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Queue Europe

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Saying 'Non' is not the only thing the French have been queuing up to do. The longest and slowest moving queues in Europe are to be found in Sweden and France, according to a new survey by Research International and the MSPA (Mystery Shopping Providers Association).

The average British queue lasts for less than four minutes, defying the stereotype and making the UK one of the fastest countries in Europe for queuing. Twelve countries were studied, and the average queue was found to contain just over three customers and last for five minutes. The shortest queues are in Germany and Hungary, and the fastest-moving in Finland, Denmark and Britain.

The British are nevertheless described as 'relatively happy to queue', with only 16% of customers appearing dissatisfied, below the European average of 20%. Across Europe, post offices and train stations have the longest queues, and bank queues are the slowest.

The research also looked at what happens when people finally get to the front, and found that '70% of British customers get a smile at the counter, and 79% get a greeting, but only 1 in 12 receive an apology for having to queue'.

'Queuing is seen by many as a British pastime' says Jane Edwards, Head of Mystery Customer Research at RI and Vice President of the MSPA. 'The study shows that British firms have got better at dealing with queues, but there's a lot of work to do. In over half the queues we studied, customers thought something could be done to shorten the queue, but on only 1 in 6 occasions was action actually taken. The attitude seems to be that queues are a fact of life, and not the firm's problem. But with 16% of customers unhappy with queues, this area is a 'quick win' as far as customer satisfaction is concerned. An apology for having to queue, for instance, can make all the difference'.

By the way, for readers in the US, we're talking about 'waiting in line' here – but presumably you'd guessed that if you got this far...

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