

Report for Ofsted: Virtual Learning Environment Survey

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Date: 06.08.2012

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BACKGROUND &
METHODOLOGY



Background and objectives

Ofsted was keen to find out more about learners' attitudes to, and use of, virtual learning environments (VLE).

A VLE is an on-line/computer-based system maintained by a training provider (college, school, private company etc.) which allows learners to access material linked with courses.

To this end, Ofsted asked YouthSight to run a survey with learners and provide the data, accompanied by a summary report.

About Youth Sight

Founded in 2004 as OpinionPanel, we are a research agency and access panel specialising in young people, students and young professionals. We rebranded as YouthSight in March 2012 to signal our focus on youth research and our commitment to helping clients see the world through the eyes of young people, students and young professionals, either through full service research including

analysis and reporting or via basic fieldwork services.

We own and manage The OpinionPanel Community, the UK's largest youth, student and young professional access panel, with 115,000 members and a dedicated community website.

Any questions....

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Methodology

A 5 minute survey was administered online to 600 learners.

Results were delivered as data tables, and the verbatim comments from the open question have been provided in an Excel file.

Sample definition and size

The sample comprised learners living in England and undertaking a course at one or more of the following training providers:

- Further Education college
- In the workplace
- Training centre
- Learndirect centre
- Community centre or library

Sample was selected from The Applicant and Youth Panels, both of which are part of the OpinionPanel community.

Total = 600

Quotas

No quotas were set.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was provided by Ofsted; it was scripted and hosted by YouthSight.

Three screener questions were required.

1) The first confirmed the respondents' home region - all those who lived outside of England were screened out.

2)The second screener filtered out all those who were not currently in education or training (or had not recently undertaken any type of education or training).

3) The third screener was used to filter out any respondents who were not undertaking/or had not recently undertaken a course at one of the core training providers (further education college, workplace, training centre, Learndirect centre, community centre or library).

In addition to the three screener questions, there were 11 closed questions in the survey and one open question.

Incentives

Respondents were incentivised with £1 in Bonusbond vouchers.

Schedule

Fieldwork took place between 16th July and 3rd August 2012.

Deliverables

Deliverables for this project include:

- Customised data tables (MS Word)
- Excel file of the verbatim from the open-ended question and any 'Other, please specify' answer categories
- This report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Courses using Virtual Learning Environments

Three quarters of all learners (76%) attended a course which used a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). The courses which most commonly used VLEs were those at Learndirect (88%), FE/college courses (79%), Training Centres (74%) and Community centres/libraries (70%). In comparison, just over half (55%) of the courses provided at the workplace used VLEs.

Learner usage of Virtual Learning Environments

The VLEs appear to be well used by the learners. When those who attended a course with a VLE were asked how often they use it, the majority (63%) said twice a fortnight in term time or more. Only a very small proportion (2% - a total of 7 learners) of those who attended a course which used a VLE had *never* accessed it. When asked why they had not used the VLE, the most common response given was that they had no reason for using it as they could get everything they needed for their course elsewhere. Other reasons were that the information on the VLEs was not up to date, that they forgot their log in details, that they were unsure how to use it and that it was not easy to use.

Accessing Virtual Learning Environments

In regards to the location used by learners to access the VLE, most used their place of training (86%) or accessed it from home (85%). In regards to *how* the VLE was accessed, a large majority of learners (82%) used their own laptop/PC, whilst just under two thirds (64%) said they used a laptop/PC at their training provider. Less than one in five (18%) said they used their phone; this is either an unpopular method, or it is simply not possible.

Learners who attended courses which did not use VLEs were asked how they would prefer to access a VLE if their course was to use one. A vast majority (89%) of those learners said they would prefer to access it using their own laptop/PC. Meanwhile, just over half (51%) said they would prefer to access it through their phone, and a similar proportion would like to access it using a laptop/PC at their learning/training provider (50%). The large proportion of those keen to access a potential VLE system from their phone implies that current VLE users do not use their phone to access the system because it is not a viable option.

Reasons for using Virtual Learning Environments

The most popular reason for using the VLE, given by three quarters of learners (75%) who had access to a VLE and used it, was to look over notes from sessions they had previously attended. Other popular reasons, given by two thirds of all learners, were to help extend what was covered in the 'classroom' (67%), and to look at notes from sessions they had missed (65%).

Learners who attended courses which did not use VLEs were asked what they would use one for if it was available. Just over half believed they would use a VLE for submitting assignments (58%) and looking at lesson notes from sessions they had attended (54%), as well as the ones they had missed (52%). Interestingly, 8% of learners said they would not want to use a VLE for their course even if it was available. The small proportion of learners who have a VLE available and have never used it (2%) suggests that the proportion of those who do not

have a VLE and would not want to use a VLE for their course even if it was available, is quite high. Their desire not to use a VLE may be based on being unfamiliar with that type of system and the assumption that they would not *need* to use it.

Feelings towards the Virtual Learning Environment

Generally speaking, the majority of learners who attended a course with a VLE and used it, viewed the VLE as a positive and helpful aspect of their course. Two thirds (66%) of the learners agreed that they would be disappointed if there was no material for their course available on a VLE, and almost half (49%) agreed that the VLE was ‘essential’ to their course. Furthermore, a large proportion of learners (61%) agreed that the VLE increased their chances of successfully completing their course. However, a third (33%) of learners agreed that they *only* used the VLE because they were instructed to do so by their teacher.

