



HM Revenue
& Customs

Research report 580

Assisted Digital and Digitally Excluded Support Needs

Characteristics and needs of UK adults who are
Digitally Excluded or require Assisted Digital
support

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Behaviour, Insight and Research Team

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Glossary

Assisted Digital / AD	Subset of the total Assisted Digital population that excludes those who never use the internet. Consists of UK adults who feel they would need support to carry out at least some government interactions online, despite using the internet for other tasks.
Total Assisted Digital population	UK adults who feel they would need support to carry out at least some government interactions online (including both those who currently use the internet and those who do not).
AD spectrum	A set of sub-groups within the broader Assisted Digital category. These provide greater detail on the potential support needs of those in the AD population.
Customers	All UK adults are potential customers of HMRC. As such, in this case 'customers' is a synonym for 'UK adults'.
Digitally Capable	UK adults who report being able to carry out a range of government interactions online.
Digitally Excluded / DE	UK adults who never use the internet. This group includes lapsed internet users as well as those who have never used the internet.
PAYE	Abbreviation of Pay As You Earn. Refers to those whose employer or pension provider deducts tax directly from their pay or pension. Those on a PAYE scheme may also have to file a Self Assessment tax return.
Qualitative research	Qualitative research is primarily exploratory. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. In this research focus groups and semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted. Due to the sampling limitations of qualitative research, findings cannot be used to generalise across the population.
Quantitative research	Quantitative research involves the collection and analysis of quantifiable data. Survey data collected from a sample can be generalised to large populations of people and used to compare differences between groups.
Self Assessment	Refers to those who submit their own tax returns, generally because they are self-employed and/ or have income that generates a tax obligation not automatically deducted at source.

<p>Tax Credits</p>	<p>This includes both Working Tax Credit (a benefit provided for those working on lower incomes) and Child Tax Credit (a benefit provided to parents of children aged up to 19). Universal Credit has now replaced these benefits in many cases.</p>
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1. Executive Summary

Introduction

In 2014/15 Kantar conducted research on behalf of HMRC to understand the proportion of customers who had internet access and their confidence using government services online. This research project aims to update the information on the prevalence, characteristics and support needs of adults in the UK who are Digitally Excluded or require Assisted Digital support. This will inform HMRC's ongoing work to improve and expand its digital services, and support those customers less accustomed to accessing services online.

The research included both qualitative and quantitative strands. The quantitative research was conducted on a face-to-face omnibus survey between 3rd July and 30th July 2019. It achieved a total sample of 5,932 UK adults, including boosted sample, to ensure adequate coverage of the Assisted Digital and Digitally Excluded support groups as well as HMRC's Self-Assessed and Tax Credit customer groups. The questionnaire was administered using a Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing method. Survey data were weighted to ensure that the profile of the survey sample was representative of the profile of UK adults aged 16+.

Kantar researchers also conducted 30 qualitative depth interviews by telephone with 20 Assisted Digital and 10 Digitally Excluded customers identified in the quantitative research.

Overview of the Assisted Digital and Digitally Excluded populations

Based on the 2014 research, UK adults have been grouped into three main categories: Digitally Capable; requiring Assisted Digital support (AD); and requiring Digitally Excluded support (DE). Digitally Capable adults are able to interact with government services online independently. AD adults report that they would need support to complete at least some online interactions with government. DE adults report that they never use the internet either at home or elsewhere. All those who need DE support also fall into the total AD support category.

Since 2014, the proportion of UK adults who were able to interact with government services online without help has increased from 63% to 70%.

The proportion who require AD support has remained stable at 22%. This group was, on average, older than digitally capable adults and more likely to have problems with literacy or numeracy. They also tended to use the internet less frequently than the digitally capable group, although more than half of AD adults go online at least once per day. Most AD adults were comfortable with simple online tasks such as using a search engine or checking email, but confidence for more complicated tasks was less widespread. Despite this, most said that they would probably be able to complete new online tasks either independently or with support from someone else.

The DE population has fallen from 15% to 8% of UK adults. Most were over 65 and had never been online, although a small proportion were lapsed internet users. DE adults did not feel the need to go online as they were able to complete most tasks without using the internet.

Barriers to using the internet more frequently

The most common barriers to using the internet more frequently among both AD and DE adults centred around a lack of interest. As many in these groups were able to complete tasks without going online there was a tendency to favour familiar, offline processes.

ADs were more likely than DEs to express concerns about online security, fraud and privacy. While DE adults were more likely to report lack of access to a computer as a barrier to going online.

Disability did not appear to be a widespread barrier preventing people from going online. Although more than a quarter of ADs and DEs reported a long-term illness or disability, less than 2% said that it prevented them from using the internet.

A perception that the internet was not relevant for their business, and a preference for approaching business tasks the way they always had, was cited by self-employed customers as a barrier to using the internet more often for business purposes. Security, fraud and privacy issues were not a common concern among this group.

How do those requiring support interact with HMRC?

Customer support needs were significantly influenced by both their tax confidence and their online confidence. For the majority of AD and DE customers, interaction with HMRC was very limited. PAYE customers may never need to contact HMRC unless their circumstances change. Because they rarely interact with HMRC, many customers lacked confidence dealing with their taxes and benefits.

DE customers almost exclusively contacted HMRC by telephone as they did not have the access or knowledge to use online services. DEs who were also SA customers, or whose taxes were complicated, mainly relied on paid agents to act as intermediaries for all contact.

AD customers were more likely than DEs to attempt to access support via HMRC's online services. However, this willingness was influenced both by the nature of the query, their previous experiences of the support from HMRC and their confidence online.

Less confident ADs were more likely to feel intimidated by the prospect of searching on HMRC's website and would use the telephone helpline instead. More confident ADs attempted to find solutions online but might still telephone the helpline for reassurance if they came across any difficulties.

For customers who were not confident dealing with tax, encountering queries and problems can be a stressful experience which can lead them to worry about making mistakes. Because of this, even confident internet users might call HMRC to check that they have understood information or acted correctly.

Sources of support when interacting with HMRC

Around a third of ADs received support when dealing with HMRC, primarily from family and friends. Those who pay tax through SA were more likely to receive support from a paid agent. DEs were less likely to have help, possibly reflecting their less frequent interactions with HMRC.

If they needed to interact with HMRC online in future, customers preferred to call HMRC rather than use online support tools. The AD group were more likely than other groups to favour online support from HMRC itself. Among this group almost half with a long-term illness, disability or learning difficulty said that they would prefer support from voluntary or community services. Friends and family were the most popular support option among the DE population.

Just over a third of ADs already used HMRC services online or said they were willing to do so. Around a quarter said that they would be confident using the Personal/Business Tax Account.

More than half of DEs said they were not at all willing to engage with HMRC online.

What do customers think of the support they are offered?

Awareness of HMRC's current online support services was low among participants. Although just over a quarter of ADs had used or heard of HMRC's online chat or YouTube help videos, they were uncertain that Ask Ruth would be effective or capable of answering complex tax questions. Less confident typists raised concerns that would not be able to express themselves clearly or quickly enough to engage with the system.

Online chat was more positively received because of previous positive experiences with commercial providers. The opportunity to access support via an online chat outside standard working hours and avoiding lengthy hold times were important positives. They also liked the offer of a written record of the conversation which could be accessed a later date. As with Ask Ruth, there were some concerns over typing speed, ability to articulate ideas and the level of support on offer. People could be encouraged to use online chat by offering additional reassurance that the service is operated by expert support staff, with mechanisms in place to support slower typists or those who do not speak English as a first language.

Participants were also receptive to YouTube videos as they were familiar with the medium from other situations. However, HMRC videos would need to be concise, visually engaging and easy to follow.

How can Assisted Digital and Digitally Excluded support be refined?

It is unlikely that any support would tempt DEs to try online services due to the extent of their disengagement with the internet.

Clear and frequent communication from HMRC outlining the effectiveness and availability of support are likely to encourage ADs to engage with online support services. Online support needs to be accessible and approachable, using straightforward language and reassuring customers of the quality of advice and support

given. It is also important to remember that many customers rarely interact with HMRC. Therefore, it is vital that customers have positive, high quality online interactions with HMRC to encourage future use.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background

HMRC's ambition is to become the 'most digitally advanced tax administration in the world', with services that are more effective, efficient and easier for taxpayers to use¹. To do this HMRC is fundamentally transforming its services and the way that it works, delivering multi-channel digital services and seeking to engage with the majority of customers digitally where possible. A key part of HMRC's ambition is Making Tax Digital (MTD). MTD will make it easier for businesses to get their tax right first time by requiring them to keep their tax records digitally and to file returns direct from that underlying data using MTD-compatible software.

HMRC has rolled out digital services including the Personal Tax Account and new forms of online support to help customers resolve queries or problems online (such as webchat, webinars, social media and YouTube videos). One of the aims of these support activities is to provide information and assurance online and thus reduce demand on HMRC's telephone helplines. This will allow HMRC to allocate helpline resources more effectively, providing the necessary support for complex queries and helping those unable to utilise online services.

Kantar's 2014/15 research on Digitally Excluded and Assisted Digital populations found that 86% of households had access to the internet and 33% used it to obtain information from government services². The proportion of households with internet access has subsequently risen to 93%³, but this means that there is still a significant number of UK adults without access to the internet. The digitally excluded group spans all parts of society but has a higher incidence among older people and those from less advantaged socio-economic groups. However, it is not only internet access which serves as a barrier to online engagement with HMRC. Factors such as confidence about taxation and confidence about *using* the internet also come into play and must be taken into account.

To improve customer experience and encourage further digital migration, digital services must be designed so that they are accessible to as broad a range of customers as is practical. This means it is important to understand which customers would be unwilling, unable or in need of assistance to use digital services and why. By further developing its understanding of these issues, HMRC is better able to determine how they can support their customers and develop services and support tools that take their needs into account. It is in this context that the research summarised in this report was commissioned.

¹ HM Revenue and Customs single departmental plan

²

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/457800/Digital_Exclusion_and_Assisted_Digital_research_publication_report.pdf

³

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetandsocialmediausage/bulletins/internetaccesshouseholdsandindividuals/2019>

2.2 Research Aims

The underlying aim of the research study was to obtain updated information on the prevalence, characteristics and support needs of adults in the UK who are Digitally Excluded or require Assisted Digital support. The findings will allow HMRC to better understand how to boost usage of its digital services and better provide support to its customers.

More specifically the objectives of the research were to:

- Identify the size and make-up of the population requiring Assisted Digital or Digitally Excluded support;
- Understand awareness of HMRC digital services;
- Understand the barriers to using digital services;
- Understand the support needs for individuals to use digital services;
- Understand how the barriers and support needs differ within the Assisted Digital and Digitally Excluded populations.

2.3 Method

The programme of research into Assisted Digital and Digitally Excluded Support Needs consisted of both quantitative and qualitative strands, as follows:

2.3.1 Quantitative omnibus interviews

The research was conducted on a face-to-face omnibus survey. This is a timely and cost-effective solution to interview a nationally representative sample and achieve robust samples of low incidence sub-groups in the wider adult population. The omnibus design is such that questions on multiple topics (commissioned by different organisations) may be asked in a single interview.

Sample

The Kantar face-to-face omnibus uses a random location design, a high-quality form of quota sampling which integrates the Postcode Address File (PAF) with 2011 Census area statistics. The sampling approach is designed to provide high quality, replicable cross sections of adults, reflecting the geographic profile (including urban/rural distribution) and socio-economic profile of the UK population. Only one interview is undertaken per household and interlocking quotas are set based on gender, presence of children and working status to ensure a balanced sample of adults within contacted addresses.

The research was run on two full waves of the omnibus study in which HMRC's questions were asked of the full nationally representative sample of c.2,060 UK adults aged 16+ per wave. To boost the sample size for HMRC's key sub-groups, the questions were also placed on two further waves of the omnibus in which they were only asked of those respondents who fell into one of the key sub-groups.

The boost samples focused on:⁴

- Customers requiring Assisted Digital support
- Customers requiring Digitally Excluded support
- Self Assessment customers
- Tax Credits customers

Fieldwork

The two full waves of interviewing were conducted between 3rd July 2019 and 16th July 2019. The two boost waves to target key sub-groups were conducted between 17th July 2019 and 30th July 2019.

A total sample of 5,932 UK adults was achieved. The boosted sample sizes for each of the key sub-groups were:

- 2,736 customers requiring Assisted Digital support
- 1,313 customers requiring Digitally Excluded support
- 986 Self Assessment customers
- 749 Tax Credits customers

Questionnaire

The interview comprised a mixture of prompted and spontaneous questions. Any questions which included the option to provide open-ended responses were coded into meaningful categories after fieldwork.

The questionnaire was administered using a CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) method. Interviewers entered all responses directly onto a tablet computer and any routing of questions was done automatically by the interviewing software. The full questionnaire is appended at the end of this report.

Weighting

Survey data were weighted to ensure that the profile of the survey sample was representative of the profile of UK adults aged 16+. Given the inclusion of boost samples in the research design, these were down-weighted to ensure that they did not skew the data when reporting at a total population level.

2.3.2 Qualitative depth interviews

Supplementing the core quantitative research, Kantar researchers also conducted a total of 30 follow-up depth interviews, by telephone, with customers identified in the quantitative research.

- 20 x Assisted Digital individuals

⁴ See glossary and Chapter 2 for details of how these groups were defined.

- 10 x Digitally Excluded individuals

The qualitative sample was structured to ensure it included a broad range of demographic groups, including a mix of segmentation, tax types, urban and rural locations and tax credit recipients. Interviews lasted an average of 45 minutes.

2.4 Reporting approach

2.4.1 Significance reporting

Strictly speaking, confidence intervals cannot be applied to quota samples, such as this one, as they do not use equal or known probabilities of selection. Nevertheless, doing so provides a useful means of identifying which findings are potentially of most interest. We have therefore applied significance testing to the data and used this to guide our commentary⁵. Charts throughout the report also highlight where differences across waves or between sub-groups are sufficiently large to note.

2.4.2 Limitations

Given the breadth of the available data, this report does not attempt to comment on all statistically significant differences between sub-groups and judgement has been used when deciding which of the statistically significant findings to highlight.

Omnibus interviews involve questions on multiple topics, commissioned by different organisations. As such, the risk of order effects (whereby the responses to questions on one topic may be affected by the content of questions on other topics) is greater than is the case for standalone studies.

More fundamentally, survey data are subject to bias. In most cases the responses obtained from a survey sample will not perfectly reflect the wider population that the sample represents. As such, there are margins of error around any survey estimate.

⁵ Commentary throughout the report focuses on differences that, in an equivalent random probability sample, would be statistically significant at a 95 per cent confidence level. In basic terms this means that if the survey were to be conducted 100 times, a finding of the same nature (e.g. sub-group A is more likely to respond in a certain way than sub-group B) would be found on at least 95 occasions.

3. HMRC customers with different digital support needs

Key findings

- 70% of UK adults said they were able to interact with governmental or licensing bodies online without any help. This has increased from 63% in 2014.
- 22% of UK adults used the internet but would need some support to interact with government online to complete some tasks (Assisted Digital). This has remained stable since 2014.
- The Assisted Digital population covers a wide range of abilities. Some were able to complete many tasks online independently while others needed support to complete simple activities.
- 8% of UK adults did not use the internet at all (Digitally Excluded)

In this chapter we begin by outlining how different groups of HMRC customers requiring digital support are defined before moving on to look at the size of these groups and how they are changing over time.

