

English Corner

Make use of comparison and contrast in reports



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In the past, we have discussed trend describing skills in reports writing. How to make comparisons and contrasts is as important as describing trends in writing proposals/reports, negotiations, presentations and so on.

Table 1 presents the findings of a customer satisfaction survey among local and overseas customers at a major hotel in Hong Kong. As you can see, the table lists nine aspects of customer satisfaction and the responses of local and overseas customers. Look closely at the survey results and note the way the findings are reported.

Table 1: Customer satisfaction (local and overseas customers)

Aspects of customer satisfaction	% of local customers satisfied	% of overseas customers satisfied
Friendliness and helpfulness of lobby staff	77%	73%
Efficiency of check-in services	85%	47%
Efficiency of room cleaning service	70%	72%
Standard of cuisine	68%	36%
Efficiency of food and beverage room service	72%	46%
Appeal of food and beverage room service menu	74%	50%
Efficiency of baggage-handling staff	81%	77%

(a) When describing data in tables, charts, etc. use the **language of approximation**. The following are examples.

The vast majority of local customers are satisfied with the efficiency of check-in services.

Most customers are satisfied with the friendliness and helpfulness of lobby staff.
Nearly/Almost three-quarters of local customers feel satisfied with the appeal of food and beverage room service menu.

Just over two-thirds of local customers are satisfied with the standard of cuisine.

(b) Note from Table 1 that the responses of local and overseas customers about the efficiency of room cleaning service are more or less the same. How could you express this?

Both local and overseas customers are fairly satisfied with the efficiency of room cleaning service.

The views of local and overseas customers on the efficiency of room cleaning service are **almost the same**.

The responses of local and overseas customers to the question on the efficiency of room cleaning service are **very similar**.

You can use the following expressions when you want to show similarities:

exactly	}	the same as...
virtually		
practically		
more or less		
approximately		
almost		
nearly		
about		

(c) Note from Table 1 that in a number of cases the responses of the local and overseas customers are different (in varying degrees). How could you express this?

The findings indicate that local customers are **far more** satisfied with the efficiency of check-in services than overseas customers.

It appears that local customers are **slightly more** satisfied with the efficiency of baggage handling staff.

Unlike overseas customers, local customers are satisfied with the efficiency of check-in services.

Local customers are quite satisfied with the standard of cuisine **whereas** overseas customers appear to be somewhat dissatisfied.

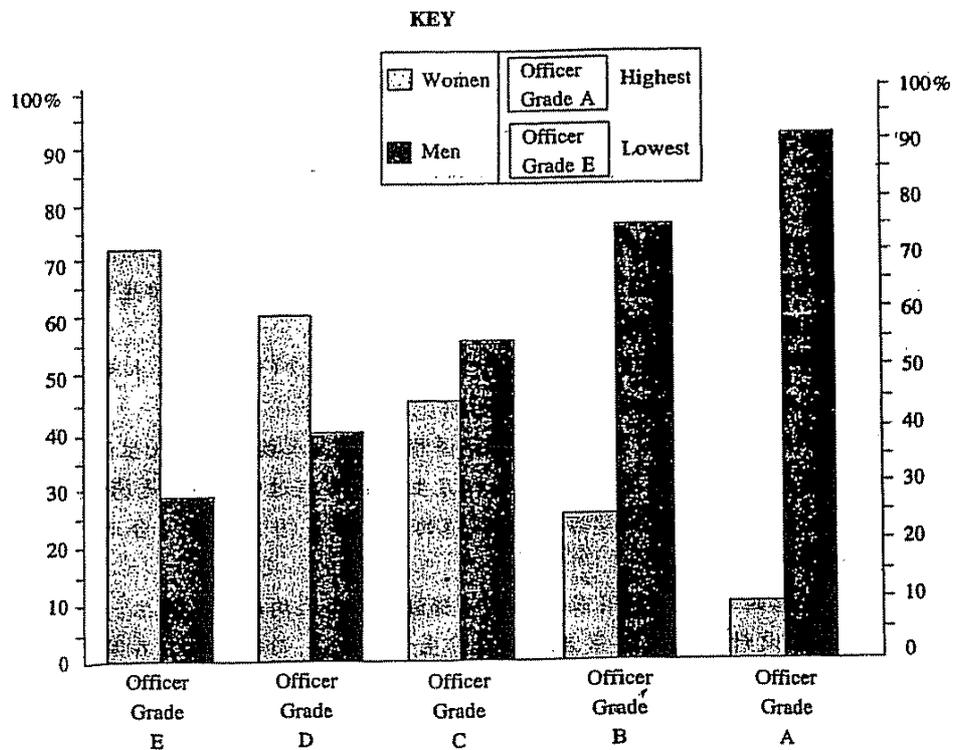
You can use the following expressions when showing differences:

much
considerably
markedly
noticeably
significantly
somewhat
rather
slightly
marginally

} cheaper / higher / lower, etc. **than ...**

Quiz:

Write a summary of approximately 150 words to describe the percentage of men and women employed in the different executive positions in ACME Oil Company from July 2007 to June 2008.



From: Jakeman, V. & Mcdowell, C. (2001). *Insight into IELTS student's book: The Cambridge IELTS course* (Updated ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Tips:

a. Let's take a step-by-step approach to completing a 150-word description about the above bar graph.

1. Use one sentence to say what the graph shows.

2. Write a couple of sentences to report the situation at Grade E (e.g. a comparison of men and women in this Grade)

3. Report the trend you can see from the graph about the distribution of men and women in relation to their rank/position.

4. Report the situation at Grade C (in relation to the percentage of men and women found in this rank).

5. Report the situation at Grade A.

6. Write a concluding statement based on the findings.

b. Join the above sentences together to form a 150-word description of the above graph.

Key:

The bar graph compares the proportions of men and women in executive positions in the ACME Oil Company for 12 months to June 2008.

Approximately 72% of workers in the lowest executive positions of Officer Grade E are women. This is the highest percentage of women in any executive job category in the ACME Oil Company. In contrast, the lowest proportion of men is found in this category. As the executive position increases to a higher Officer Grade, the percentage of women decreases and the percentage of men increases. This trend continues throughout the graph. The least difference between the percentage of men and women found in a job category exists in the category of Office Grade C, which is a middle executive position. Here women represent 45% and men represent 55% of workers in this category.

In the highest executive position, of Officer Grade A, women represent only about 8% of workers; this stands in marked contrast to the 92% of men represented in this job category.

In conclusion, men occupy a greater percentage of high executive positions in the ACME Oil Company than women. In fact, the higher the executive position, the higher the percentage of men represented in the category. In comparison, women's representation is inversely proportional to men's; the higher the executive job category, the lower the percentage of women to be found.

The information given in the column graph does not give reasons for this trend, yet it would be interesting for the ACME Oil Company to examine why such a high percentage of their women employees occupy lower status positions.

References:

Jakeman, V. & Mcdowell, C. (2001). *Insight into IELTS student's book: The Cambridge IELTS course* (Updated ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



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