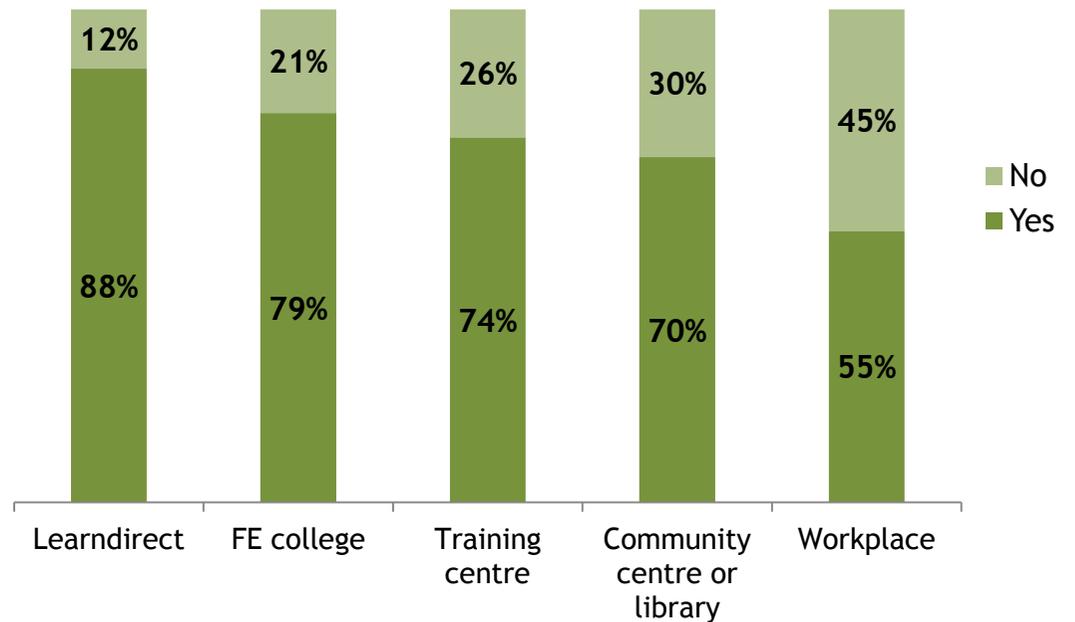
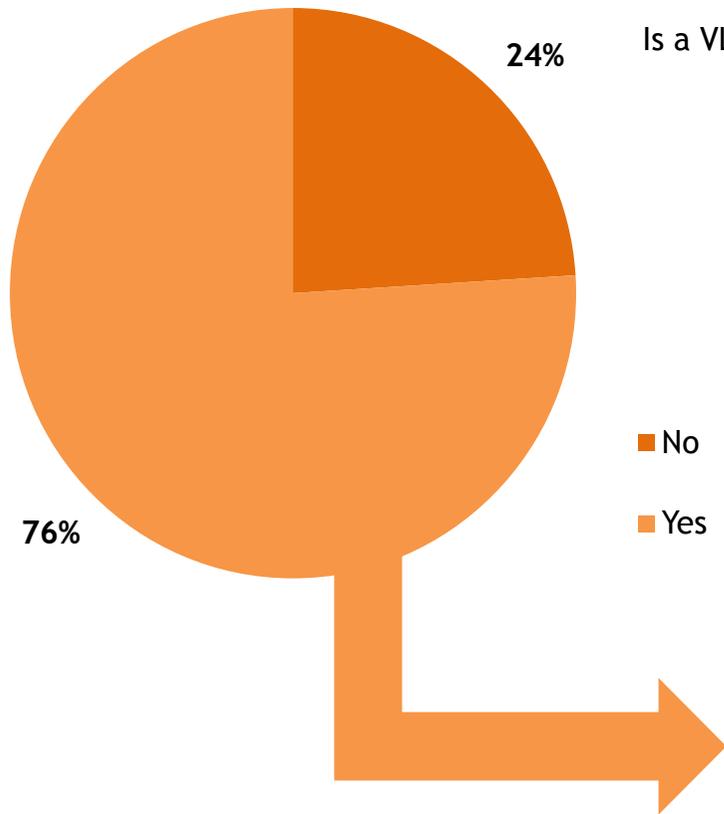
In regards to the usability of the VLEs, two thirds of learners (66%) agreed that the VLE was well designed and easy to use. Just over half of all learners (54%) who used a VLE, said the VLE was as professional looking as many other systems on the net, and almost half (49%) said the material on the VLE was always up to date (48%).

FINDINGS IN DETAIL



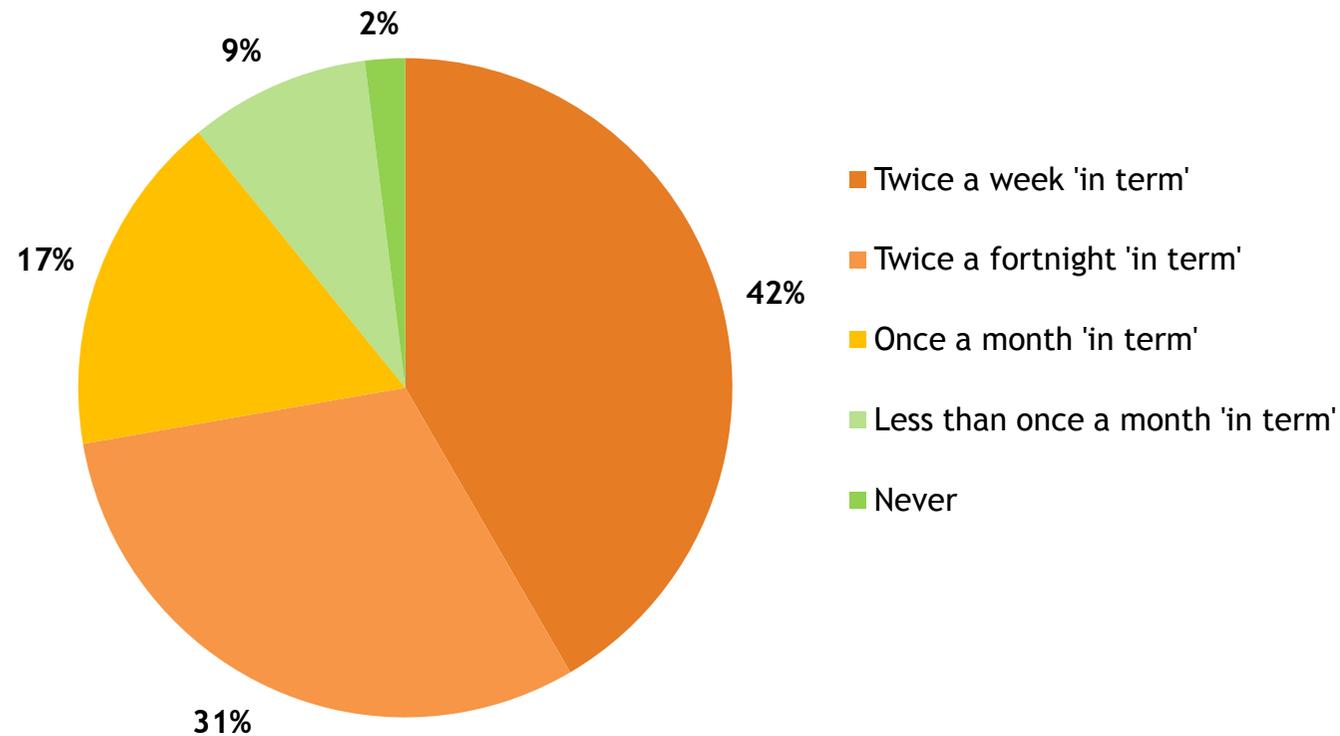
1.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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VLEs were used in just over three quarters of courses (76%) across the five kinds of core training providers. They were most commonly used in Learndirect courses (88%) and FE college courses (79%), and least commonly in courses provided at workplaces (55%).



Q1. Is a VLE (virtual learning environment) used for the course that you're currently undertaking/recently undertook at the following training providers?
Base: All learners who are currently undertaking/recently undertook a course with the following providers: Further education college (515), Workplace (82), Training centre (19), Learndirect (17), Community centre or library (10)