3.1 The key groups of interest

When considering differing digital support needs, HMRC customers have been grouped into three main categories:

- Digitally Capable
- Requiring Assisted Digital support (total AD population)
- Requiring Digitally Excluded support (DE)

There is overlap between the DE and total AD population given that anybody who required Digitally Excluded support would also need Assisted Digital support. We therefore consider a fourth group throughout this report:

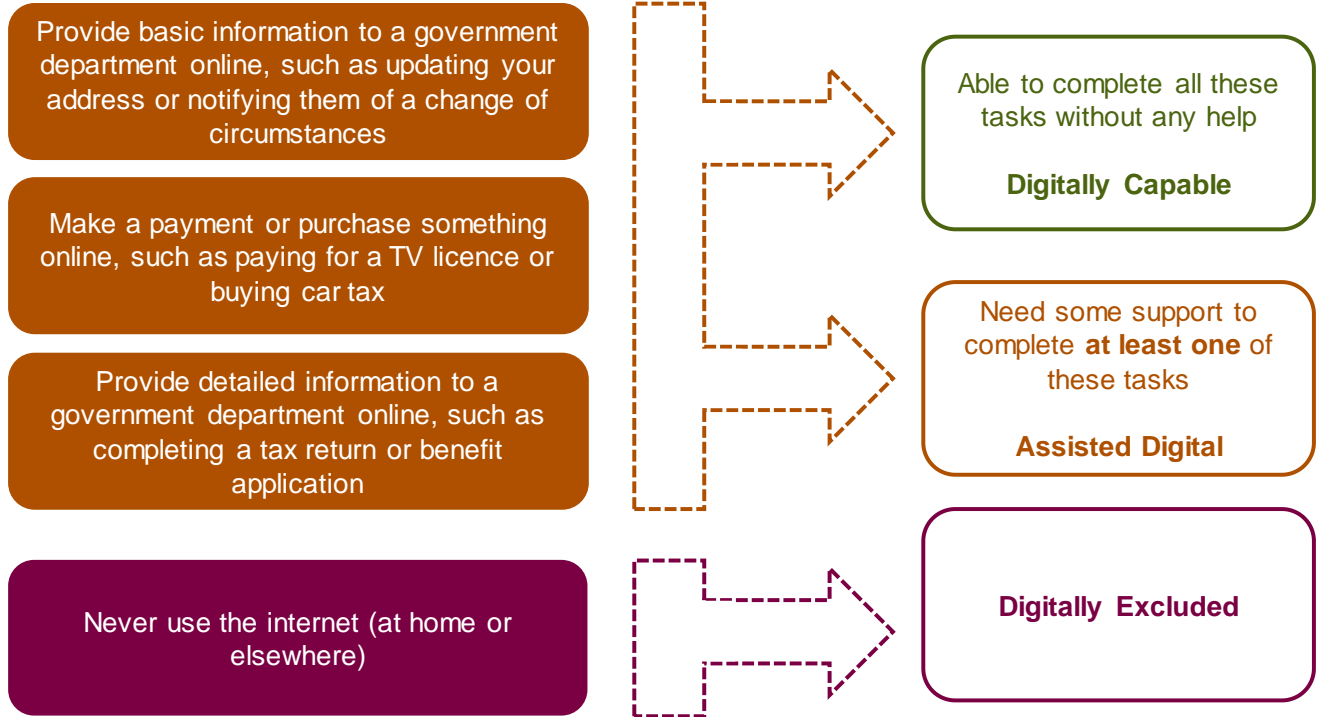
- Requiring Assisted Digital support but NOT requiring Digitally Excluded support (AD)

The AD group provides a clearer delineation between HMRC customers with different support needs, given that it has no overlap with the DE group.

A range of other sub-groups are also examined throughout the report, covering topics such as tax and employment status, and issues relating to health, disability and learning difficulties.

3.2 Defining the AD and DE groups

Figure 3.1 Digital capability



Members of the DE groups report that they **never use the internet (either at home or elsewhere)**. This group includes both lapsed internet users and those who have never used the internet. They are likely to face the greatest challenges accessing digital services and would need most support.

The AD group sits in the middle of the support needs hierarchy, as shown in Figure 3.1 above. To define this group, participants in the research were presented with a range of scenarios outlining tasks using the internet. They were asked to specify how much help they felt they would need (if any) to be able to carry out each task.

The tasks were grouped into two batches of three⁶. One batch of tasks related specifically to digital interactions with governmental or licensing bodies, defined as follows:

- Provide basic information to a government department online, such as updating your address or notifying them of a change of circumstances
- Make a payment or purchase something online, such as paying a for a TV licence or buying car tax

⁶ The order of these two batches of tasks was randomised to ensure that half of the research sample was exposed to the government/licensing tasks first and the other half of the sample was exposed to the more general digital tasks first. This serves to mitigate any potential order effects within the total research sample.

- Provide detailed information to a government department online, such as completing a tax return or benefit application

The other batch of tasks focused on more general digital activities, defined as follows:

- Provide basic information to an organisation online, such as updating your address with a bank or utility provider
- Make a payment or purchase something online, such as paying a utility bill or buying something from a website like Amazon
- Provide detailed information to an organisation online, such as completing a mortgage application or job application

If respondents were self-employed, owned a business or had a controlling stake in a business, the wording of these tasks was amended to reflect a business context (e.g. 'Provide detailed information to an organisation online, such as completing a business loan application or tender for business via an electronic tender service'). Full details can be found in the appendices of this report.

For each of the six tasks, the research participants were asked to specify whether:

- I would be able to do this without any help
- I would be able to do this if I had help from a friend or family member
- I would be able to do this, but only with the help from the organisation/department providing the service
- I would be able to do this but only with help from someone independent, such as Citizen's Advice or a professional advisor
- I wouldn't be able to do this even with help

Anybody who **currently used the internet but felt that they would need some support to complete any of the tasks relating to governmental or licensing bodies** was classified as AD.

Anybody who reported that they would be **able to complete all three of the tasks relating to governmental or licensing bodies without any help** was classified as Digitally Capable. As suggested by its name, the Digitally Capable group has the lowest support needs.

3.3 The Assisted Digital spectrum

The AD group encompasses a spectrum of digital capabilities. As such, a set of sub-groups has also been developed to provide a more granular understanding of the behaviours and needs of the AD population. These are broadly defined as follows:

- Independent or help from friends and family
 - Those able to do all the government or licensing tasks either on their own or with support from friends and family
- Need external support for payment or giving detailed information

- Those who said they would need the help of HMRC, an independent advisor or an independent organisation to complete one or more of these government or licensing tasks (but did not report that they would be unable to do any of them)
- Could not provide payment or detailed information
 - Those who reported that they would be unable to do one or both of these government or licensing tasks, even with help

3.4 Sizing the key groups with digital support needs

The proportion of Digitally Capable adults increased from 63% in 2014 to 70% in 2019. Given a total UK adult population of 53.8 million, this equates to 37.8 million Digitally Capable adults in 2019 (Figure 3.2).

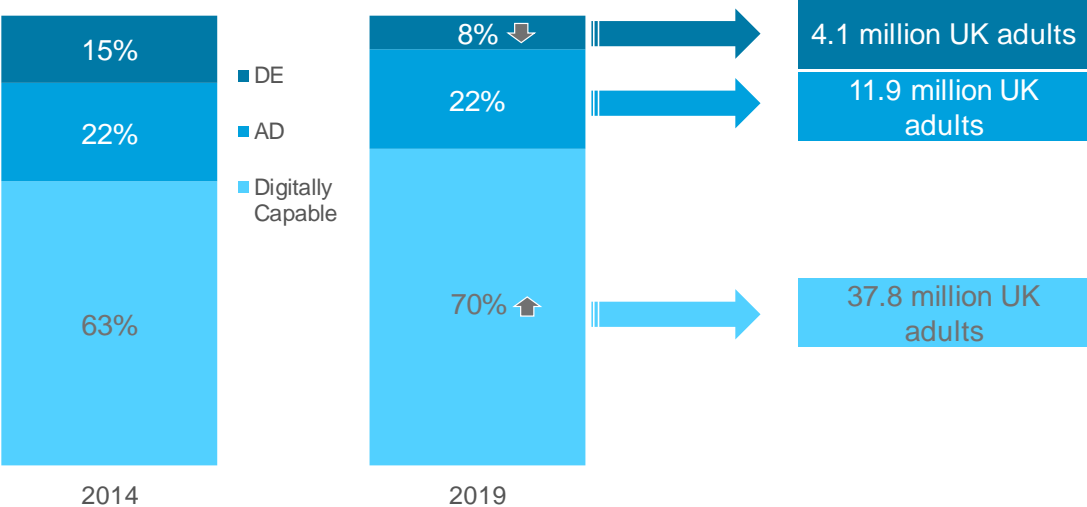
The proportion of AD adults remained steady at 22% in both 2014 and 2019 (the equivalent of 11.9 million UK adults). The increase in the proportion of Digitally Capable adults was due solely to a decrease in the proportion of adults who are Digitally Excluded.

The proportion of adults in the DE population has fallen from 15% in 2014 to 8% in 2019. This equates to 4.1 million DE adults in 2019. Around one in six of those in the DE group (16%) were lapsed internet users who had at least some prior experience online despite reporting that they never use it now. Most of the DE population had never used the internet (84%).

Overall, a total of 16 million UK adults were found to need at least some degree of support to access government services online.

Figure 3.2 Changes in digital capability over time

Digital capability (% all adults, by year)



↑↓ Significantly higher/lower than 2014/15

BASE: 2014 (4,017), 2019 (5,932)

4. Characteristics of the digital support groups

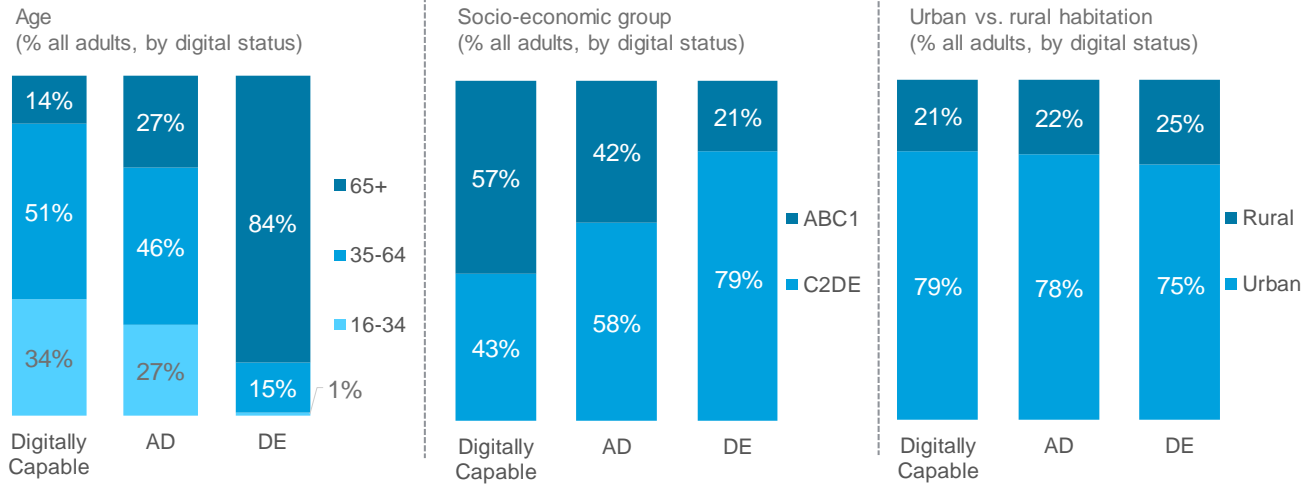
Key findings	
<p>AD characteristics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age: Older than digitally capable group (27% 65+ vs 14% of capable group) • Literacy: More likely to have problems with literacy or numeracy (12% vs. 7% of capable group) • Online activity: Used the internet less frequently than the capable group (43% use it once a day or less vs. 20% of capable group) • Online ability: There was a wide spectrum of ADs, from those who were confident online but not confident on tax issues, to those who only engaged in recreational online activities • Barriers to going online: Lack of interest and security / privacy concerns • Potential online activity: At least half felt they could do typical online tasks they don't currently do, independently or with help 	<p>DE characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age: Mostly 65+ (84%) • Online activity: 16% were lapsed internet users • Actions completed online: None - if necessary, others go online for them • Barriers to getting online: No sense of urgency / motivation to get online, lack of interest and perceived lack of capability and access • Potential online activity: Unlikely to go online as they see little benefit for them personally

4.1 Differences in the profiles of the digital support groups

Digitally Excluded respondents were more likely to be older (84% were 65+) than the AD (27%) or Digitally Capable (14%) groups (Figure 4.1). Younger adults, aged 16-34, were rarely digitally excluded and accounted for 1% of all those in the DE population. In comparison, those aged 16-34 made up around a third of the Digitally Capable population (34%) and a quarter of the AD population (27%). Within the DE population, 86% of those aged 65+ had never used the internet and 16% were lapsed users. DE adults aged 35-64 were more likely than their older peers to be lapsed users (27%) and less likely to have never used the internet (72%).

Those in lower socio-economic groups tended to have higher digital support needs. C2DEs accounted for 43% of the Digitally Capable group, 58% of the AD group and 79% of the DE group. Differences according to whether adults lived in rural or urban settings were less pronounced. Nevertheless, those in rural settings were slightly more likely to need digital support.

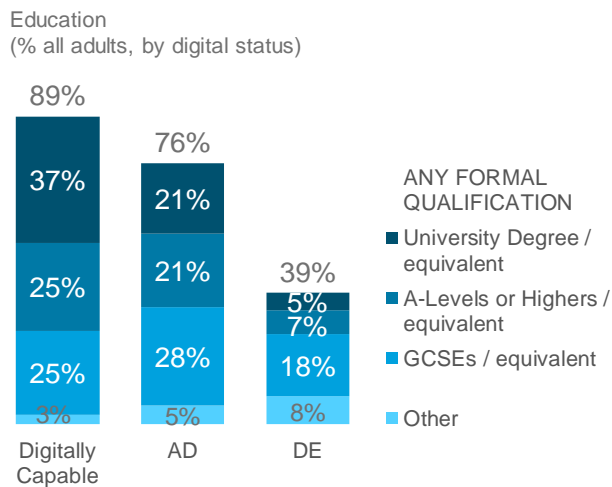
Figure 4.1 Demographic profiles of the digital support groups



BASE: Digitally Capable (3,196), Assisted Digital (1,423), Digitally Excluded (1,313)

Many of the differences between the DE and AD population appear to be driven by age. Due to changes in the education system over the past few decades older people are less likely to have formal qualifications than younger people. This may partly explain the lower proportion of DEs who reported having any type of formal qualification (39%) than ADs (76%) or those who were Digitally Capable (89%) (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 Education among the digital support groups

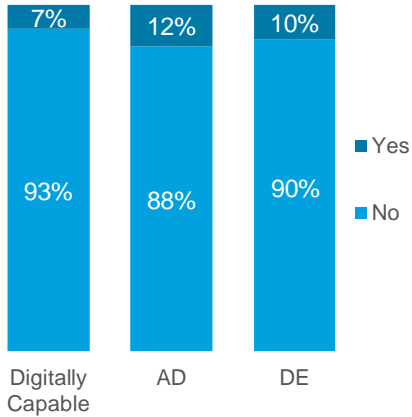


BASE: Capable (3,196), Assisted Digital (1,423), Digitally Excluded (1,313)

Those who reported problems with English literacy or numeracy were slightly less likely to be Digitally Capable. They accounted for 10% of the DE, 12% of the AD and 7% of the Digitally Capable populations (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3 Literacy/numeracy problems among the digital support groups

Any problems with English literacy and/or numeracy
(% all adults, by digital status)

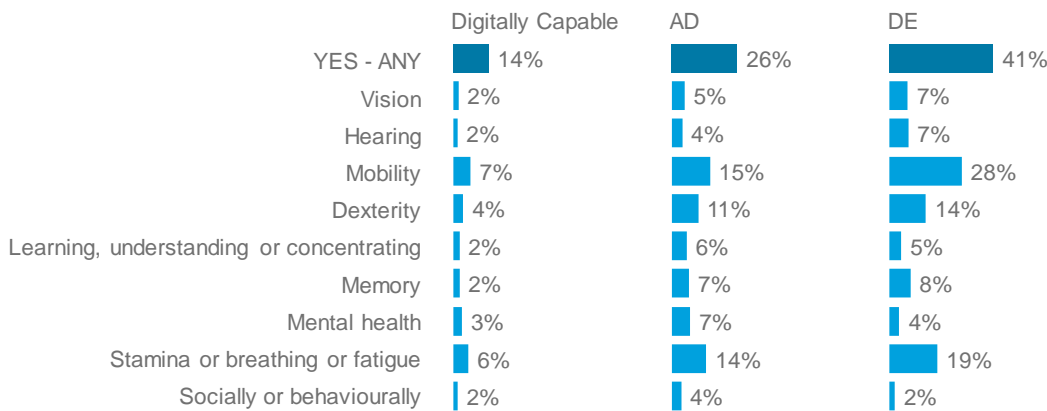


BASE: Capable (3,196), Assisted Digital (1,423), Digitally Excluded (1,313)

Again, probably reflecting the age differences between the digital capability groups, adults in the Digitally Capable population were less likely to have any long-standing illness, health problems or disabilities (14%) than those in the AD group (26%) and, particularly, those in the DE group (41%). The incidence of mobility issues was particularly widespread in the DE population (28%, compared to 15% of AD adults and 7% of Digitally Capable adults) (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4 Long-standing illness, health problems and disability among the digital support groups

Long standing limiting illness, health problems or disability
(% all adults, by digital status)



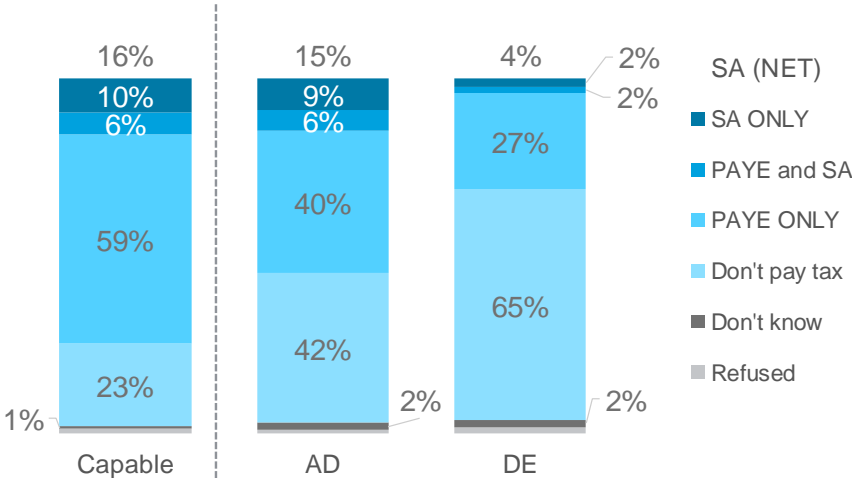
BASE: Capable (3,196), Assisted Digital (1,423), Digitally Excluded (1,313)

SOURCE: Q.F8 Do you have any long-standing illness, health problems or disability which limits your daily activities or the work you can do? By long-standing I mean anything that has troubled you over a period of time or that is likely to affect you over a long period of time. Q. F9 Do any of these conditions or illnesses affect you in any of the areas?

