Restriction*
- *Neither*
- *Both equally*

Quantitative phase

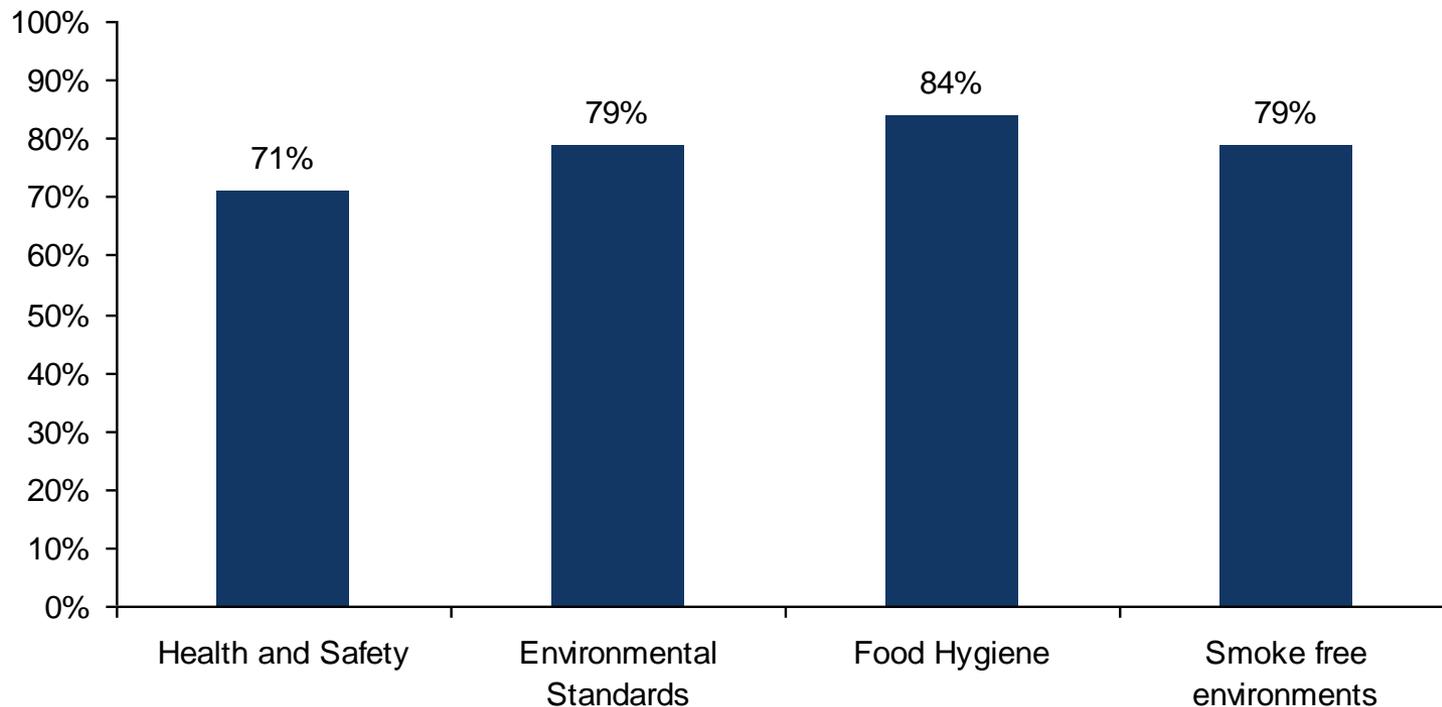
Three questions included in an omnibus survey of 1018 adults in the UK

1. In what way do you think regulations have an impact on you and your family?
2. Thinking about [show card X] regulation, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
 - Regulation is a suitable way to address this problem
 - Me and my family have personally benefited from this regulation
 - This regulation has important benefits for wider society
 - This regulation puts substantial burden on society
 - Overall, I think the benefits outweigh the burdens for this regulation
3. And now, thinking about all kinds of Government regulations but not tax, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
 - “I benefit from regulation in my everyday life”
 - Disagree 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Agree

(sliding scale – Strongly agree -> strongly disagree)

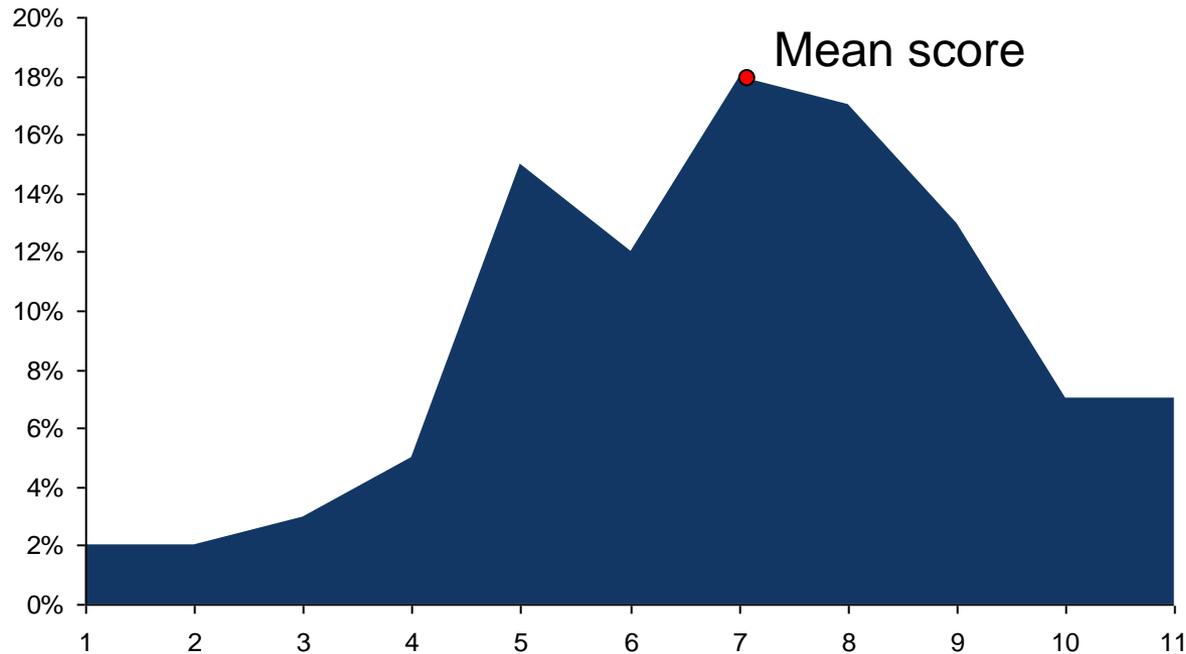
Our findings: citizens see a benefit

Proportion agreeing that 'overall I think the benefits outweigh the burdens for this regulation'



Our findings: citizens see a benefit

“I benefit from regulation in my everyday life”



For better perceptions; reduce irritants, increase knowledge, communicate well

- Report highlights promising steps to improve business perceptions as part of a strategy
 - Irritants are memorable, so its good to remove them
 - Increase knowledge if the myth is worse than reality
 - Communicate: about improvements, with memorable stories, emphasising that compliance is standard
- However, different views on morality/politics/risk mean regulations won't be 'perceived good' by all the people, all the time

Further information



All project outputs can be found on our website at:

<http://www.berr.gov.uk/policies/better-regulation/benefits/better-benefits>