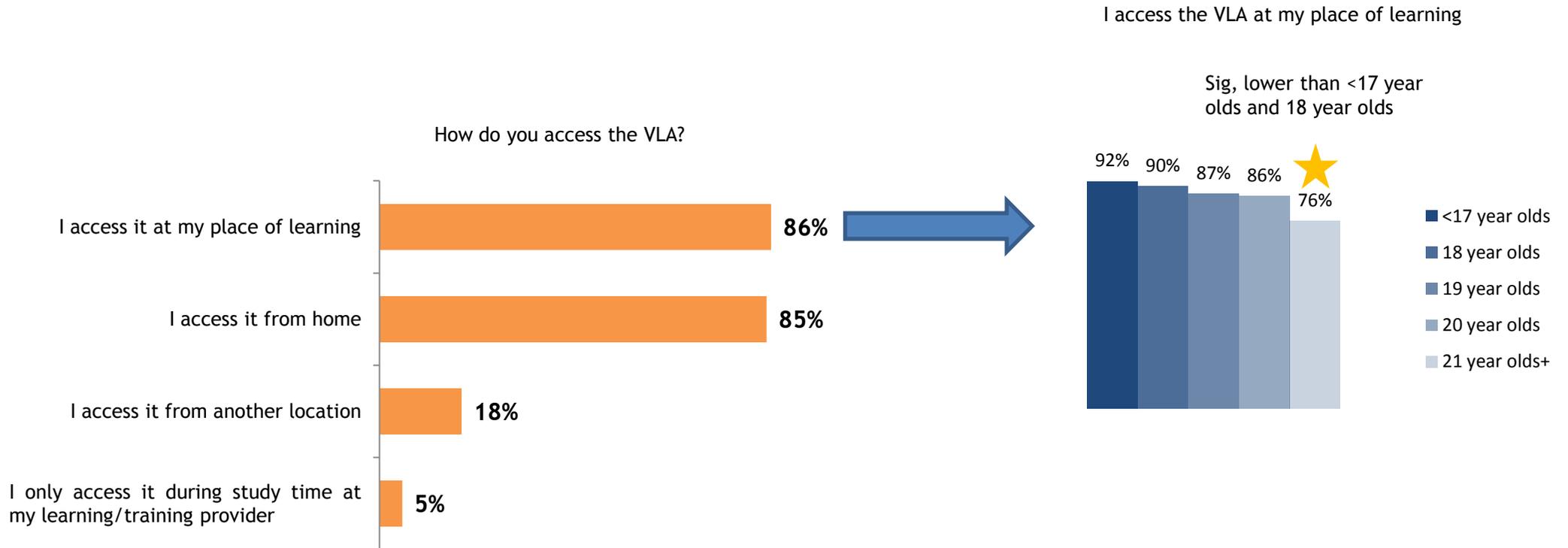
The vast majority of learners (73%) used the VLE twice a fortnight or more in term time. Meanwhile, about one out of ten (11%) learners used the VLE less than once a month in term time or never used it at all. There were no significant gender differences in VLE usage frequency.



Q3a. How often do/did you use a VLE to help you in the course you're currently undertaking/recently undertook?

Base: All learners who attended a course which uses a VLE (458)

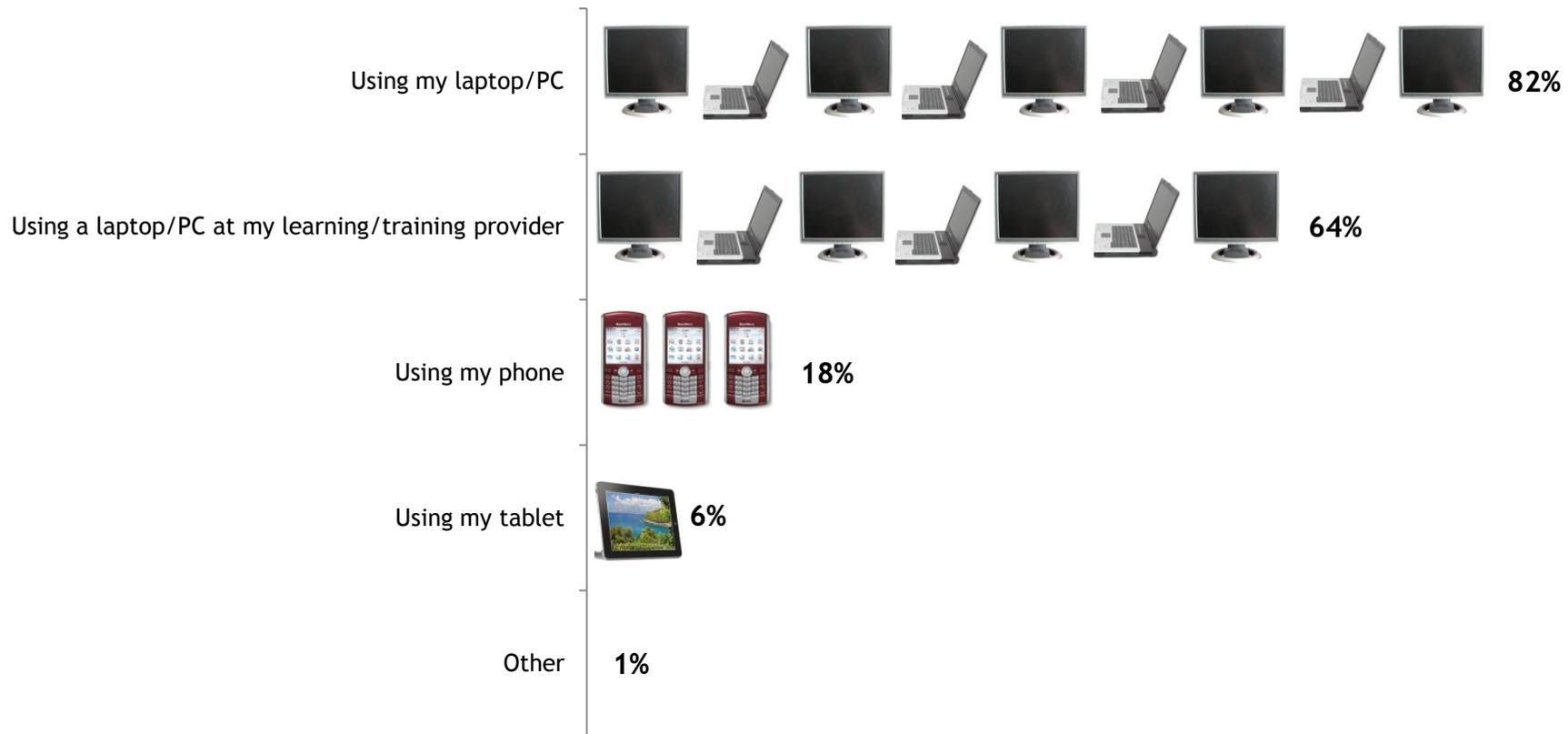
The vast majority of learners said they accessed the VLE at their place of learning (86%) and from home (85%). A small proportion of learners said they accessed it only on the day at college or another training provider (5%). Interestingly, a significantly smaller proportion of 21 year olds (76%), than those aged 18 (90%) or 17 and younger (92%), accessed the VLE from their place of learning.



Q5 How do/did you access the VLE (virtual learning environment) for the course you're currently undertaking/recently undertook?
Base: All learners who attend a course which uses a VLE and use it (451)