PAYE was the most common method of tax payment among all digital support groups. A similar proportion of customers among both the Digitally Capable (16%) and AD (15%) groups paid tax via SA only or via PAYE and SA (Figure 4.5). Members of the older DE groups were more likely to say they didn't pay tax at all.

Figure 4.5 Tax payment methods among the digital support groups

How pay taxes (% all adults, by digital status)



BASE: Capable (3,196), Assisted Digital, not Digitally Excluded (1,423), Digitally Excluded (1,313)
 SOURCE: Q.A2 Please could you tell me which of the following best describes how you pay your taxes?

5. Perspectives and use of the internet

Key findings

- DE customers did not feel the need to go online as they were able to complete most tasks without using the internet.
- More than half of the AD population use the internet at least once a day. Tax payers were more likely than non-tax payers to use the internet frequently.
- The most common online activities among AD and lapsed DE customers were sending and receiving email (71%), using a search engine (71%) and using social networking sites (52%).
- Customers who are otherwise proficient interacting online may need support with some government activities online due to the nature of the activity itself rather than because it is online.

Chapter 5 explores the attitudes and online behaviours of each of the digital support groups.

5.1 DE perspectives of the internet

In general DE participants in the qualitative research said they could complete most tasks without needing to use the internet and had no compelling reason to engage online. The majority had gone their whole lives without using the internet and did not feel a need to do so now. There was also a sense among the DE population that they were not missing out by not going online. Although there was some awareness of the benefits of researching or reviewing products online, respondents were either not aware of the benefits or did not feel they were strong enough to motivate them to go online.

In instances when DE participants needed to find information online, they would ask family or friends to search on their behalf, for example to identify information about rubbish collection. Those in the DE group tended to be apprehensive about the security aspects of online services and this served as a further barrier to using the internet.

“I’ve never turned on a computer, I’ve never really gotten around to it and I don’t feel like I’m missing out.”

Participant, DE

5.2 AD perspectives of the internet

Qualitative interviews with the AD group underlined the broad range of online abilities within this group. At one end of the spectrum were those who could conduct relatively complex online activities for leisure purposes but shy away from engagement with what they perceive as being ‘important’ tasks such as submitting tax returns.

The potential legal ramifications of making a mistake led to caution engaging with some online government services.

At the other end of the spectrum were those who were less confident with certain online activities (for example buying online or completing forms). However, even they generally went online on a regular basis and engaged in a range of basic activities, such as checking the weather.

In common with the DE group, there were concerns about online security among the AD population, but this tended to reflect personal experience and individual levels of confidence recognising scams or suspicious websites.

“I use the internet about 2-3 times a week to play games, e-mail and to google things to find out. I renew my car tax online but I don’t fill any other forms out apart from [car tax].”

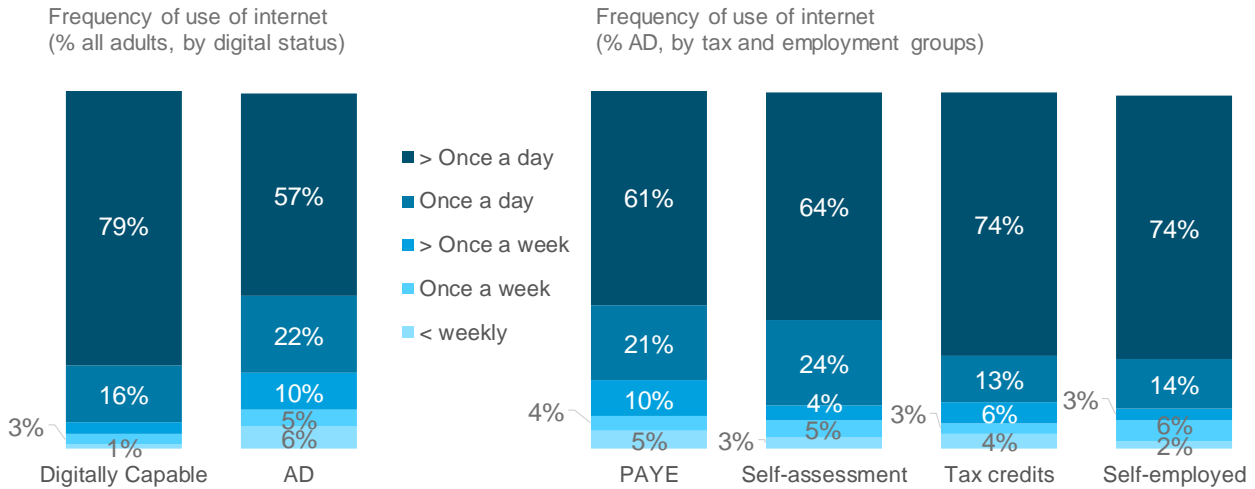
Participant, AD

5.3 Internet usage

The Digitally Capable population (79%) were more likely to use the internet multiple times per day than the AD population (57%) (Figure 5.1). Nevertheless, more than half of AD adults (57%) said that they use the internet multiple times per day reflecting the wide range of experiences and capabilities represented within this group. Fewer than one in ten AD adults went online less than once a week (6%).

Multiple daily internet usage was more widespread among those AD adults who received tax credits (74%) or who were self-employed (74%). AD adults who submitted a Self Assessment tax return (64%) and those who paid tax via PAYE (61%) were more likely than non-tax payers (52%) to use the internet at least once per day.

Figure 5.1 Frequency of internet usage

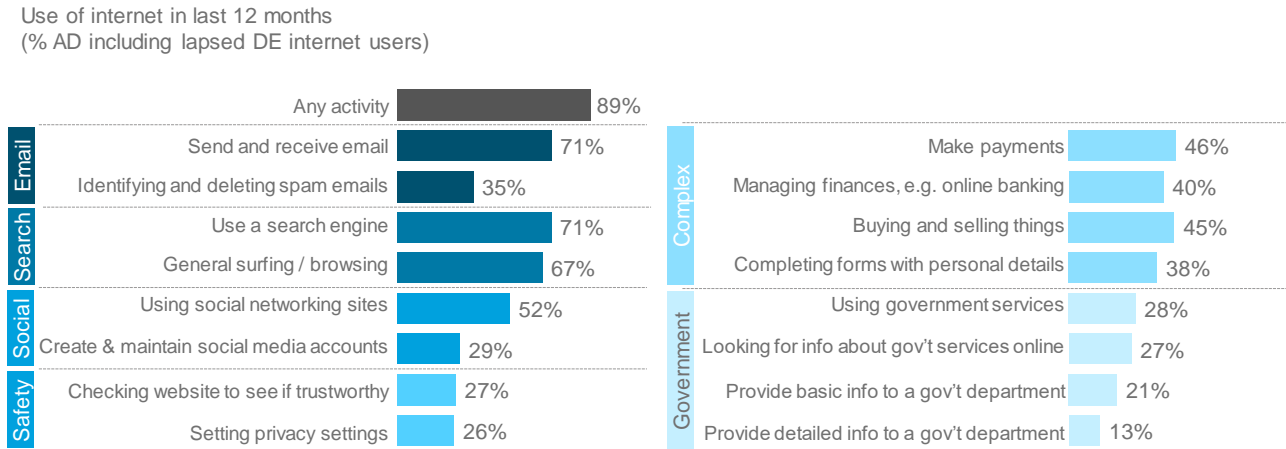


BASE: All respondents/self employed: Digitally Capable (3,196), AD (1,423), PAYE (730), Self-assessment (224), Tax credits (172), Self-employed (149)
 SOURCE: Q.A4. On average, how often do you use the internet, either at home or elsewhere? Q.A5 On average, how often do you use the internet for business use, either at home, your workplace or elsewhere?

The most common online activities among AD adults were sending and receiving email (71%), using a search engine (71%) and using social networking sites (52%) (Figure 5.2). Although they were not classified as Digitally Capable, many reported that they had personally conducted relatively complex online activities including: making payments (46%); buying and selling things (45%); managing their finances (40%); or completing forms with their personal details (38%). This suggests that, in at least some cases, their need for support with some governmental online activities may not be driven specifically by a lack of proficiency in navigating and interacting with online sources, but by the nature of the activity itself.

Overall, around a quarter of this group reported that they had used government services (28%) or had looked for information about government services (27%) online. Around one in five reported providing basic information to a government department (21%) and one in eight (13%) had provided detailed information to a government department.

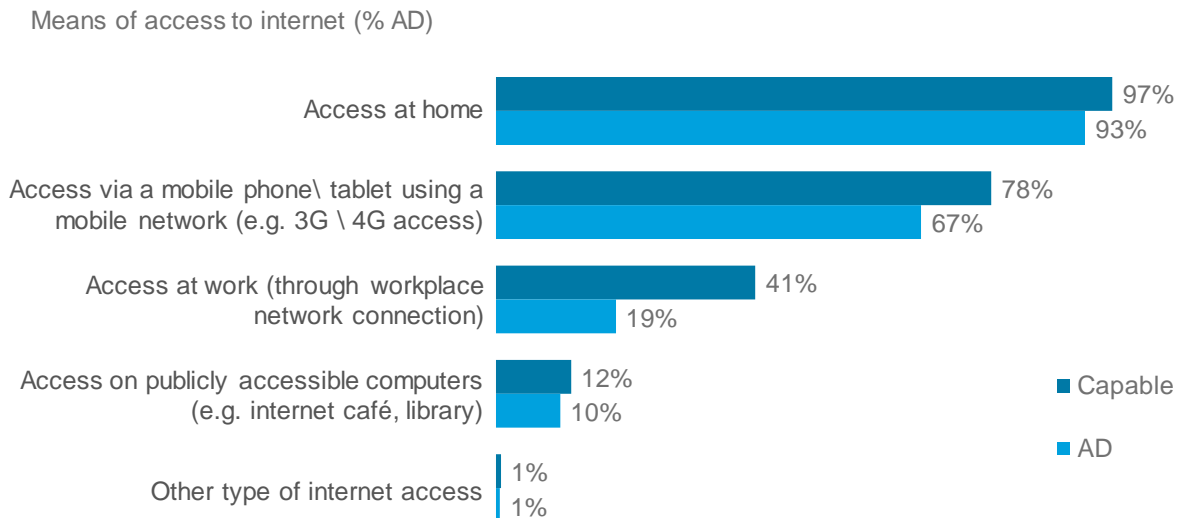
Figure 5.2 Activities conducted online by the AD group (including lapsed DE internet users)



BASE: Assisted Digital including lapsed Digitally Excluded internet users (1,522)
SOURCE: Q.B2 Which, if any, of these have you done yourself in the last 12 months?

Most (93%) of those in the AD group were able to access the internet at home and two thirds (67%) also had access via a mobile phone or tablet using a mobile network (Figure 5.3). AD adults were slightly less likely (67%) than Digitally Capable adults (78%) to have access to the internet via mobile devices. Almost all self-employed members of the AD group had access to the internet at home (97%) and reported high levels of internet access via mobile phone or tablet (79%) and at work (31%).

Figure 5.3 How the AD group accesses the internet



BASE: Capable (3,196), AD (1,423)
SOURCE: Q.L Which of the following do you currently ever use, if at all? Please choose all that apply

6. Barriers to increasing internet usage

Key findings	
<p>Barriers to increased internet usage among AD population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AD barriers to getting online: Lack of interest was the most common barrier, with 27% of ADs reporting that they 'don't want to use the internet' or would 'rather do things without using the internet' (21%) • Security/fraud concerns: the impact of going online and the potential for online fraud was also a concern for ADs (20%) 	<p>Barriers to increased internet usage among DE population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DE barriers to getting online: Like ADs, DEs also reported a lack of interest as the main barrier to going online, with 40% reporting that they do not want to use the internet • Lack of access: For DEs not having a computer (36%) was also a significant barrier to getting online

Chapter 6 explores the attitudes, abilities and situations which prevent people from using the internet more often. This, and subsequent, chapters mainly look at the AD and DE groups given HMRCs focus on supporting those customers less accustomed to accessing services online.

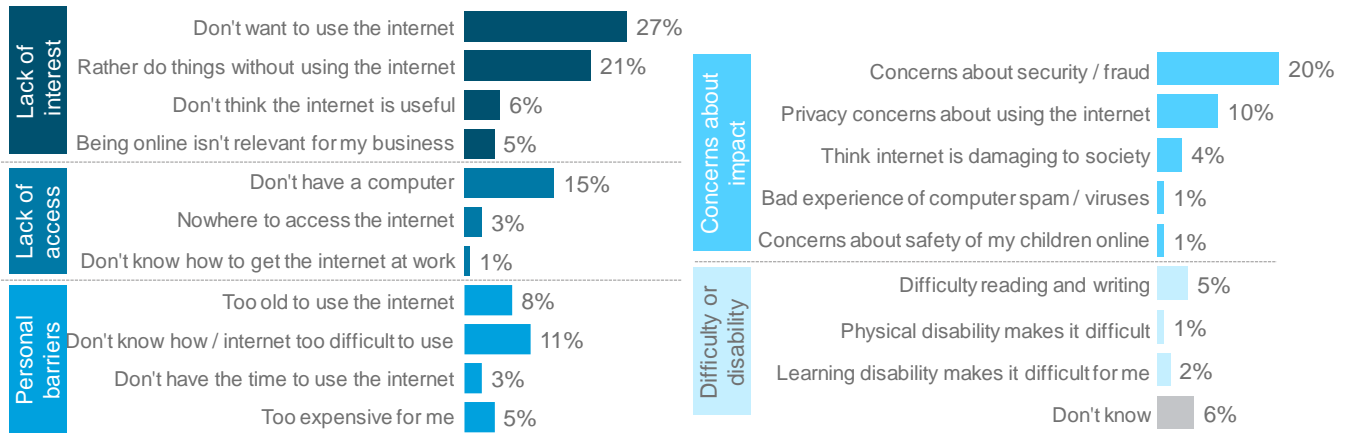
6.1 Reasons for not using the internet

Those in the AD population who used the internet less than once a week were asked the reasons for their infrequent usage. These reasons fell into five main categories: lack of interest; lack of access; personal barriers; concerns about the impact of going online; and difficulties arising from physical or learning difficulties and disabilities (Figure 6.1).

The most common responses related to a lack of interest, with around a quarter (27%) reporting that they simply didn't want to use the internet (more) and a fifth (21%) saying that they preferred to do things without using the internet. Concerns about security or fraud were also relatively common for this group (20%) and privacy concerns also featured (10%). Around one in seven (15%) reported that they didn't have a computer which they could use, while around one in ten reported that they either thought they were too old to use the internet (8%) or found it too difficult to use (11%).

Figure 6.1 Reasons for not using the internet more frequently among those who go online less than once per week

Reasons for not using the internet (% AD who use it less often than weekly)



BASE: AD who use internet less than weekly (127)

SOURCE: Q.D1 Which, if any, of the following are the main reasons for you not using the internet more frequently?

The most common barriers among the DE population related to a lack of interest (simply not wanting to use the internet was mentioned by 40% of the DE population) and lack of access (36% did not have a computer) (Figure 6.2). The perception that the internet was for younger people was relatively widespread, with one in five (20%) reporting that they thought they were too old to use the internet. Lack of knowledge about how to use the internet or finding it too difficult was also a key barrier. Concerns around security and privacy were less widespread among the DE population than they were among AD users.

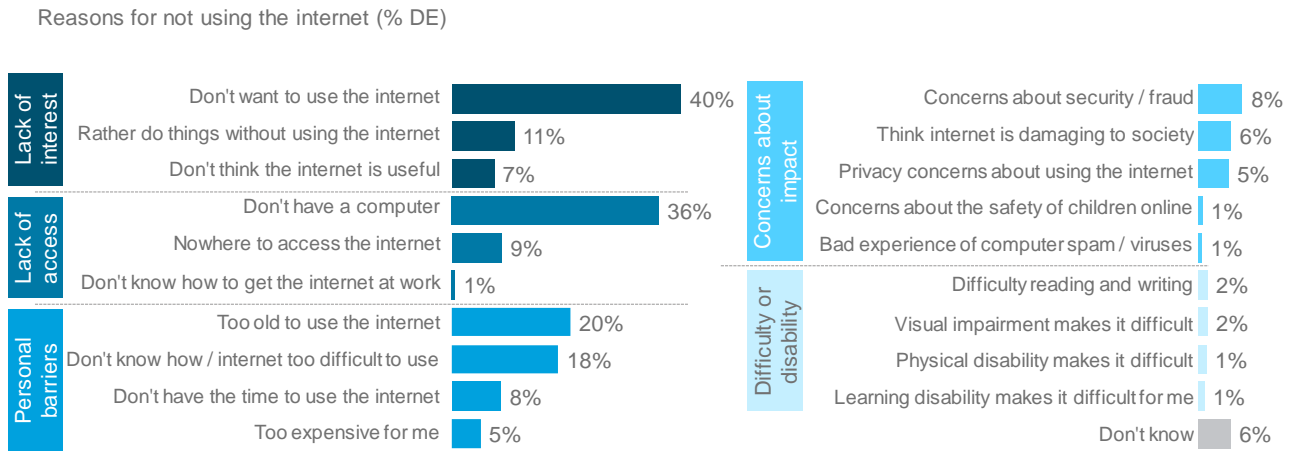
"I've made it to 92 without having to use the internet, I'm fine!"

Participant, DE

Among both AD and DE adults, physical (1% of each group) or learning (2% and 1% respectively) disabilities were rarely mentioned as barriers to internet usage. The proportions were low in comparison to the number of people reporting that they had a disability (see Chapter 3), suggesting that even among those with a disability it was unlikely to prevent them from going online. However, it appears that for some DE respondents health conditions and age were related. For example, 31% of those with vision or hearing challenges reported that they were 'too old to use the internet'⁷.

⁷ NB – relatively low base size of 92 for those with vision or hearing challenges.

Figure 6.2 Reasons for not using the internet among those in the DE population



BASE: All DE (1,313)

SOURCE: Q.D1 You said that you don't use the internet for personal use. Which, if any, of the following are the main reasons for you not using the internet currently?

Self-employed respondents who used the internet less frequently for work than personal reasons were asked why this was. Among the whole self-employed population (including Digitally Capable, AD and DE) 30% said being online wasn't relevant for their business, 18% said that they prefer to do things the way they always have and 15% said they did not use the internet as an agent deals with their tax affairs (Figure 6.3).

Lack of access (7%), concerns about security/fraud (7%) or privacy (4%) were not widespread barriers to working online among business owners.

Figure 6.3 Reasons for using the internet more frequently for personal than business use

BASE: AIIA adults 16+ who are self-employed (180)

SOURCE: Q.D2 Which, if any, of the following are the main reasons you use the internet more for personal use?

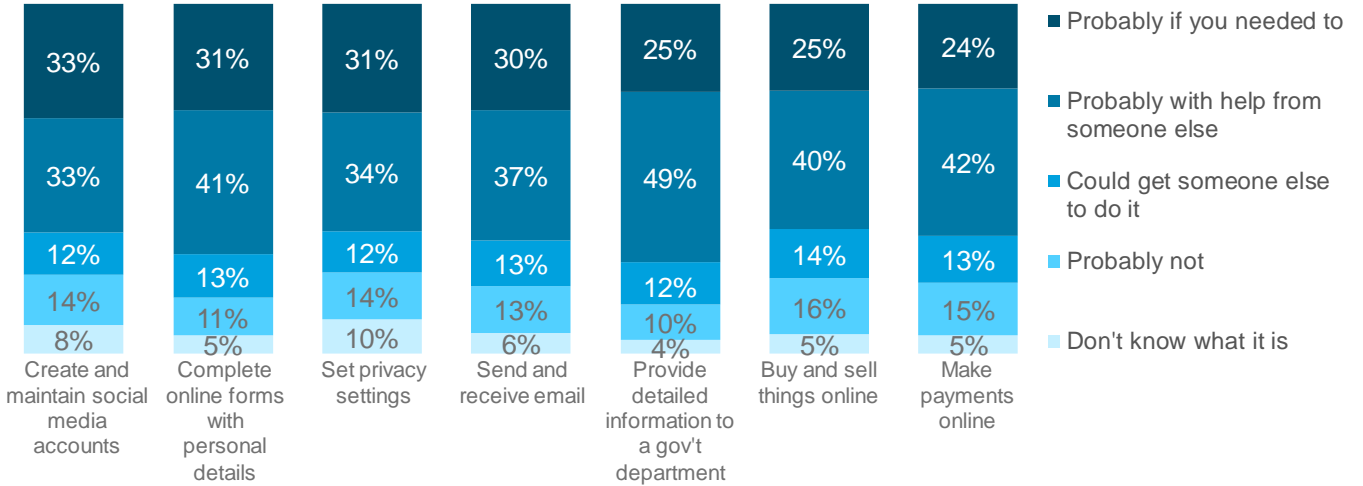
6.2 Ability to complete specific IT tasks

Those in the AD group who said they had never done specific online tasks were asked if they thought they would be able to do them if necessary. Even among a group with additional support needs, most people reported that they would be able to complete an unfamiliar online task either on their own or with help from a friend or family member (Figure 6.4). Between a quarter and a third felt that they would be able to manage a new task online independently, suggesting that there is scope to encourage many of those who don't already interact with HMRC online to do so.

However, a minority of people in the AD group would be harder to engage. They said that they would probably not be able to complete any of the online tasks they had not previously done, even with support. This ranged from 10% for providing detailed information to a government department up to 16% for buying and selling things online. Among those who said they would be unable to complete at least one new task, even with support from friends or family members, 73% said they would be unable to complete more than one task.

Figure 6.4 Ability to complete specific online tasks which they have not previously done

What help would need to be able to go online (% AD who have not done each of these in last 12 months)



BASE: AD who had NOT used the internet for any of these in last 12 months; Send and receive email (406); Complete online forms (902); Buying and selling things online (782); Make payments online (788); Setting privacy settings (1059); Provide information to a government department online (1215); Create and maintain social media accounts (1,027).
 SOURCE: Q.B3 For each of the following things you said you hadn't done, can you tell if you probably could do it yourself if you needed to, probably could do it with help from someone else, could get someone else to do it for you, or probably couldn't do it?

7. Current ways of interacting with HMRC

Key findings

- AD and DE customers **lack confidence** when dealing with taxes and benefits
- AD and DE customers have used relatively **few government services** in the last year
- AD and DE **customers have infrequent contact with HMRC**
- 16% of AD only have had online dealings with HMRC in last year
- **Uptake of HMRC's online service was generally low** because as AD customers prefer the phone; some ADs did not realise there were online options, other ADs were worried about online **security**

In this chapter we look specifically at how HMRC customers use the internet, their digital confidence and their engagement with government services.

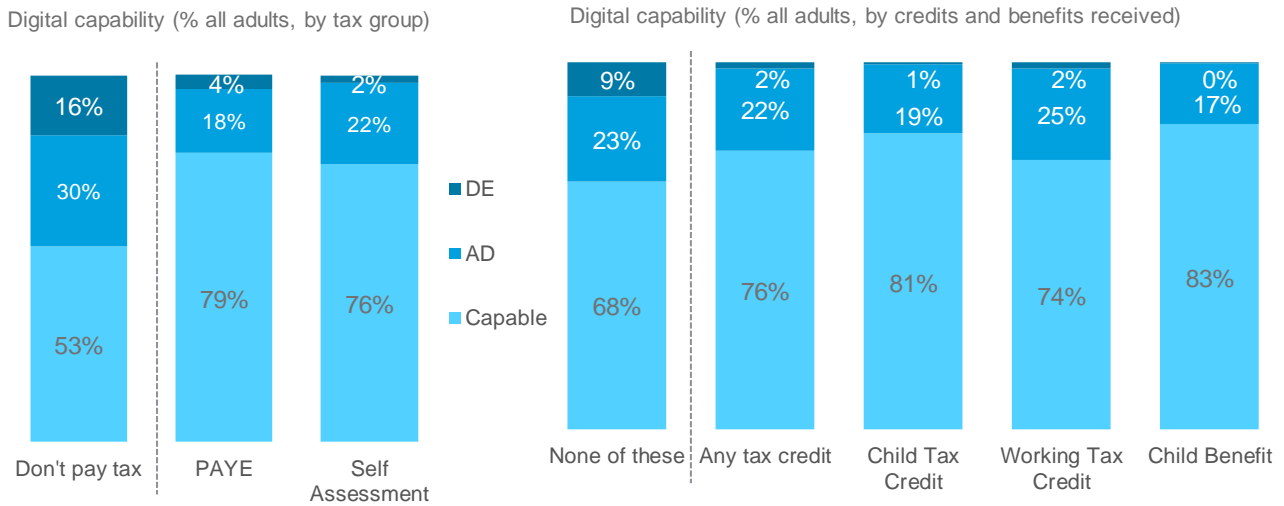
7.1 Digital support status of HMRC customer groups

Most people who interact with HMRC are taxpayers. Among both PAYE and Self Assessment groups the proportion who need AD or DE support was lower than among those who don't pay tax at all (Figure 7.1).

Although most of those who pay tax via PAYE (79%) and SA (76%) were Digitally Capable there is still a need for digital support among these customer groups. Around one in five of both PAYE customers (18%) and SA customers (22%) said that they need help to interact with government services online. While a small minority of PAYE (4%) and SA customers (2%) were DE and never go online. Adults who do not pay tax were more likely to be AD (30%) or DE (16%).

Respondents were also asked about their receipt of a range of benefits. Those who received tax credits were less likely than the general population to be DE (2%) with 22% the AD group. Therefore, Tax Credit recipients were likely to go online most days, even if some needed some support to engage with government services.

Figure 7.1 Digital capability of HMRC customer groups



BASE: Non tax payers (2,352), PAYE (2,847), Self Assessment (986)
 SOURCE: Q.A2 Please could you tell me which of the following best describes how you pay your taxes?
 BASE: None of these (4,630), Any tax credit (749), Child tax credit (575), Working tax credit (217), Child benefit (1,000)
 SOURCE: Q.A3 Which, if any, of the following state benefits or allowances are you currently receiving?

7.2 Confidence in dealing with tax and benefit issues

In general, there were low levels of confidence dealing with tax and benefit affairs across the AD groups. Even among the Digitally Capable group 10% reported low levels of confidence (i.e. rating their confidence with a score of 1 or 2 out of 5). Among the AD group, 45% reported low levels of confidence and a majority (62%) of the DE group said they were not confident dealing with tax and benefit affairs independently (Figure 7.2).

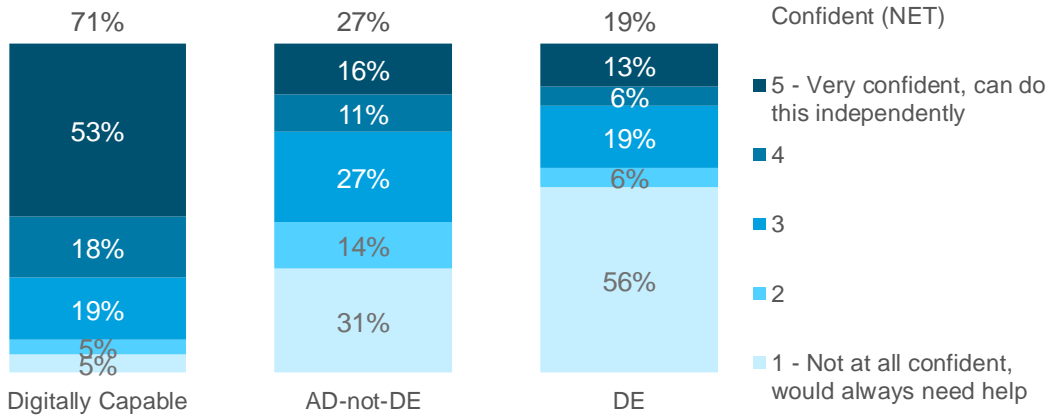
Among the AD population, those with health issues or disabilities were more likely to report low levels of confidence in tax/benefit affairs. Almost half (48%) of AD adults with hearing or vision challenges reported that they were 'not at all confident'; the proportion was similar for those with mental health (47%) and learning, memory or social/behavioural challenges (47%)⁸.

Again, within the AD population HMRC customers who pay tax through Self Assessment (25%) or who pay tax via PAYE (21%) were more likely to say they are confident dealing with their tax and benefit affairs.

⁸ NB – relatively low base sizes when examining each of these in isolation. Vision/hearing base = 74; Mental health base = 66; Learning/memory/social/behavioural base = 92

Figure 7.2 Level of digital support groups' confidence in dealing with tax and benefit affairs

Confidence in dealing with taxes and benefits independently
(% all adults, by digital status)



BASE: Digitally Capable (3,196), AD (1,423), DE (1,313)

SOURCE: Q.C4 In general, how confident are you dealing with your tax and / or benefit affairs? Please answer on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is very confident and 1 is not at all confident

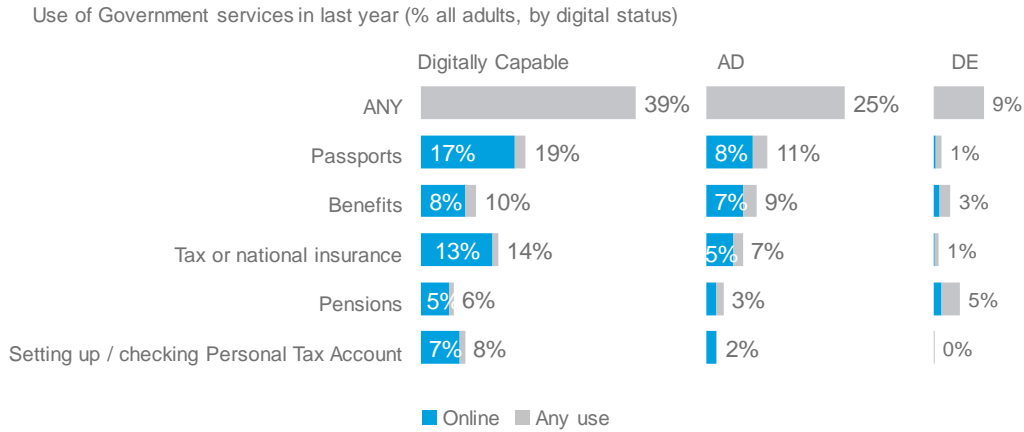
Even among those who were relatively confident navigating the internet, the low levels of confidence engaging with tax and benefit affairs among the AD group were likely to discourage these groups from engaging with HMRC online. Lack of familiarity and comfort with the task itself compounds their lack of digital confidence and further decreases the likelihood that they will attempt to use HMRC online services unless they are provided with support and reassurance.

7.3 Online and offline engagement with government services

In the past year around one in four (39%) of the Digitally Capable population used government services (either online or offline) (Figure 7.3). This was a higher proportion than in the AD (25%) and the DE populations (9%). For both the Digitally Capable and AD populations, most of those who engaged with each given service had done so online.

In the Digitally Capable group, the most widely used services related to passports (19% overall and 17% via online channels), tax or national insurance (14% overall and 13% online) and benefits (10% overall and 8% online). Those in the AD group were also most likely to have used the passport service (11% overall and 8% online). Benefits were the second most commonly used service for this group (9% overall and 7% online). Among the DE group, interactions were almost exclusively limited to benefits (3% overall and 1% online) and pensions (5% overall and 1% online).