MEANS OF REGULAR VLE ACCESS

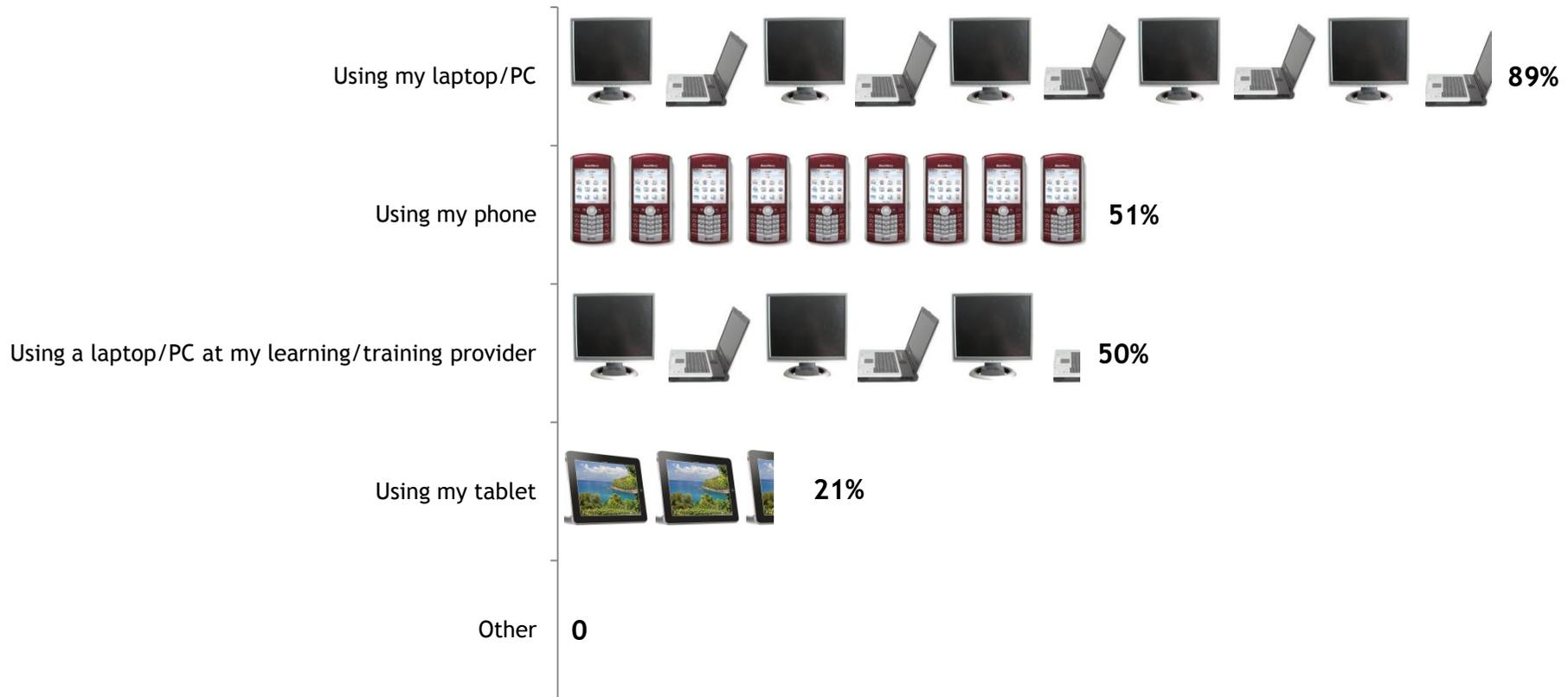
A large majority (82%) of learners used their own laptop/PC in order to access the VLE and two-thirds (64%) used a laptop/PC provided at the place of their training. Roughly one in five (18%) learners used their mobile phone for regular VLE access.



Q6.A In what way do/did you most regularly access the VLE (virtual learning environment) for the course you're currently undertaking/recently undertook?
Base: All learner s who attend a course which uses the VLA and use it(451)

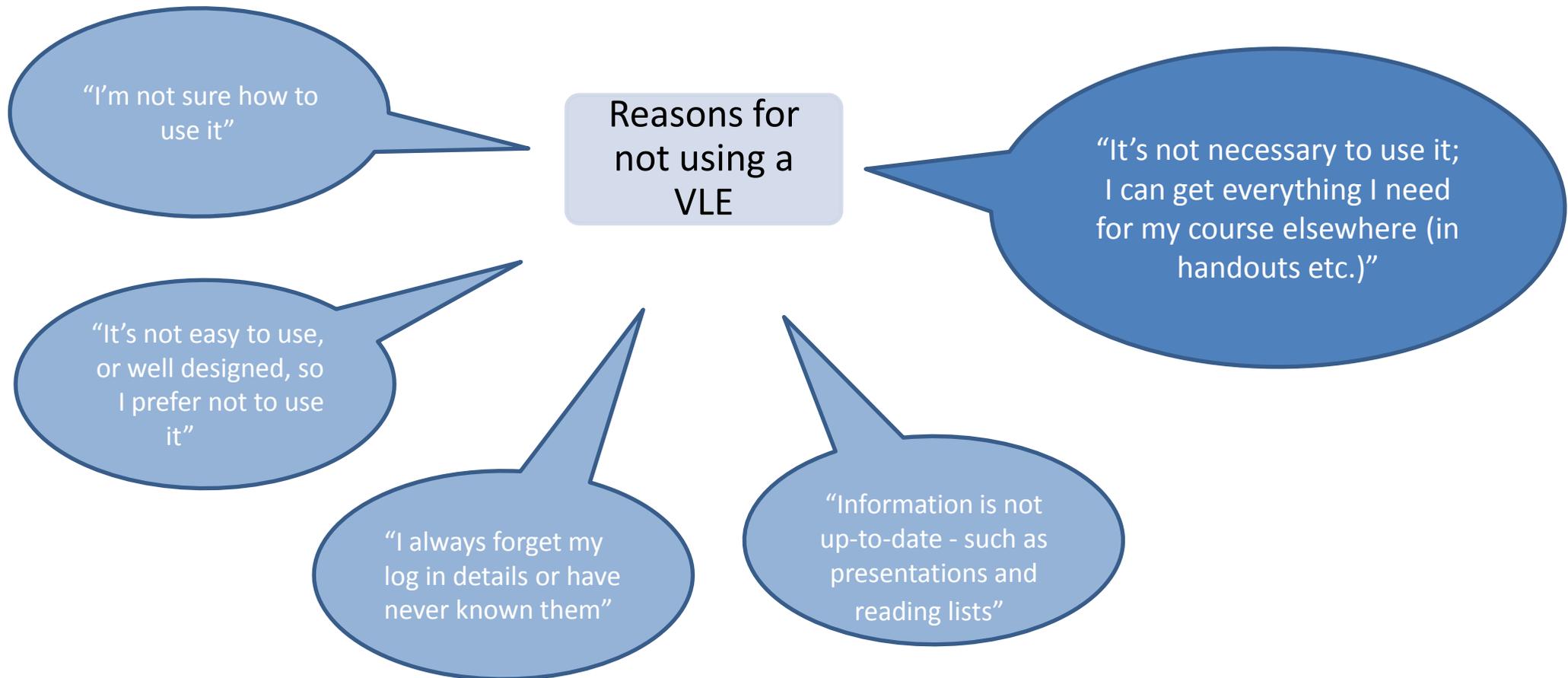
MEANS OF REGULAR VLE ACCESS IF IT WAS AVAILABLE

A large majority (89%) of learners would want to use their own laptop/PC in order to access the VLE if it was available, and half of them (51%) would want to use their phone (51%) or a laptop/PC at the training provider.