Figure 7.3 Online and offline usage of services by support group⁹



BASE: Digitally Capable (3,196), AD (1,423), DE (1,313)
 SOURCE: Q.C1 In the last year, have you used or applied for Government services in any of the following areas? Q.C2 And in which of these areas did you use or apply for the government service via the internet?

Those who had not used any of the government services online were asked why.¹⁰ Access to the internet was the primary stated barrier for those in the DE group (56%) (Figure 7.4). A lack of knowledge about how to use the internet was also cited widely (43%), while around one in seven said that they preferred to deal with things over the phone (15%).

In the AD group, the primary barrier to using online government services appeared to be driven by preference rather than need. One in three (33%) reported that they preferred to deal with things over the phone. A lack of knowledge that government services were offered online was also mentioned as a key factor (16%) and concerns over security or fraud (13%) and lack of confidence in online skills (13%) also featured.

The AD group’s preference for dealing with HMRC over the telephone presents an opportunity to address some of these issues. HMRC helpline staff, who are generally trusted by callers, are in a strong position to advise customers about online services and provide guidance and reassurance on security.

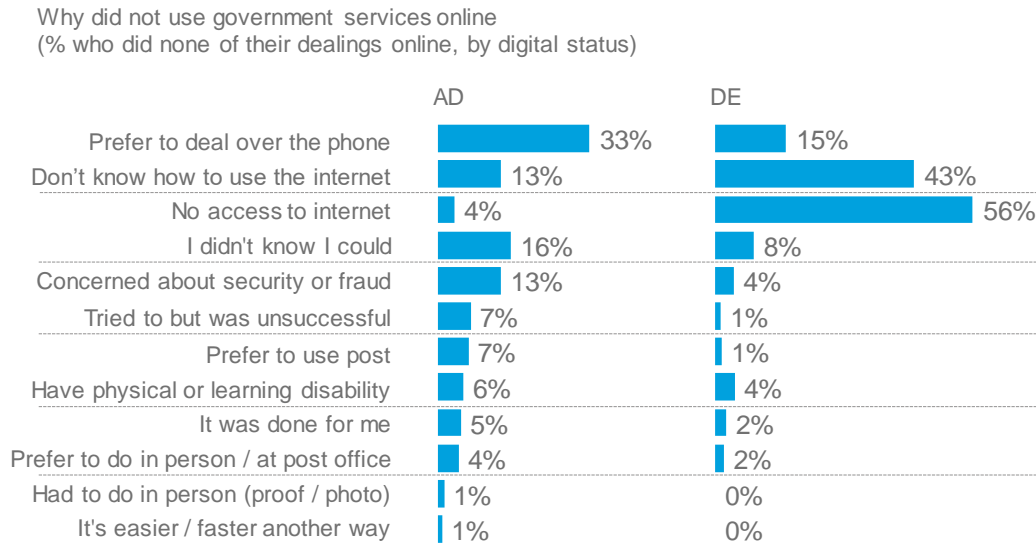
“When you speak to someone on the phone, you have someone there to do it for you, you have faith in them - you’ve placed your confidence in them to get the job done”

Participant AD

⁹ DE adults, by definition, did not use the internet personally to use government services. However qualitative participants reported asking friends and family members to complete tasks online on their behalf.

¹⁰ Figure 7.4 summarises this data, but please note that the base sizes for the AD group (n=95) and DE group (n=88) are relatively low. As such, these findings should be taken as indicative.

Figure 7.4 Reasons for not using government services online by support group



BASE: Those who have not done any of their Government dealings online: AD (95*), DE (88*) *CAUTION SMALL BASE SIZES
SOURCE: Q.C3 Why didn't you use the internet to deal with it?

7.4 Frequency of HMRC contact and usage of the Department's digital services

In addition to confidence with tax and benefit affairs, familiarity with processes can impact customers' willingness to engage with a new service. The survey results showed that most people were relatively unfamiliar with HMRC's processes as they rarely get in touch.

Qualitative participants from both the AD and DE groups who paid tax via PAYE and who were taxed at source, struggled to think of reasons to contact HMRC. Contact with HMRC was typically initiated by participants responding to letters from HMRC as necessary. Spontaneous contact prompted by customers tended to be prompted by a need to notify HMRC of a change in circumstances.

The survey showed that contact between the AD population and HMRC was infrequent for most customers. Only a quarter (27%) of the AD population had been in touch with HMRC at least once over the past 12 months. This fell to only 7% among the DE population. More frequent contact was rare. (Figure 7.5).

Within the AD group, those who were self-employed were more likely to have been in touch with HMRC in the past year (52%) and frequent contacts were also more common for self-employed AD adults (7% had been in contact with HMRC four or more times in the past year).

Online interactions with HMRC were also rare. Among the AD group, 16% reported any kind of digital interaction with HMRC, of which receiving emails (9%) and searching for information on HMRC webpages (7%) were most common. One in twenty-five (4%) of the AD group had accessed HMRC digital services via their Personal Tax

Account (PTA) or Business Tax Account (BTA). Engagement with HMRC via a mobile app was relatively uncommon (1%) (Figure 7.6).

Use of online services was higher among those AD customers who pay tax via PAYE (22%) and SA customers (35%).

The qualitative interviews showed that contact with HMRC could be relatively limited even among self-employed customers who paid tax via SA. More confident ADs were more likely to ‘dig about’ to try and find solutions. Less confident ADs tended to use paid agents to complete their Self Assessment tax return for them and so their contact with HMRC could be very limited.

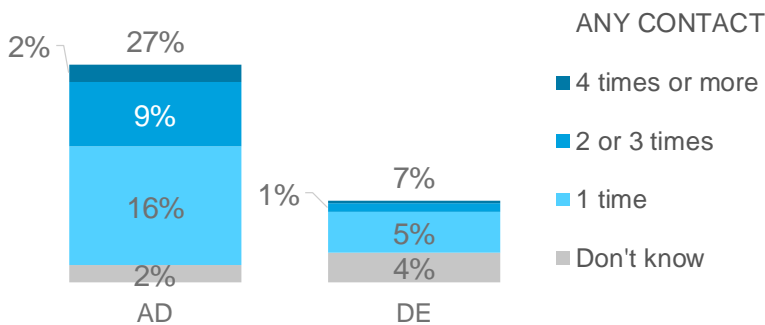
By definition, the DE group did not make use of HMRC’s digital services. The qualitative interviews showed that they preferred to contact HMRC by telephone. This was also the first-choice method of contact for less digitally confident ADs. More confident AD participants mentioned looking for answers online initially but then resorting to the telephone if a solution was not readily available. This was reflective both of their confidence in using the internet and in tax. ADs across the confidence spectrum referred to wanting to feel ‘reassured’ that their interpretation of information was correct by having it confirmed directly by a tax advisor over the phone.

“I normally look online and if it’s not 100% clear I will call them”

Participant, AD

Figure 7.5 Frequency of contact with HMRC

How often had contact with HMRC in last 12 months
(% all adults, by digital status)

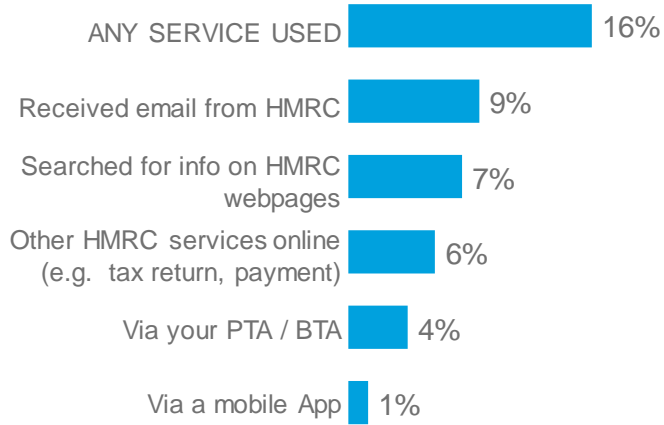


BASE: All respondents: AD (1,423), DE (1,313)

SOURCE: Q.E2 How often have you had contact with HMRC in the last 12 months?

Figure 7.6 Frequency of specific digital interactions

Use of HMRC digital services in last 12 months
(% AD)



BASE: AD (1,423)

SOURCE: Q.C5 In which of the following ways have you had any online dealings with HMRC over the last 12 months?

8. The impact of digital support needs on HMRC

Key findings

- ADs could lack confidence in handling their tax affairs themselves and therefore, preferred someone familiar with tax to help them. They did not see a need/point to learning how to do something that they do not do often.
- Due to the infrequent need to deal with HMRC, being on the telephone with HMRC was not perceived as a time burden by DEs. As their need can be satisfied through these channels there was no motivation for them to develop their skills and move online.
- There is a greater potential to encourage ADs to move online as 35% report that they would be willing to use HMRC online services or were already doing so compared to only 3% in the DE group.

Chapter 8 looks at how HMRC's AD and DE customers get support to deal with their tax and benefits affairs. We go on to look at their awareness and perceptions of HMRC's digital support needs.

8.1 Support in dealing with HMRC

Figure 8.1 shows the current sources of support used when dealing with HMRC – the framing of this question was not time-specific, and responses may therefore relate to interactions outside the 'past 12 month' timeframe which applied to the data in Chapter 5.

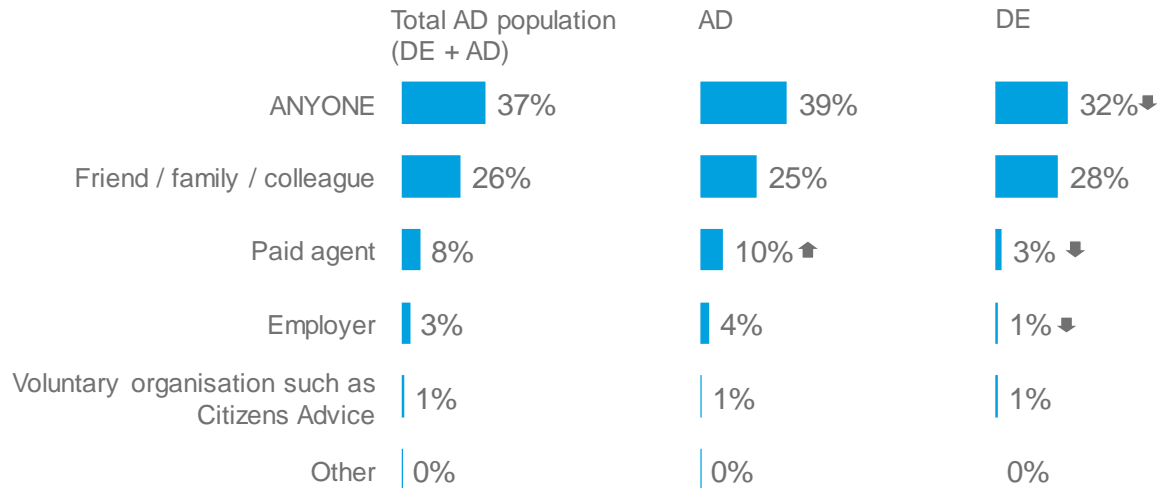
Around a third of the total AD population mentioned any source of help in their dealings with HMRC. Of these, support from friends, family or colleagues was the most common (26%), followed by advice from a paid agent (8%) or employer (3%) (Figure 8.1). The total AD population did not generally engage with voluntary organisations such as Citizens Advice to support their HMRC interactions (1%).

The DE group were less likely than the total AD population to have help in dealing with HMRC (32%), which may relate to the fact that this group have fewer annual interactions with HMRC, as discussed in section 7.4. This was likely to be at least partly explained by the higher proportion of older and retired people within the DE population.

Those in the AD group were more likely to receive help from paid agents (10%). Within the AD group, Tax Credit recipients were more likely to report using a friend, family member or colleague (39%) and those who paid tax through Self Assessment were more likely to report receiving help from a paid agent (48%).

Figure 8.1 Sources of help when dealing with HMRC

Who helps deal with HMRC (% all adults, by digital status)



↑↓ Significantly higher/lower than AD total

BASE: All respondents: AD total (2,736), AD (1,423), DE (1,313)

SOURCE: Q.E3 Does anyone help you with your dealings with HMRC?

Given a free choice of support for future interactions with HMRC, the AD group was more likely to favour online support from HMRC; 22% mentioned this as one of their top three support sources, compared to only 2% of the DE group (Figure 8.2). The AD group was also more likely to report that they would work the issue out or find the necessary information themselves, for example online (19% mentioned this in their top three, compared to 5% of the DE group).

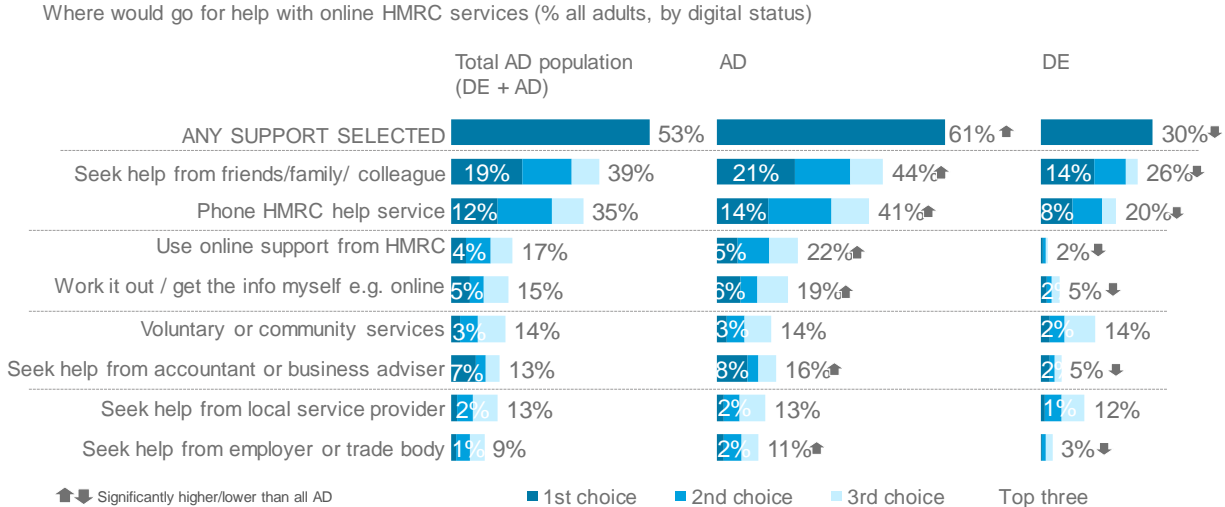
Preference for support from voluntary or community services was the same for both the AD group and the DE group (14% of each mentioned it in their top three).

While top three preference for support from an accountant or business adviser was relatively low (13% of the total AD group), this was the third most frequently cited '1st choice' in the total AD population (7%) and the AD group (8%).

Help from employers or trade bodies was the least popular of the prompted options, mentioned by 1% of the total AD population as their first choice and 9% as one of their top 3 choices.

Within the total AD population those with issues relating to health, disability and learning difficulties were more likely to cite support from voluntary or community services in their top three, particularly those with mental health issues (48%).

Figure 8.2 Preferred sources of support if needed help with HMRC online services



BASE: All respondents: AD total (2,736), AD (1,423), DE (1,313)
 SOURCE: Q.E1 If you wanted help or support with online HMRC services, which, if any, of the following would you be most likely to choose? Please tell me which would be your first choice? Now please tell me which would be your second choice. And now which would be your third choice?

When asked how they would prefer to interact with HMRC for each of a range of specific activities, telephone communication was the preferred option within the total AD population (Figure 8.3). This applied to all four of the prompted activities: providing simple information about yourself such as updating your details; making or receiving payments; providing detailed information about yourself such as a change of circumstances; and getting specific or detailed information.

The telephone was particularly preferred when it came to providing or getting *detailed* information. Four in ten of the total AD population said they preferred the telephone for providing detailed information (41%) and for getting detailed information (40%).

There was a feeling that participants could be anxious about misinterpreting guidance somehow if they were reading it online. Therefore, qualitative participants stated that they would be more likely to contact HMRC by phone as it was reassuring to receive verbal confirmation that they had correctly understood or done the right thing. Participants saw telephoning as a way to minimise the risk of miscommunication.

It was also anticipated that phoning HMRC would be easier and less stressful than having to navigate the website – this was particularly echoed by participants who did not speak English as their first language.

“I would look online but I would probably also ring them to check I haven’t misinterpreted [the guidance]”

Participant, AD

Those in the AD group were equally happy to deal with more straightforward tasks by telephone or online. When it came to providing *simple* information about themselves, 36% of the AD group said they would prefer the

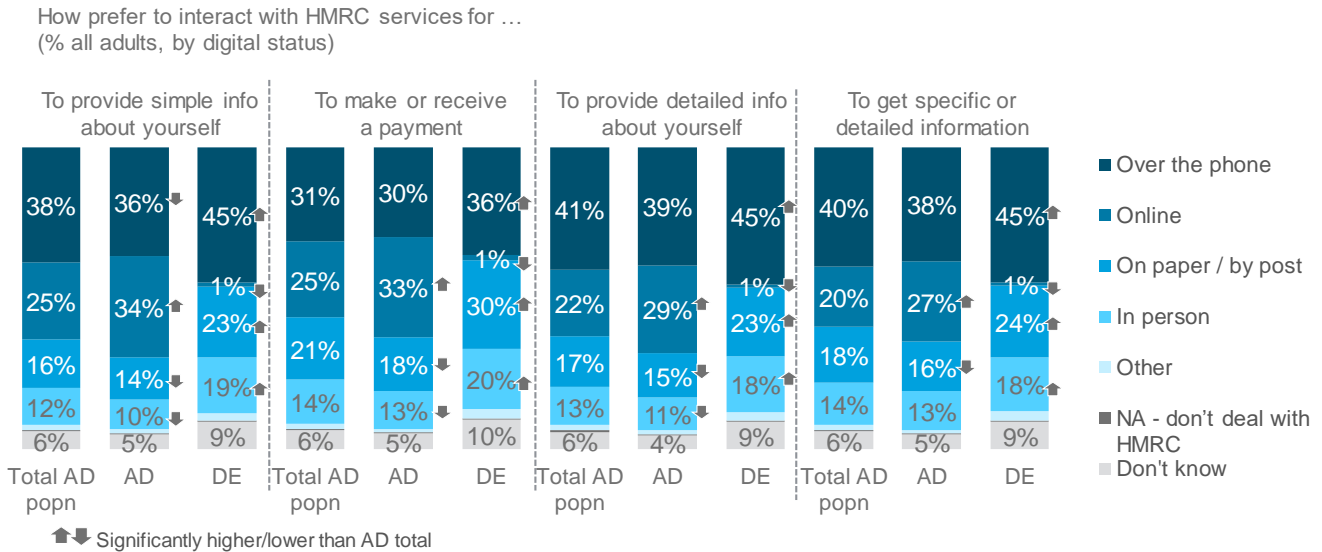
telephone and 34% would prefer to do this online. Their preference in terms of making or receiving payments slightly favoured online (33%) over telephone (30%) interactions.

Within the AD group, self-employed customers were more likely to prefer communicating online. More than 40% of self-employed customers preferred to provide simple information (44%) or detailed information (42%) online. And more than half (53%) preferred to make or receive payments online. A third (33%) said that they would prefer to get information from HMRC online.

The DE group, unsurprisingly, did not widely report that they would like to conduct any of the interactions online (1% for each). Telephone was clearly their preferred means of communication for providing simple or detailed information about themselves (45% in both cases) and for getting specific or detailed information (also 45%). Their preference in terms of making or receiving payments was less clear-cut, with 36% favouring telephone interactions and 30% preferring to do this using paper/by post. Around a fifth of the DE group reported that they would prefer in-person contact for each interaction (ranging from 18% to 20% for each).

Online interactions were favoured less by those with issues relating to health, disability and learning difficulties.

Figure 8.3 Preferred means of communicating with HMRC on different topics



BASE: All respondents: AD total (2,736), AD (1,423), DE (1,313)

SOURCE: Q.E4 For each of the following situations how would you typically prefer to interact with HMRC?

8.2 Customer response to current digital support services

8.2.1 How willing are customers to deal with tax affairs online?

Around a third (35%) of the AD group reported that they would be willing to deal with HMRC online or already did so. Of these, 16% already dealt with HMRC online and a further 11% said they would be very willing (a score of five on the five-point willingness scale). A third of the AD population (34%) reported that they would not be at all

willing to deal with HMRC online (a score of one on the willingness scale) (Figure 8.4). Within the AD group, PAYE customers (43%) and SA customers (51%) were more likely to either say they already dealt with HMRC online or would be willing to do so.

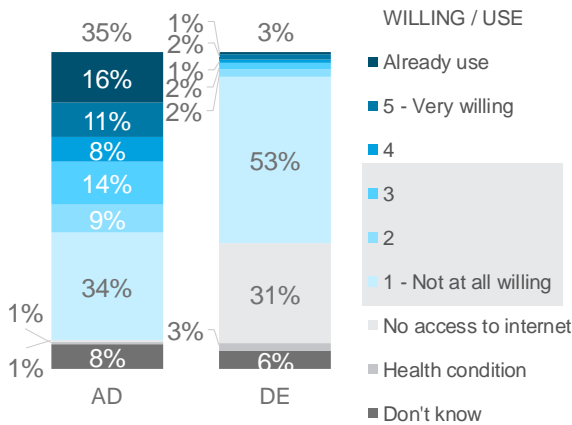
Willingness to deal with HMRC online was, as would be expected, much lower for the DE group. Around half (53%) reported that they would not be at all willing (a score of one on the willingness scale) and a further third (31%) explicitly said that they had no access to the internet and could not therefore give a willingness score. Overall, 3% of the DE population reported that they would be willing to deal with HMRC online. In the qualitative interviews DE participants stated that, due to their DE status, HMRCs online services were irrelevant to them and therefore there was no incentive to go online.

“I cannot see why I would ever need this service”

Participant, DE

Figure 8.4 Willingness to deal with HMRC online

Willingness to deal with HMRC online
(% all adults, by digital status)



BASE: All respondents

SOURCE: Q.C6 How willing or unwilling are you to deal with your tax and benefit affairs online? Please answer on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is very willing and 1 is not at all willing [Rebased on all]

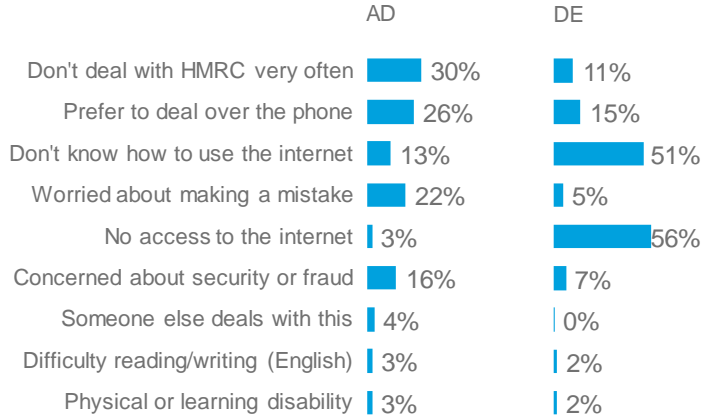
Those who gave a score of one to three on the willingness scale were considered to be unwilling to deal with HMRC and were asked why this was (Figure 8.5). For the AD group, the most frequently cited reasons were that they didn't deal with HMRC very often (30%) and preferred to deal with HMRC by telephone (26%). However, reflecting their general lack of confidence in completing governmental tasks online, they were worried about making a mistake online (22%), or had concerns about their level of online knowledge (13%). Security or fraud issues also featured (16%).

Self-employed ADs were more likely to say that they were unwilling to deal with HMRC online as someone else deals with their tax and benefit affairs for them (19%).

For the DE group, the primary barriers to dealing with HMRC online were, again, lack of access to the internet (56%) and their lack of knowledge about how to use the internet (51%).

Figure 8.5 Barriers to dealing with HMRC online

Why unwilling to deal with HMRC online (% all adults unwilling to deal with HMRC online, by digital status)



BASE: All unwilling to deal with HMRC online: AD (1,423/815), DE (1,313/746)

SOURCE: Q.C7 Why wouldn't you be willing to deal with your tax and benefit affairs online? SHOWING RESPONSES FOR 3% OR MORE

8.2.2 Confidence in using Personal/Business Tax Accounts

As discussed in section 7.4, 4% of the AD group reported that they already used a Personal Tax Account (PTA) or Business Tax Account (BTA) (Figure 7.6). Around a quarter (23%) had already used a PTA/BTA or said they would be at least fairly confident in doing so. A further 6% of the AD population said that they would not be very confident and would definitely need some help to get set up and use the account.

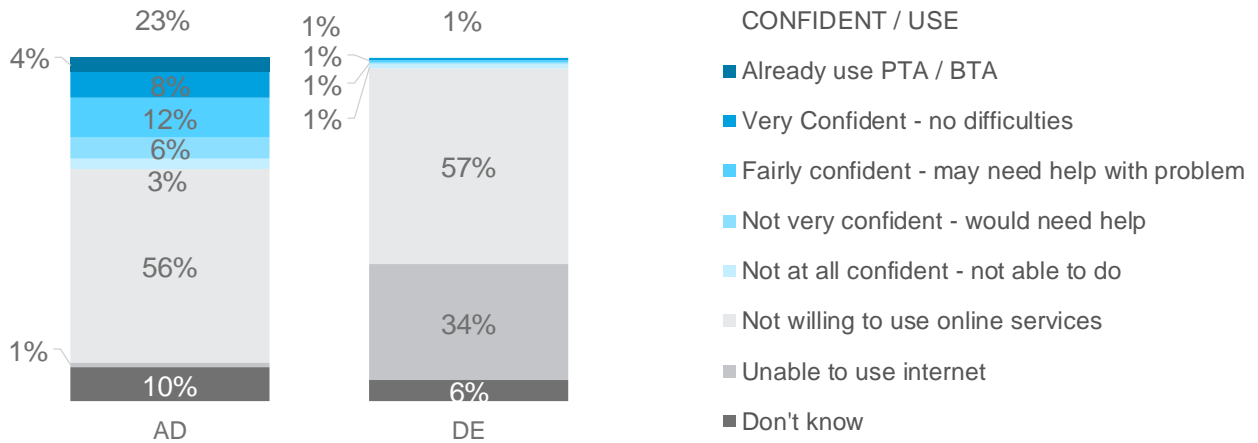
However, more than half (56%) of the AD group said that they would not be willing to use online services and 3% said that they were not at all confident and would not be able to use online PTA/BTAs (Figure 8.6).

AD customers who pay tax through PAYE (29%) or SA (36%) were more likely than the AD group generally to either use a PTA/BTA or feel confident using an account.

In the DE population, there was very limited confidence in being able to use a PTA/BTA (1% reported being either 'very confident' or 'fairly confident'). The majority said that they would not be willing to use online services (57%) and a further third said that they were unable to use the internet (34%).

Figure 8.6 Confidence using Personal / Business Tax Account

Confidence in using Personal Tax Account / Business Tax Account
(% all adults, by digital status and employment status)



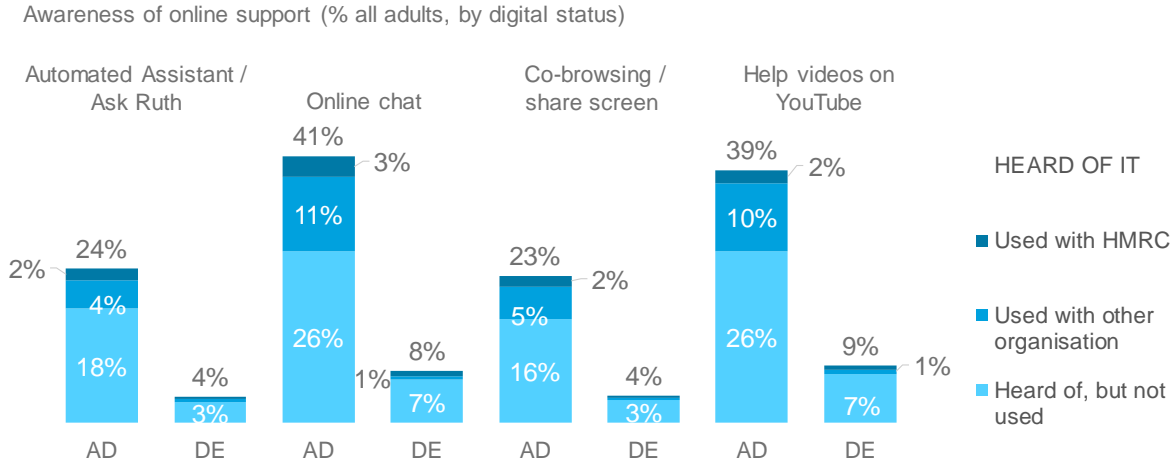
BASE: AD (1,423), DE (1,313), Self-employed (696)
 SOURCE: Q.C8 The PTA / BTA is an online service, which lets you manage your tax and benefit affairs online. How confident would you feel doing this? [Rebased on all]

Respondents were asked if they had heard of, or used (either with HMRC or another organisation), the following online service help tools: Automated Assistant/Ask Ruth; Online chat; Co-browsing/share screen; and YouTube help videos

In the AD group, awareness was highest for HMRC’s online chat (41%) and help videos on YouTube (39%). Around a quarter reported that they were aware of the automated assistant/Ask Ruth (24%) and co-browsing/share screen (23%) (Figure 8.7). Usage of these HMRC support tools was less widespread (3% for online chat and 2% for each of the others). Awareness of all online support tools was lower among the DE group, reflecting their lack of familiarity with the internet. AD customers who pay tax via PAYE (5%) or SA (8%) were more likely to have used HMRC’s online chat. AD customers who pay tax via SA were also more likely than the AD group in general to have used HMRC’s help videos on YouTube (6%).

Around one in ten of the AD group had used online chat (11%) or help videos on YouTube (10%) in the context of an organisation other than HMRC.

Figure 8.7 Awareness and usage of online support tools



BASE: AD (1,423), DE (1,313)

SOURCE: Q.C9 Before today, which, if any, of the following HMRC online functions have you used or heard of?

8.3 Qualitative perceptions of HMRC’s online support tools

In the qualitative research, AD customers views of some of these online support tools. Automated Assistant, Online Chat and Help Videos on YouTube were discussed in more depth.

8.3.1 Automated Assistant / Ask Ruth



Participants in the qualitative research had minimal experience of automated assistants and expressed a degree of scepticism that ‘Ask Ruth’ would be able to handle complex queries or effectively cater for those with language barriers. Concerns were also raised about how time consuming it might be to engage with Ask Ruth if their typing was slow. There were anecdotal concerns that the session might be disconnected prematurely due to slow typing.

8.3.2 Online chat



Experience of online chat tools was more widespread, particularly in the context of commercial providers. Nevertheless, some reservations were expressed about ease of use, particularly compared to telephone support services. Typing skills were again flagged as an issue for some users and there was some fear of miscommunication. Communicating by text was feared to be more easily misinterpreted than spoken conversation. This was particularly important for those participants who were anxious about interacting with HMRC. These participants were also concerned that they might struggle to articulate their problem without being able to explain themselves or being prompted by the advisor on the telephone. There were therefore some doubts over whether the online chat function would be as effective as the telephone. This challenge was anticipated by participants with lower literacy levels as well as those with lower IT capability. Unfamiliar technology and processes combined with anxiety over typing skills could lead customers to bypass to online chat for the 'safer option' of the telephone.

Experience of online chat offered by other providers was mixed. While some had negative experiences with other providers' online chat systems, which impacted on their willingness to engage with HMRC's system, others were very positive, particularly in terms of the speed of response relative to telephone services.

"I wouldn't be comfortable doing it that way, I'm not very good at typing so to have a conversation would take a long time"

Participant, AD

"There are always going to be instances when people are misunderstood"

Participant, AD

8.3.3 Help videos on YouTube



While there was widespread knowledge of help videos for other providers (or individuals) on YouTube, there was little familiarity with HMRC's offering. Participants said that help videos were useful and engaging for day to day topics such as DIY, but there were concerns about finding relevant HMRC videos. They were not sure that they would know what to search for to find appropriate content and would feel more confident if links to relevant videos were embedded directly into HMRC's website. There was also some difficulty envisaging what topics these videos might cover and that videos wouldn't be flexible enough to deal with specific situations. Language barriers for non-native English speakers were also flagged as an important consideration. Nevertheless, if the clips were concise (a maximum of 90 seconds) and visually engaging, there was a perception that they could be effective, particularly for dealing with demonstrating simple 'how to' actions.