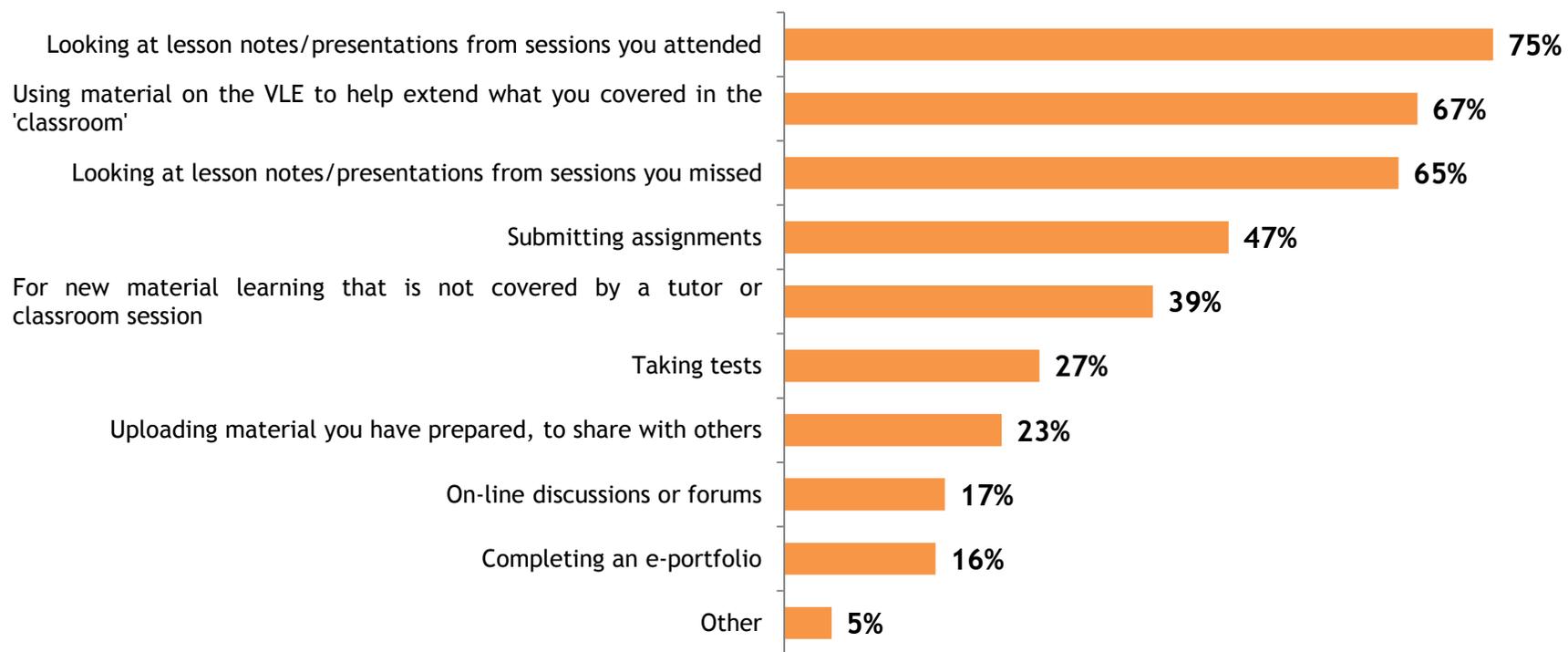
Q6B You said that your course does not/did not use a VLE (virtual learning environment). If your course did use a VLE, how would you prefer to access it?
Base: All learner s who attend a course which does not use the VLA (142)

Only seven learners, out of the 458 who attended a course which used a VLE, never used the system. The most common reason for not using the VLE was that it was not necessary to use it. Other reasons were that they were unsure how to use it, that it was not easy to use or well designed, that the information on it was not up-to-date and that they kept on forgetting their log in details.



Q3b. Why don't/didn't you use the VLE for the course you're currently undertaking/recently undertook?
Base: All learner s who attend a course which uses a VLE but never use it (7)

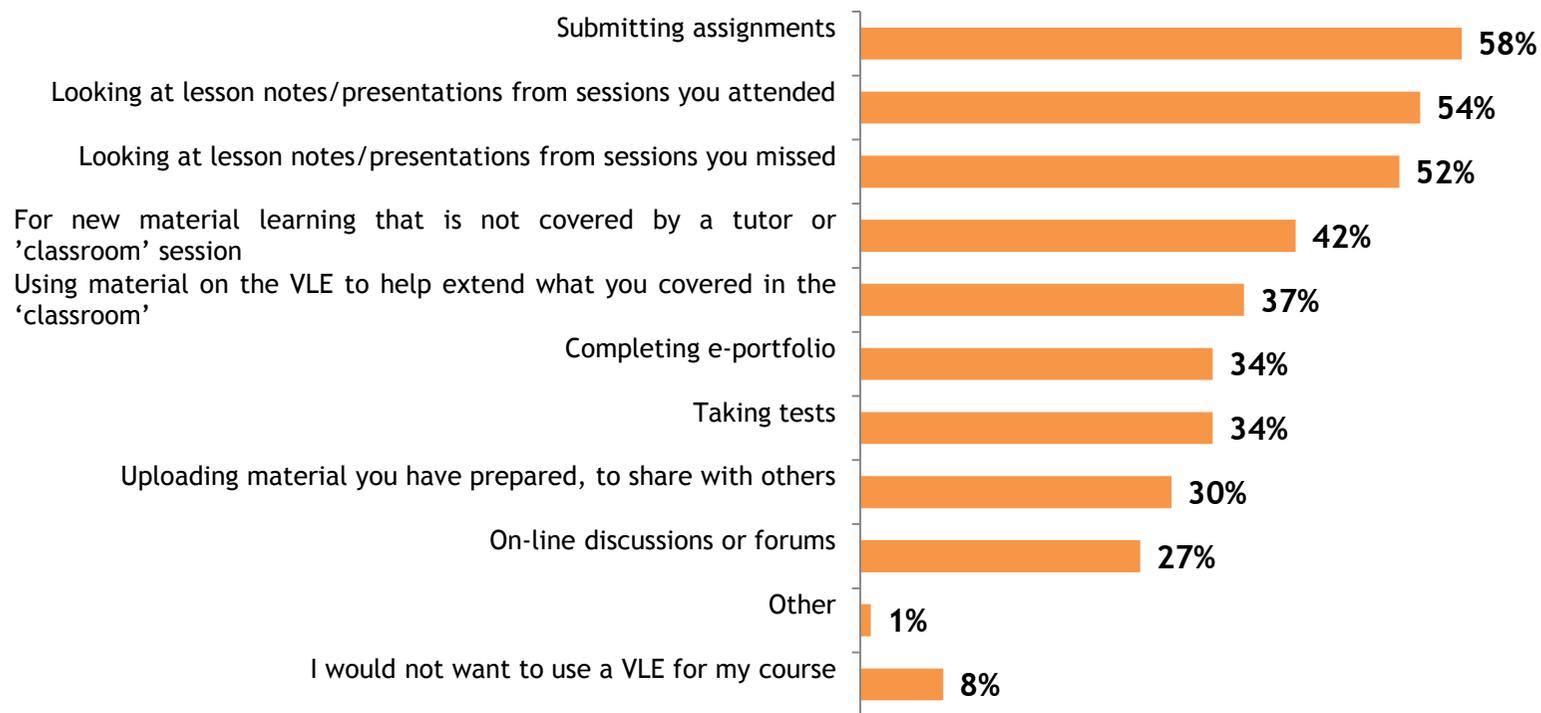
The majority of learners (75%) said they used the VLE predominantly to look through lesson notes from sessions they have attended. Over two thirds (67%) said they used it for material to help extend what was covered in the 'classroom' (67%) and just under two thirds said they use it for looking at notes from sessions they have missed (65%).