9. How could Assisted Digital and Digitally Excluded support be refined?

Key findings

- **Technological awareness and engagement:** ADs' position on the AD spectrum impacts their technological awareness and engagement. Those who were more confident were more likely to adopt a **'trial and error' approach** when using online services. They were less likely to be worried about online security and scams.
- **Barriers to using HMRC digital services: infrequent contact with HMRC was the biggest barrier to using online services.** Many among the SA population would prefer to use paid agents as they were also **fearful** about making a **mistake**.
- **Customer expectations:** Expectations of HMRC online services were influenced by experiences of **commercial support services**. More digitally confident ADs expected HMRC online services to match these support services in **resolving their issues quickly**. Less digitally confident ADs did not expect HMRC to resolve complex issues immediately but did expect **clear and frequent communication and updates** throughout.
- **Potential drivers of uptake: Both ADs and DEs said that support from a friend or family member was likely to encourage them to interact with HMRC online.** ADs also mentioned improvements in **online chat** and the **development / improvement of apps** and **telephone support** to supplement online support. DEs cited needing **internet access** in order to get online.
- **Messaging options:** Participants reported wanting messages that are **credible** with **clear, relevant instructions** to encourage them to try using online support services.
- **Supporting AD customers to use online services:** Support offered needs to reflect customers' differing levels of confidence and experience using online support tools. This could include **using less jargon and improved signposting on HMRC's website** with a **friendly tone**. Many ADs need **reassurance that interacting online is secure** and that they are speaking to a **tax expert on online chat**. The wide range of online support offered needs to be highlighted.

This final chapter looks at how AD and DE customers can be better supported. It mainly draws on the qualitative interviews but also reflects the quantitative findings discussed in earlier chapters.

9.1 Technological awareness and engagement

Future engagement with digital support services among the AD and DE population was likely to be determined by their digital confidence. As has been discussed previously, the DE population was unlikely to ever engage

with online services. For the AD population, their ability and willingness to increase their use of online services depends where they sit upon the confidence spectrum.



Less confident ADs were unsure how comfortable they felt using the internet. Changes to familiar online processes or challenges using the website and support tools could easily cause them to revert to the phone. These ADs were also more likely to be concerned about online scams and their security online. Having fundamental concerns could cause them to disengage from online services and mean that they are less likely to ‘self-serve’ in the future. In order for these less confident ADs to move and, critically, stay online, it is likely that they will require ongoing support. The exact kind of support will vary according to the individual. Whilst the range of need and support will vary widely, the channel which ADs rely upon to get this support is likely to consistently remain within their trusted networks of friends and family. Although reliance on friends and family will reduce demand for HMRC (telephone) support, it will not encourage this group to develop their skills.



ADs who were more confident online were much more likely and willing to adapt to changes in technology and internet services. As their online confidence was much higher they were more prepared to learn through trial and error. Their higher level of confidence was likely to have come from greater usage and need for the internet and so they may be more dependent upon it and prepared to adapt and learn.



The more digitally confident ADs also tended to be less wary about online security and had fewer concerns about sharing their data online. This confidence has been built through other service providers educating them on online security risks such as e-mails from their banks warning about ‘phishing’ emails and awareness of the kinds of ‘red flags’ to look out for on a website. They therefore had a greater awareness of indicators that ensured online security such as a padlock in the address bar and multi-staged verification requests.

“I’m not computer savvy, and if I had to start doing things for myself, within 6 months I would be computer savvy”

- Participant, AD

“I do worry about getting a virus and having my identity stolen but I know to always look for the padlock”

- Participant, AD

“A government website I feel quite confident with that, and quite secure. But I’d have to be very confident that it was the proper website”

- Participant, AD

9.2 Barriers to using HMRC digital services



A fundamental barrier preventing the AD population using HMRC's digital services more often was the infrequency with which they need to contact HMRC. AD participants described interacting with HMRC infrequently to undertake ad-hoc tasks such as notifying about a change in circumstances, making a capital gains query or requesting a tax rebate. Most of the participants reported that they paid tax through PAYE and so had no cause to think about HMRC very often. AD participants who were SA customers also reported having limited contact with HMRC. Instead, they tended to rely upon paid agents to handle their tax affairs.



As many government and commercial services have now moved online, the AD participants we spoke to were aware that HMRC had also moved its services online. But as they rarely needed to contact HMRC they lacked confidence and like to have someone more familiar with tax systems to do the work on their behalf. There was also an assumption that it would take a long time to deal with their tax affairs online. As such they do not feel that it was worth investing the time to learn new processes they will rarely use.



Similarly, DE customers anticipated that HMRC would offer support online, but as they were not using any online services struggled to see how online services would be helpful for them. DE customers also had very limited contact with HMRC beyond receiving their annual tax code. They were comfortable interacting with HMRC over the telephone and by post when necessary. As they made contact so infrequently, they did not see slower communication methods as a significant time burden or 'hassle' and did not feel motivated to consider any other means of making contact.

9.3 Customer expectations



As contact with HMRC was so limited and irregular for the AD and DE population, interactions tended to be at 'unexpected points' such as having to report a bereavement or an incorrect tax code. These were often stressful interactions, which combined with their lack of familiarity and confidence in dealing with tax issues, lead to concerns about 'doing the right thing'.



The expectations of the customers at these points, particularly among more confident ADs, were often shaped by experiences of commercial support services. Confident AD participants were used to fast customer service, responding quickly to help solve issues when the customer needed. They expected that HMRC's services would be of a similar standard and that contacting HMRC online could be an effective and efficient way of resolving their problem.



For the less confident AD and DE population expectations of HMRC's services were more general and less considered. These participants hoped that HMRC would make things as easy as possible for them and 'fix' their problem. There was recognition that complex situations could not necessarily be resolved immediately but they still wanted clear communication and advice on what to do next.

9.4 Potential drivers of uptake

The quantitative data highlighted a relatively substantial core of customers who were very unlikely to engage with HMRC's digital services. When asked what services or support would make them more likely to access HMRC services online 40% of the AD group and 68% of the DE group said that none of the suggested options would help (Figure 9.1).

Nevertheless, there were many factors which could potentially encourage online usage. Support from a friend or family member was most likely to drive digital uptake and was mentioned by 21% of the AD group and 16% of the DE group. Encouraging online advocacy from family and/or actively encouraging Digitally Capable customers to sit down and help less confident family members may improve uptake.

The AD group was relatively likely to mention that it would be helpful if government websites were easier to use (13%). More online support options, such as online chat, could drive online engagement among the AD group (9%) alongside the development and/or further promotion of apps (10%). However, none of these options would motivate the DE group. This reflects their lack of access to the internet and knowledge of the online landscape.

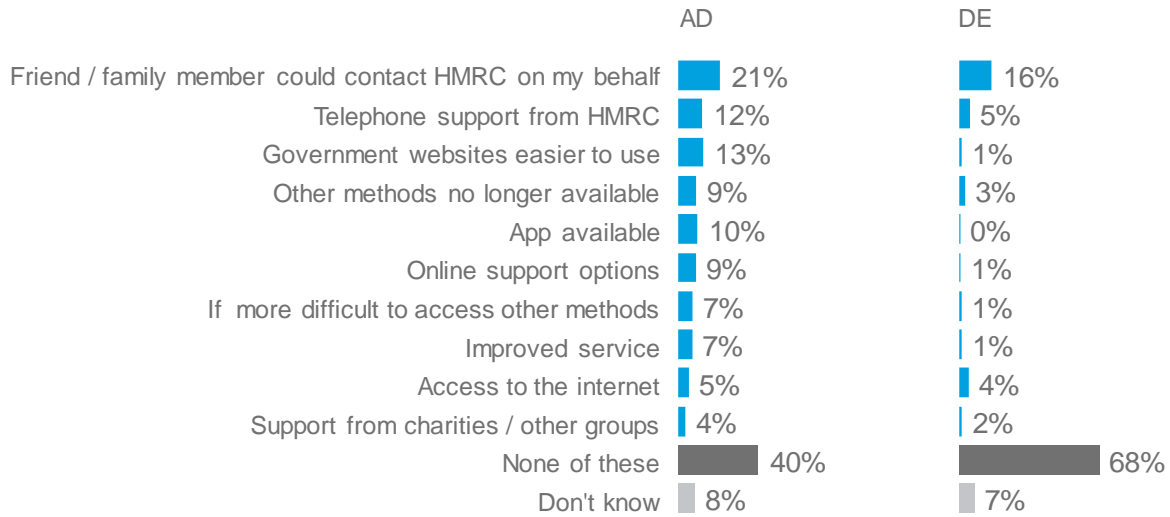
Telephone support to supplement online interactions is also potentially useful; 12% of the AD group and 5% of the DE group said this would make them more likely to use the internet. As such, embedding telephone links in any online support may provide the reassurance necessary to encourage customers to start navigating through HMRCs online services.

Around one in ten (9%) of the AD group acknowledged that they would engage with HMRC digital services if offline options were made unavailable. But among the DE group only 3% would go online, even if other communication options were removed. There was a similar response where offline means of interacting with HMRC became more difficult to access (7% of the AD group and 1% of the DE group). Such changes in provision would undoubtedly drive engagement with digital services, but many customers would find this approach challenging.

Overall, few of the potential support options were appealing to DE adults.

Figure 9.1 Self-reported drivers of HMRC digital service uptake

What would make them more likely to use HMRC digital services
(% all adults, by digital status)



BASE: All respondents: AD (1,423), DE (1,313)

SOURCE: Q.E5 Which, if any, of the following options would make you more likely to use the internet to access HMRC services (e.g. for paying taxes)?

9.5 Messaging options

Within the qualitative research, three messaging options were shown to participants to explore what might motivate an AD individual to use HMRC’s online services. Overall, AD participants would be encouraged to go online by messaging that is credible, relevant, specific and instructive.

9.5.1 “Going online can be an intuitive, easy and simple experience”

For ADs, this statement could feel jarring and lacking in credibility, especially if they had previously had a bad online experience. There is a risk that it may feel condescending to those participants who lack confidence and find going online stressful and challenging.

“Not for me!”

Participant, AD

9.5.2 “You can check how much tax you owe, pay any outstanding amounts and see how much you are due to receive online”

Participants liked the option to do these tasks online. However, PAYE customers did not see how it was relevant to them. This presents a risk of customers disengaging from all messaging they receive from HMRC if they repeatedly receive information that they feel is irrelevant.

9.5.3 Reminders that “going online can be a positive experience”

This message was poorly received by participants. They described it as vague and lacking in direction. Participants said that they preferred clear instructions of what they could do online and how it would be beneficial.

“It’s a bit wishy-washy as its not telling you what to do, it is not really encouragement”

Participant, AD

9.6 Supporting AD customers to use online services

HMRC needs to help customers overcome their anxiety dealing with tax online in order to support AD customers to use these services. Customer confidence can be built by reinforcing positive interactions. As customer contact with HMRC can be both very limited and occasional it is essential that customers have a good experience when they do get in touch.

There were several barriers among the AD population which may have based upon assumptions about HMRC which could be addressed to help build confidence.

Concern	Solution
I can't navigate the HMRC website	Improved signposting on website
The formal tone on the website makes me feel anxious	Website text needs to be friendly, with less jargon

Given the complexity of tax and concerns about non-compliance, participants were concerned that they would be overwhelmed by the website, unable to navigate it and intimidated by the formal tone used. Improving signposting on the website and ensuring the website text is customer-friendly without jargon could therefore be an effective start in building reassurance among AD customers.

Reassurance on the support which online services can offer for complex tax issues is also a key area for improving AD engagement.

Concern	Solution
My issue is too complex to be answered online	Communications to emphasise that online chat can handle complex queries
I don't know about tax, so I want to speak to an expert	Emphasise online chat - speaking to trained HMRC advisor

The qualitative interviews highlighted customers' concerns that they need expert advice and reassurance to deal with HMRC as tax and benefits are complicated. Customers felt they could only get this by speaking on the telephone. To address this, the profile, quality and remit of the online chat service needs to be highlighted and emphasised. This includes:

- Customers need to be made aware that an online chat can handle complex queries and that they will still be speaking to a trained HMRC advisor.
- Customers liked the option to keep a written record of their interaction via online chat. This could be promoted as a benefit of online chat over the telephone helpline.
- Interactions need to be positive, to reinforce the habit of using this channel in the future.

Continual education and emphasis of the speed and ease of online support could also help to encourage those who are accustomed to speaking to HMRC over the phone online.

Concern	Solution
I am used to speaking to HMRC over the phone	Emphasise that online support is quick and easy
Over the phone I know they have received my request	Offer email updates and reference numbers as proof of receipt
I don't know what online services are available	Communicate what is available and how to access and use it

Raising awareness will also be important. Those who were disengaged with HMRC's online services were not considering the different approaches they could take when the need arises. HMRC call handlers are well placed to encourage AD customer to go online in the first instance. They could coach callers through their first online interaction staying on the phone to help in case they encounter problems. This would require call handlers to invest more time over the short-term to educate customers to use the online tools to resolve issues themselves (rather than just sorting it out for them). But this could reduce dependency on the telephone helpline over time.

Concern	Solution
I am anxious about my online security	Educate customers on how to stay safe online and provide reassurances of safety
I have issues with reading English	Online support can cater for a wide range of other languages

Finally, it is important to remember that customers come from a wide range of starting points. They may be anxious about online security, particularly if they lack confidence online, or need additional reassurance that their request has been received by HMRC. Providing reassurance about the safety of HMRC's online services, combined with online safety education could be effective at addressing these barriers. Offering e-mail updates and reference numbers as proof of receipt could help customers to feel that they have a 'paper trail' which they can use as evidence of the action they have taken. Raising awareness that online support can cater for a range of language needs could also be an important step to encourage customers who do not speak English confidently to use online services.

Appendix A: Questionnaire

SECTION A: SCREENING QUESTIONS AND AD/DE STATUS

ALL WHO WORK FULL OR PART TIME

A1. You mentioned that you are currently employed. Can I just check, are you...?

SINGLE CODE, INVERT

1. Self-employed
2. The owner of the business/company that you work for
3. An employee with a controlling interest in the business/company that you work for - e.g. director of company
4. An employee (and not an owner/controller of the business)
5. Don't Know
6. Refused

ASK ALL

A2. Please could you tell me which of the following best describes how you pay your taxes?

PAYE stands for Pay As You Earn – your tax is deducted from your salary by your employer or your pension by your pension provider. If a person is self-employed they will pay through Self-Assessment.

SINGLE CODE, INVERT

1. I pay income tax through PAYE (employer /pension provider deducts tax from my pay/pension) ONLY
2. I pay income tax through self-assessment ONLY
3. I pay income tax through PAYE AND also self-assessment
4. I don't pay tax
5. Don't Know
6. Refused

ASK ALL

A3. Which, if any, of the following state benefits or allowances are you currently receiving?

Your answers are completely confidential.

MULTICODE, RANDOMISE CODES 1,2,3,4

1. Child Benefit
2. Working Tax Credit
3. Child Tax Credit
4. Tax Credit, not sure which one
5. None of these
6. Don't know
7. Refused

ASK ALL

INTRO SCREEN. Now I'd like to ask a few questions about your internet use.

ASK ALL

A4. On average, how often do you use the internet [IF SELF-EMPLOYED: for personal use], either at home or elsewhere?

SINGLE CODE

1. More than once a day
2. Once a day
3. More than once a Week

4. Once a Week
5. At Least Once a Month
6. A Few Times a Year
7. Less than once a year
8. Never
9. Don't Know

ASK IF SELF EMPLOYED

A5. On average, how often do you use the internet for business use, either at home, your workplace or elsewhere?

SINGLE CODE

1. More than once a day
2. Once a day
3. More than once a Week
4. Once a Week
5. At Least Once a Month
6. A Few Times a Year
7. Less than once a year
8. Never
9. Don't Know

ASK IF DO NOT USE THE INTERNET

A6. Have you ever used the internet?

SINGLE CODE, INVERT

1. Yes – used frequently in the past but stopped using
2. Yes – used a few times in the past but stopped using
3. Have tried it once or twice
4. Never used the internet
5. Don't know

ASK IF NOT SELF-EMPLOYED

A7. I'm now going to present three scenarios involving using the internet. For each of these, please tell me if you feel you would be able to do this without any help, able with some help, or not able to do this at all.

SINGLE CODE

1. I would be able to do this without any help
2. I would be able to do this if I had help from a friend or family member
3. I would be able to do this, but only with the help from the organisation/department providing the service
4. I would be able to do this but only with help from someone independent, such as Citizen's Advice or a professional advisor
5. I wouldn't be able to do this even with help
6. Don't Know

ASK IF NOT SELF EMPLOYED

A8. And for the following three scenarios, again please tell me if you feel you would be able to do this without any help, able with some help, or not able to do this at all.

Interviewer probe: If they say able to do it with help, probe if that is with help from a friend or family member, from the organisation they are interacting with, or from someone independent or professional advisor.