Q4a. Thinking about the course you're currently undertaking/recently undertook, what do you use the VLE (virtual learning environment) for?
Base: All learners who attend a course which uses a VLE and use it (451)

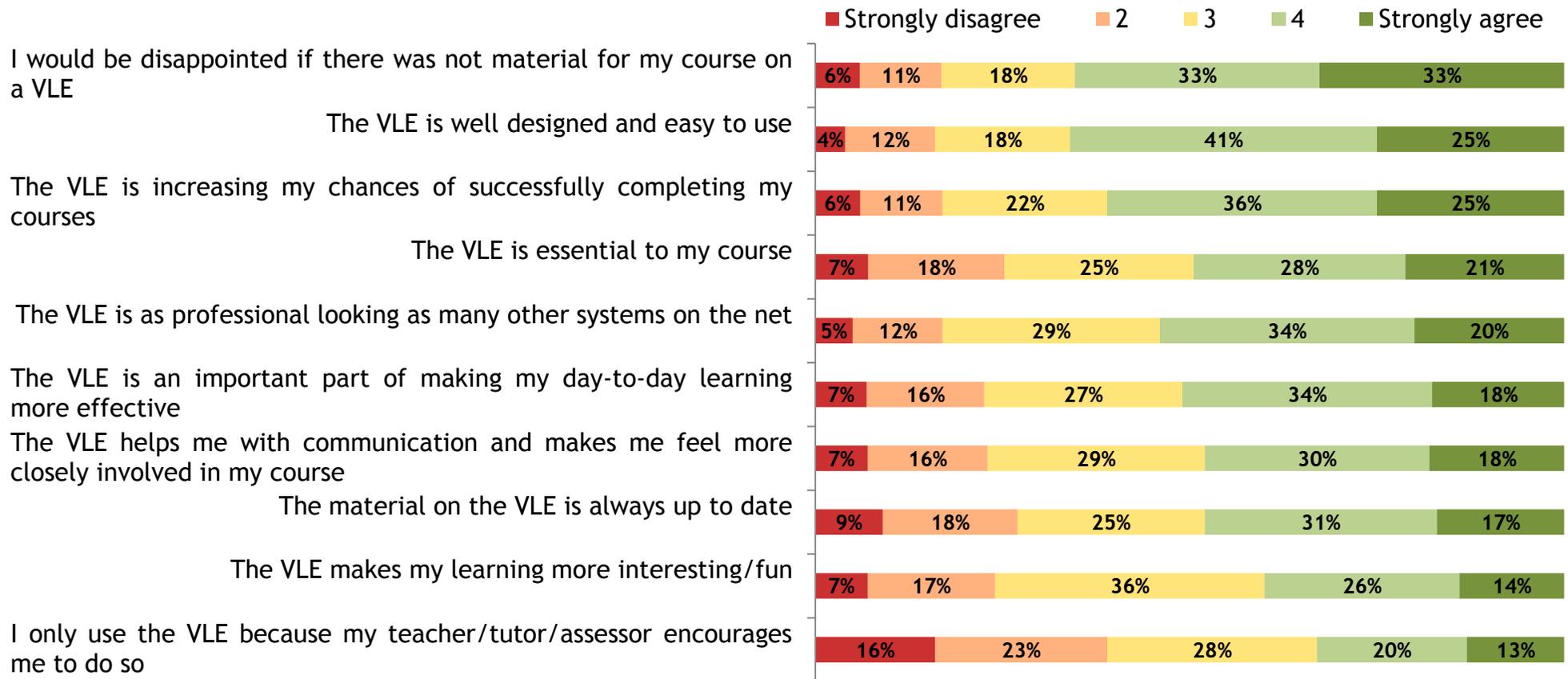
REASONS FOR USING THE VLE IF IT WAS AVAILABLE

The majority of learners (58%) said that if their course provided a VLE they would use it to submit assignments. Half of all learners said they would use the VLE to look at lesson notes from sessions they attended (54%), as well as the ones they missed (52%). Interestingly 8% said they would not use a VLE even if their course used one.



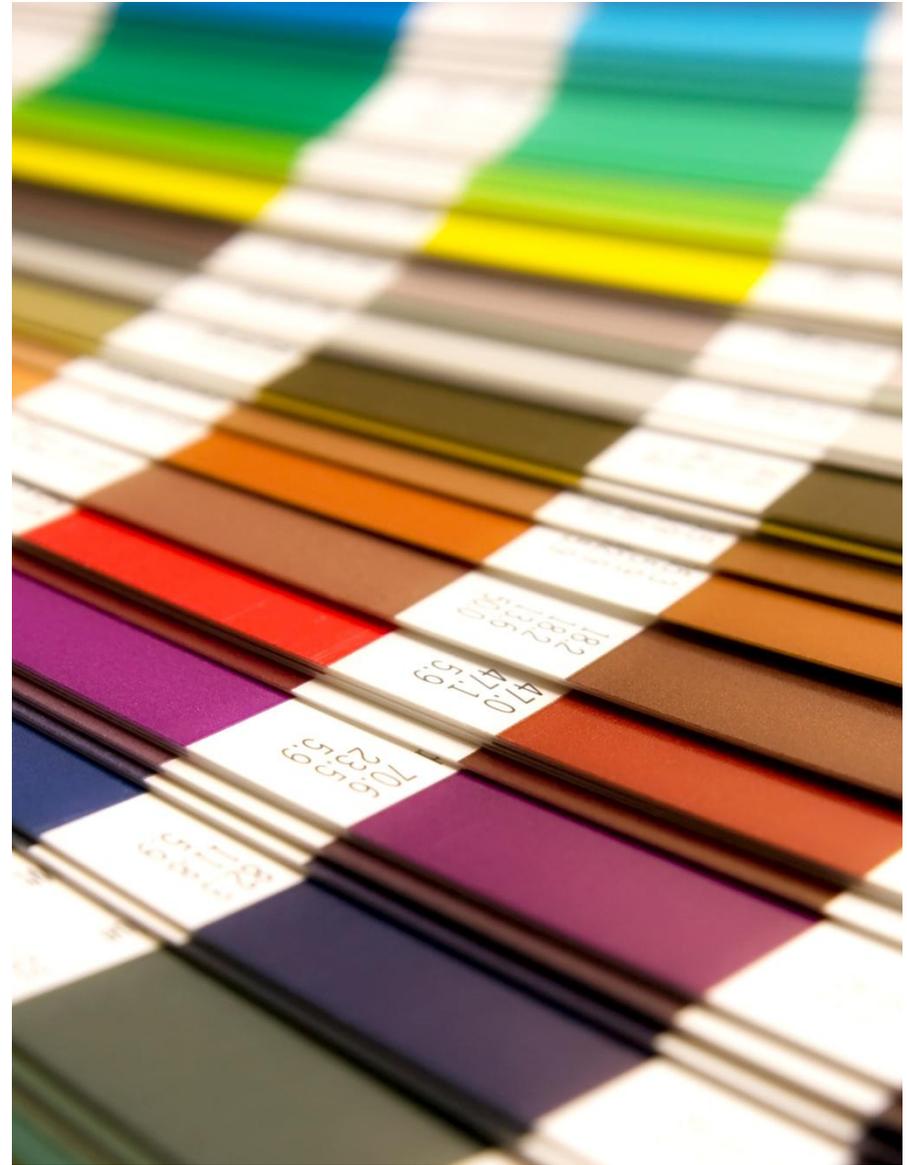
Q4a. You said that your course does not/did not use a VLE (virtual learning environment). If your course did use a VLE, what would you want to use it for?
Base: All learner s who attend a course which does not use a VLE (142)

Two thirds (66%) of the learners agreed that they would be disappointed if there was no material for their course available on a VLE and that the VLE was well designed and easy to use. Meanwhile, one in four (39%) said they used the VLE only because instructed to do so by their teacher.

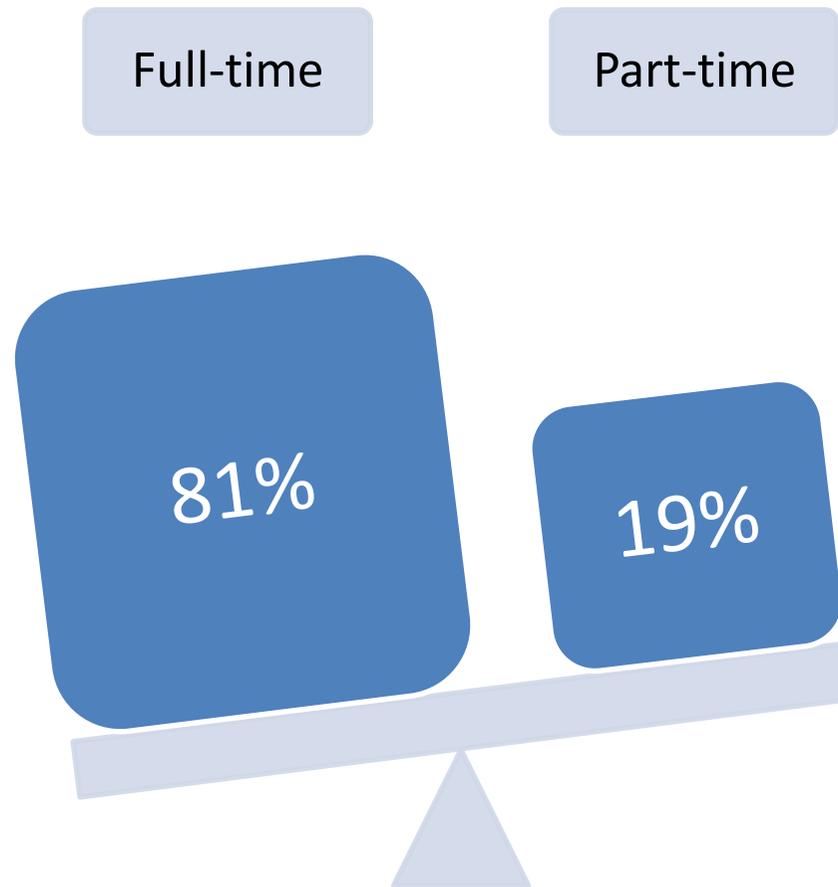


Q7a. What are your feelings about the following?
 Base: All learners who attend a course which uses the VLE and use it (451)

APPENDICES



A large majority of learners (81%) were currently undertaking, or recently undertook, a full-time course.



Q9. Which of the following best describes the course you are currently undertaking/recently undertook?
Base: All learners (600)

Learners were asked to provide information on their course title. This word cloud reflects the comments made, with the size of the words representing how frequently they were used by respondents.

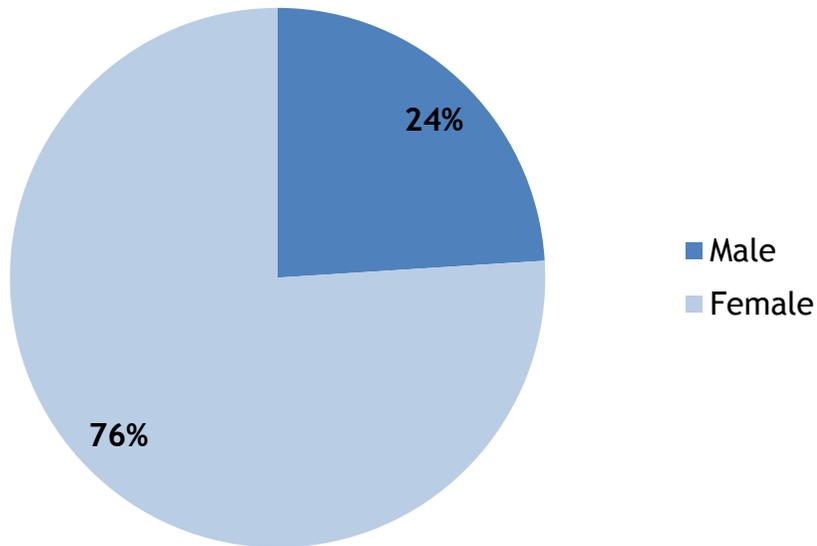
A large majority of learners were studying for their A-levels.



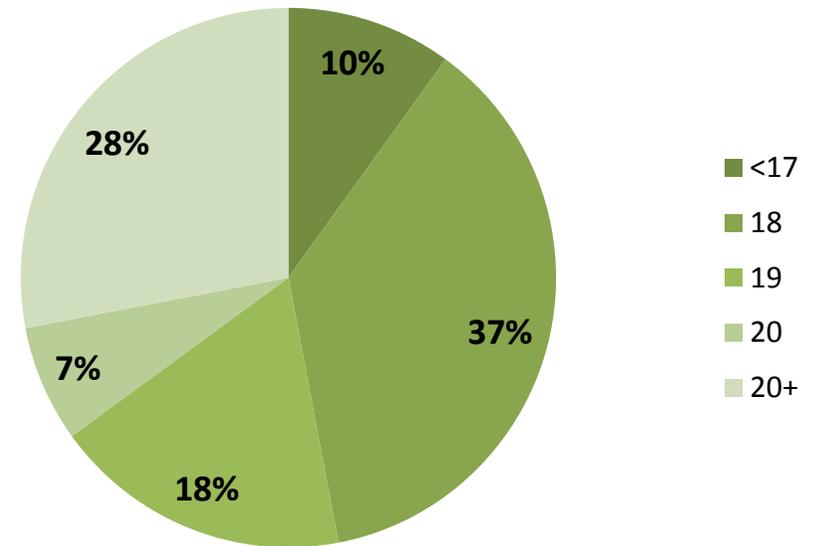
Q9. What is the title of the course you are currently undertaking/recently undertook?
 Base: All learners (600)

The gender split within the sample was skewed, with 76% of responses coming from female learners and 24% from male learners. In terms of age, almost 2 out of 5 learners (37%) were aged 18, about a third was aged 20+ and almost 1 out of 5 (18%) was aged 19. A small proportion (10%) of the sample was aged <17, and a similarly small proportion (7%) was aged 20.

Gender



Age



Base: All learners (600)

Text 1

Welcome, and thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey!
As we're keen to hear from specific types of people, we'll start by asking you a few questions about yourself to see if you're eligible to participate.

Please click 'Next' to begin the survey, which will take about 10 minutes to complete and is worth £1 in Amazon gift certificates.

Our research is anonymous and confidential and in line with the Market Research Society (MRS) Code of Conduct. We are an MRS Company Partner.

S1

ASK ALL

Single response

Confirm 'home region' to ensure we have up to date information for each respondent
Screen out all those who do not live in England

According to our records, you currently live in <insert region from DK>. If this is correct please click 'next'.

If this is **not correct** please select the correct region from the list below.

East Midlands

London

Northern Ireland - screen out and write to DK

North East

North West

Scotland - screen out and write to DK

Eastern

South East

South West

Wales - screen out and write to DK

West Midlands

Yorkshire and The Humber

Outside the UK - in the EU - screen out and write to DK

Outside the UK - not in the EU - screen out and write to DK

S2

ASK ALL

Single response

Are you currently in any form of education or training?

If you have just finished your summer term at school, college etc. - or you are about to - please think about your time at this training provider and select the answer which best describes your **main activity recently**.

Yes

No - screen out

S3

ASK ALL

Multiple response

Screen out all those who select the answers in red **UNLESS** an answer highlighted in yellow is also selected - these are the **target providers** for this survey

You said you're currently in some form of education, or have recently completed some form of education. Where is/was your education, learning or training based?

Please select ALL that you attend...

State school 6th form (comprehensive/secondary)

State school NOT 6th form (comprehensive/secondary)

Grammar school

City academy

Private/independent school

6th form college

Further Education (FE) college - either the main college or a local centre

Open University

University or Higher Education Institution

In the workplace

Training centre

Learndirect centre

Community centre or library

Other

None of these - screenout

Text 2

Great, you're exactly the type of person we're looking for...

We're keen to understand more about attitudes towards **virtual learning environments (VLEs)**.

A VLE is an on-line/computer-based system maintained by a training provider (college, school, private company etc.) which allows learners to access material linked with courses.

A VLE may also allow learners to contribute to their learning and to communicate with other learners, and it might include anything from handouts to copies of PowerPoint presentations, graphics, videos, pictures or other material.

The VLE is usually accessed through a provider/college intranet or via the internet, and some can be accessed using mobile phones and/or tablets.

Familiar VLE systems, which you may recognise, include **Moodle** and **Blackboard**.

Please click 'Next' to begin the survey...

Q1

ASK ALL

Single response

Is a VLE (virtual learning environment) used for the course that you're currently undertaking/recently undertook ?

Yes

No

Q2

ASK ALL

Single response

Which of the following courses is most important to you?

The course at your Further Education (FE) college - either the main college or a local centre

The course in your workplace

The course at your training centre

The course with Learndirect

The course at your Community centre or library

Text 3

For the rest of the survey we would like you to think about the course you're currently undertaking/recently undertook

Q3.a

ASK ALL THOSE WHOSE ONLY COURSE / MOST IMPORTANT COURSE USES A VLE - AT Q2

Single response

How often do/did you use a VLE (virtual learning environment) to help you in the course you're currently undertaking/recently undertook?

Very regularly (twice a week 'in term')

Quite regularly (twice a fortnight 'in term')

Sometimes (once a month 'in term')

Rarely (less than once a month 'in term')

Never

Q3b.

ASK ALL THOSE WHO SELECTED 'NEVER' AT Q3a

Multiple response

Please randomise answer categories

Why don't/didn't you use the VLE for the course you're currently undertaking/recently undertook ?

I don't have enough time to access it

I'm not sure how to use it

It's not easy to use, or well designed, so I prefer not to use it

It's not necessary to use it; I can get everything I need for my course elsewhere (in handouts etc.)

I cannot access the internet easily/regularly

I always forget my log in details or have never known them

Information is not up-to-date - such as presentations and reading lists

Other, please specify

Q4a.

ASK ALL THOSE WHOSE ONLY COURSE / MOST IMPORTANT COURSE USES A VLE - AT Q2
Multiple response

Thinking about the course you're currently undertaking/recently undertook what do/did you use the VLE (virtual learning environment) for?

Please select all that apply.

- Completing an e-portfolio
- Submitting assignments
- Looking at lesson notes/presentations from sessions you attended
- Looking at lesson notes/presentations from sessions you missed
- Using material or links on the VLE to help extend what you covered in the 'classroom'
- For new material learning that is not covered by a tutor or 'classroom' session
- Uploading material you have prepared, to share with your tutor or other learners
- Taking tests
- On-line discussions or forums
- Other (please specify)

Q4b.

ASK ALL THOSE WHOSE ONLY COURSE / MOST IMPORTANT COURSE DOES NOT USE A VLE - AT Q2
Multiple response

You said that your course does not/did not use a (virtual learning environment). If your course did use a VLE, what would you want to use it for?

Please select all that apply.

- Completing an e-portfolio
- Submitting assignments
- Looking at lesson notes/presentations from sessions you attended
- Looking at lesson notes/presentations from sessions you missed
- Using material or links on the VLE to help extend what you covered in the 'classroom'
- For new material learning that is not covered by a tutor or 'classroom' session
- Uploading material you have prepared, to share with your tutor or other learners
- Taking tests
- On-line discussions or forums
- Other (please specify)
- you now....

Q5.

ASK ALL THOSE WHOSE ONLY COURSE / MOST IMPORTANT COURSE USES A VLE - AT Q2
Multiple response

How do/did you access the VLE (virtual learning environment) for the course you're currently undertaking/recently undertook?

Please select all that apply.

- I access it at my place of learning
- I access it from home
- I access it from another location
- I only access it during study time at my learning/training provider (i.e. only on the day at college, or at a provider) - exclusive answer category

Q6a.

ASK ALL THOSE WHOSE ONLY COURSE / MOST IMPORTANT COURSE USES A VLE - AT Q2
Single response

In what way do/did you most regularly access the VLE (virtual learning environment) for the course you're currently undertaking/recently undertook?

Please select all that apply.

- Using my phone
- Using my tablet
- Using my laptop/PC
- Using a laptop/PC at my learning/training provider
- Other, please specify

Q6b.

ASK ALL THOSE WHOSE ONLY COURSE / MOST IMPORTANT COURSE DOES NOT USE A VLE - AT Q2
Single response

You said that your course does not/did not use a VLE (virtual learning environment). If your course did use a VLE, how would you prefer to access it?

Please select all that apply.

- Using my phone
- Using my tablet
- Using my laptop/PC
- Using a laptop/PC at my learning/training provider
- Other, please specify

Q7.

ASK ALL THOSE WHOSE ONLY COURSE / MOST IMPORTANT COURSE USES A VLE - AT Q2

Scale response

Split the 10 statements between two pages

Randomise statements

Please think about how the VLE helps/helped you in your main course of study. What are your feelings about the following?

COLUMNS

1- Strongly disagree

2

3

4

5 - Strongly agree

The VLE helps me with communication and makes me feel more closely involved in my course

The VLE is increasing my chances of successfully completing my courses

The VLE is essential to my course

I only use the VLE because my teacher/tutor/assessor encourages me to do so

I would be disappointed if there was not material for my course on a VLE

The VLE is well designed and easy to use

The material on the VLE is always up to date

The VLE is as professional looking as many other systems on the net

The VLE is an important part of making my day-to-day learning more effective

The VLE makes my learning more interesting/fun

Prefer not to say

Q8.

ASK ALL

If taking more than 1 course, ask about the MOST IMPORTANT course

Open response

What is the title of the course you are currently undertaking/recently undertook?

Q9.

ASK ALL

If taking more than 1 course, ask about the MOST IMPORTANT course

Open response

Which of the following best describes the course you are currently undertaking/recently undertook?

Full-time course

Part-time course

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