SINGLE CODE

1. I would be able to do this without any help
2. I would be able to do this if I had help from a friend or family member
3. I would be able to do this, but only with the help from the organisation/department providing the service
4. I would be able to do this but only with help from someone independent, such as Citizen’s Advice or a professional advisor
5. I wouldn’t be able to do this even with help
6. Don’t Know

SCRIPTING INSTRUCTION: Present half of the sample with the non-government scenarios first, then repeat exercise for the government scenarios. For the other half of the sample present the government scenarios first, and then repeat for the non-government.

	Scenario name	Non-government wording (individual)	Government wording (individual)
A	Provide basic information	Provide basic information to an organisation online, such as updating your address with a bank or utility provider	Provide basic information to a government department online, such as updating your address or notifying them of a change of circumstances
B	Make a payment / complete a purchase	Make a payment or purchase something online, such as paying a utility bill or buying something from a website like Amazon	Make a payment or purchase something online, such as paying a for a TV licence or buying car tax
C	Provide more detailed information	Provide detailed information to an organisation online, such as completing a mortgage application or job application	Provide detailed information to a government department online, such as completing a tax return or benefit application

ASK IF SELF EMPLOYED

A9. I’m now going to present three scenarios involving using the internet. For each of these, please tell me if you feel you would be able to do this without any help, able with some help, or not able to do this at all.

If they say able to do it with help, probe if that is with help from a friend or family member, from the organisation they are interacting with, or from someone independent or professional advisor.

SINGLE CODE

1. I would be able to do this without any help
2. I would be able to do this if I had help from a friend or family member
3. I would be able to do this, but only with the help from the organisation/department providing the service
4. I would be able to do this but only with help from someone independent, such as Citizen’s Advice or a professional advisor
5. I wouldn’t be able to do this even with help
6. Don’t Know

ASK IF SELF EMPLOYED

A10. And for the following three scenarios, again please tell me if you feel you would be able to do this without any help, able with some help, or not able to do this at all.

If they say able to do it with help, probe if that is with help from a friend or family member, from the organisation they are interacting with, or from someone independent or professional advisor.

SINGLE CODE

1. I would be able to do this without any help
2. I would be able to do this if I had help from a friend or family member
3. I would be able to do this, but only with the help from the organisation/department providing the service
4. I would be able to do this but only with help from someone independent, such as Citizen’s Advice or a professional advisor
5. I wouldn’t be able to do this even with help
6. Don’t Know

SCRIPTING INSTRUCTION: Present half of the sample with the non-government scenarios first, then repeat exercise for the government scenarios. For the other half of the sample present the government scenarios first, and then repeat for the non-government.

	Scenario name	Non-government wording (self-employed)	Government wording (self-employed)
A	Provide basic information	Provide basic information to an organisation online, such as updating your address with a bank or utility provider	Provide basic information to a government department online, such as updating your address or notifying them of a change of circumstances
B	Make a payment / complete a purchase	Make a payment or purchase something online for your business, such as paying a utility bill or buying something from a website like Amazon	Make a payment to or purchase something from government online for your business, such as paying for a business licence or buying car tax
C	Provide more detailed information	Provide detailed information to an organisation online, such as completing a business loan application or tender for business via an electronic tender service]	Provide detailed information to a government department online, such as completing a tax return or business grant application

SECTION B: INTERNET USE

ASK ALL WHO ARE SELF EMPLOYED AND HAVE INTERNET ACCESS OR LAPSED INTERNET USERS
 INFO SCREEN (For self-employed: For the rest of these questions please think about your internet use for both personal and business reasons.

ALL WHO HAVE INTERNET ACCESS OR LAPSED INTERNET USERS

B2. Here is a list of things that some people do on the internet or through their computers or other devices (e.g. a tablet, smartphone, games console).

Which, if any, of these have you done yourself in the last 12 months?

Government services includes both local and national government. Please think about things that you have done on your own.

MULTICODE, INVERT

Online activities

1. Send and receive email
2. Use a search engine
3. General surfing/browsing the internet

4. Completing online applications/ forms which include [personal / personal or business] details
5. Buying and selling things online
6. Using social networking sites e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter
7. Managing finances, e.g. online banking
8. Make payments online

Using government services

9. Using government services e.g. renew car tax, driving licence or passport, obtain business support etc.
10. Looking for information about government services online
11. Provide basic information to a government department online, such as updating your address or notifying them of a change of circumstances
12. Provide detailed information to a government department online, such as completing a tax return or benefit application

Online security

13. Identifying and deleting spam emails
14. Checking a website to see if it was trustworthy
15. Setting privacy settings e.g. on social media sites like Facebook
16. Create and maintain social media accounts

17. None of the above

ALL WHO HAVE INTERNET ACCESS\LAPSED USER AND DID NOT USE THE INTERNET FOR CERTAIN THINGS

B3. For each of the following things you said you hadn't done, can you tell if you probably could do it yourself if you needed to, probably could do it with help from someone else, could get someone else to do it for you, or probably couldn't do it?

SINGLE CODE

1. Probably could do it if you needed to
 2. Probably could do it with help from someone else
 3. Could get someone else to do it for you
 4. Probably could not do it
 5. Don't know what it is
-
- A. Send and receive email
 - B. Completing online applications/ forms which include personal details
 - C. Buying and selling things online
 - D. Make payments online
 - E. Setting privacy settings e.g. on social media sites like Facebook
 - F. Provide detailed information to a government department online, such as completing a tax return or benefit application
 - G. Create and maintain social media accounts

SECTION C: ONLINE SERVICE USAGE AND AWARENESS OF DIGITAL SERVICES

ASK ALL

C1. In the last year, have you used or applied for Government services in any of the following areas? Please include any areas where you have used or applied for government service, be that in person, via a leaflet or over the phone and not just on the internet.

You can include all interactions in the last year and not just those via the internet

MULTICODE, INVERT

1. Benefits - e.g. job seekers allowance, child benefit, carers allowance
2. Pensions
3. Passports e.g. applying or renewing a passport
4. Tax or national insurance – e.g. paying taxes or completing a tax return
5. Setting up or checking a Personal Tax Account [IF SELF EMPLOYED: or Business Tax Account]
6. [BUSINESS ONLY] Registering a business
7. [BUSINESS ONLY] Setting up a PAYE scheme
8. [BUSINESS ONLY] Accessing business finance including government funding and business grants
9. [BUSINESS ONLY] Tax relief and incentives for business e.g. Employment Allowance NICs relief
10. [BUSINESS ONLY] Business licences – e.g. temporary event licences, alcohol licences, music licences, food licences
11. None of these
12. Don't know

ASK IF ALL WHO HAVE APPLIED FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES IN THE LAST YEAR

C2. And in which of these areas did you use or apply for the government service via the internet?

MULTICODE

- X. Previous list filtered by those selected
- 11. None of these
- 12. Don't know

ASK IF All who have not applied for any Government services online in the last 12 months

C3. Why didn't you use the internet to deal with it?

MULTICODE, INVERT

1. I don't have access to the internet
2. I don't know how to use the internet
3. I prefer to deal over the phone
4. I am concerned about security or fraud
5. I have physical or learning disability
6. I didn't know I could deal with it online
7. I tried to use the internet, but was unsuccessful
8. Other (specify)
9. Don't know

ASK ALL

C4. In general, how confident are you dealing with your tax [IF RECEIVE BENEFITS OR TAX CREDITS: and/or benefit] affairs?

Please answer on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is very confident and 1 is not at all confident.

SINGLE CODE

- 1 – Not at all confident, would always need help
- 2: 2.
- 3: 3.
- 4: 4
- 5 – Very confident, can do this independently

ASK ALL

C5. In which of the following ways have you had any online dealings with HMRC over the last 12 months? Please select all that apply.

Dealings might include contacting or receiving information from HMRC or using HMRC's online services. The Personal OR Business Tax Account is an online service, which lets you manage your tax affairs online e.g. check your tax code or manage tax credits.

MULTICODE, INVERT

1. Searched for information on the HMRC webpages
2. Via your Personal Tax Account [IF SELF-EMPLOYED: or Business Tax Account] (The Personal [Business] Tax Account is an online service, which lets you manage your tax [IF RECEIVE BENEFITS OR TAX CREDITS: and benefits] affairs online e.g. check your tax code or manage tax credits)
3. Via a mobile App
4. Other HMRC services online (e.g. submitted a tax return, requested or made a payment)
5. Received an email from HMRC
6. None of the above
7. Don't know
8. Prefer not to say

ASK IF All who have not dealt with HMRC Online in the last 12 months

C6. How willing or unwilling are you to deal with your tax [IF RECEIVE BENEFITS OR TAX CREDITS: and benefit] affairs online?

Please answer on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is very willing and 1 is not at all willing.

SINGLE CODE

- 5 - very willing
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1 - not at all willing
- I do not have access to the internet
- I am unable to use them due to a health condition
- don't know

ASK IF All unwilling to deal with HMRC online

C7. Why wouldn't you be willing to deal with your tax [IF RECEIVE BENEFITS OR TAX CREDITS: and benefit] affairs online?

MULTICODE, INVERT

1. I don't have access to the internet
2. I don't know how to use the internet
3. I prefer to deal with HMRC over the phone
4. I am concerned about security or fraud
5. I have a physical or learning disability
6. I'm worried about making a mistake
7. I don't deal with HMRC very often
8. I have difficulty reading or writing (in English)
9. Other (specify)
10. Don't know

All who have used any HMRC services online in the last 12 months or willing to BUT NOT PTA/BTA

C8. The Personal [IF SELF-EMPLOYED: or Business] Tax Account is an online service, which lets you manage your tax [IF RECEIVE BENEFITS OR TAX CREDITS: and benefit] affairs online e.g. check your tax code or manage tax credits)

SINGLE CODE, INVERT

1. Very Confident - do not foresee any particular difficulties
2. Fairly confident - may need a bit of help to get started or if encounter a specific problem
3. Not very confident - would definitely need some help to get set up and use account
4. Not at all confident - would not be able to do this
5. Don't know

ASK ALL

C9. HMRC has a number of tools to help people use its online services. Before today, which, if any, of the following HMRC online functions have you used or heard of?

SINGLE CODE, INVERT

Definitions:

A. Automated Assistant/Ask Ruth

While you are browsing, an automated pop up window will appear and will ask you if you need help. It will try to automatically answer any questions you type in.

B. Online chat

This is real time text communication where you type your questions in a chat window and a HMRC adviser will answer them immediately

C. Co-browsing/share screen

A HMRC adviser will talk to you on the phone and will be able to see your screen online so they can advise you on how to resolve the problem.

D. Help videos on YouTube (e.g. how to register for Self-Assessment)

1. I have used this with HMRC
2. I have used this with another organisation
3. I have heard of this, but not used it
4. I have never heard of this

5. Don't know

ASK ALL

C11. Some organisations allow customers to formally nominate a close friend or family member to deal with their affairs on their behalf.

Before today, had you used or heard of a scheme like this?

This is sometimes known as having an appointee or nominating someone with power of attorney.

INTERVIEWER NOTE: If respondent says it would depend on the organisation please code as 3.

SINGLE CODE

1. I have used this with HMRC
2. I have used this with another organisation
3. I have heard of this, and would be willing to use it
4. I have heard of this and would not be willing to use it
5. I have never heard of this
6. Don't know

IF HEARD OF A TRUSTED HELPER SERVICE OR USED WITH ANOTHER ORGANISATION

C13. You can ask a friend or family member to register to manage your tax [IF RECEIVE BENEFITS OR TAX CREDITS: and benefit] affairs - this is called having a 'trusted helper'

Would having a trusted helper to assist, make you more or less likely to use HMRC services online?

SINGLE CODE

1. I would be comfortable having a trusted helper to assist me to manage my tax affairs online.
2. I would be comfortable having a trusted assist me to manage my tax affairs but not comfortable with them doing it online.
3. I would not be comfortable with having a trusted helper manage my tax affairs.
4. Don't know

SECTION D: UNDERSTAND THE BARRIERS TO USING DIGITAL SERVICES

ASK IF USE THE INTERNET LESS THAN ONCE A WEEK

D1. You said that you don't use the internet/ don't use the internet often/ don't use the internet often for business use/ don't use the internet for business use

Which, if any, of the following are the main reasons for you not using the internet more frequently?

SHOW SCREEN, MULTI CHOICE

1. I don't have the internet at my place of business
2. I don't know how to get the internet at my place of business
3. I have nowhere that I can go to access the internet
4. The internet is too expensive for me
5. I don't think the internet is useful
6. I'd rather do things without using the internet (i.e. just prefer to do things without)
7. I think the internet is damaging to society
8. I have privacy concerns about using the internet
9. I am concerned about security/fraud
10. I don't know how to use the internet/the internet is too difficult to use
11. I don't have a computer
12. I don't have the time to use the internet
13. A visual impairment makes it difficult for me to use the internet
14. I have a learning disability that makes it difficult for me to use a computer
15. I have a physical disability that makes it difficult for me to use a computer

16. I have difficulty reading and writing
17. I am too old to use the internet
18. I don't want to use the internet
19. I have had a bad experience of computer spam \ viruses
20. I have concerns about the safety of my children online
21. [If SELF-EMPLOYED]Being online isn't relevant for my business
22. [If SELF-EMPLOYED]I have other priorities for investment into my business
23. Other reason
24. Don't know
25. Refused

ASK IF SELF EMPLOYED AND USE INTERNET MORE FREQUENTLY FOR PERSONAL THAN BUSINESS REASONS

D2. You said that you use the internet more often for personal reasons than for business reasons.

Which, if any, of the following are the main reasons you use the internet more for personal use?

MULTICODE, INVERT

1. Use agent to deal with tax affairs
2. Prefer to do it way always done it – no reason to change
3. I have privacy concerns about using the internet for business and tax issues
4. I am concerned about security/fraud
5. Being online isn't relevant for my business
6. I don't have the internet at my place of work
7. I have other priorities for investment into my business
8. Other (specify)
9. Don't know

SECTION E: UNDERSTAND THE SUPPORT NEEDS FOR INDIVIDUALS TO USE DIGITAL SERVICES

ASK ALL

E1. HMRC provides many of its services online, (for example submitting tax returns). If you wanted help or support with online HMRC services, which, if any, of the following would you be most likely to choose?

Please tell me which would be your first choice, then your second choice, and finally your third choice.

MULTICODE, INVERT

1. I'd work it out/get the information I needed myself (e.g. online)
2. Seek help from friends/family/colleague
3. Seek help from my employer or trade body
4. Phone an HMRC help service
5. Use online support from HMRC (e.g. gov.uk, web chat, instant messenger or online video)
6. Seek help from local service provider (e.g. library, Jobcentre Plus)
7. Voluntary or community services (e.g. Citizen's Advice, Age UK, Royal Institute for the Blind)
8. Seek help from accountant or business adviser
9. Other (specify)
10. None of these
11. Don't know

ASK ALL

E2. How often have you had contact with HMRC in the last 12 months?

This includes contact from you to HMRC and contact from HMRC to you

SINGLE CODE

1. Not at all

2. Once
3. 2 or 3 times
4. 4 times or more
5. Don't know – *position fixed*

ASK ALL

E3. Does anyone help you with your dealings with HMRC?

Please select all that apply

MULTICODE, INVERT

1. Yes – Friend/family/colleague
2. Yes – Employer
3. Yes – Voluntary organisation such as Citizens Advice
4. Yes – Paid agent
5. Yes – Other (please specify using the text box below)
6. No one helps
7. Don't know
8. Prefer not to say

ASK ALL

E4. For each of the following situations how you would you typically prefer to interact with HMRC?

SINGLE CODE, INVERT

1. When you need to provide simple information about yourself e.g. update your details
 2. When you need to make or receive a payment
 3. When you need to provide detailed information about yourself e.g. report a change of circumstances
 4. When you need to get specific or detailed information
-
- A. Online
 - B. Over the phone
 - C. In person
 - D. On paper/by post
 - E. Other (specify)
 - F. Don't know

ASK ALL

E5. Which, if any, of the following options would make you more likely to use the internet to access HMRC services (e.g. for paying taxes)?

An app is computer programme designed to work on a smartphone, tablet or watch.

MULTICODE, INVERT

1. If a friend or family member could get in touch with HMRC on my behalf
2. If government websites were easier to use
3. If there was an app available
4. If I received an improved service
5. If there were online support options, e.g. online chat
6. If there were telephone support from HMRC
7. If there were support available from charities and other support groups e.g. Citizens Advice, other charity or support group [IF SELF EMPLOYED or trade or professional bodies etc.]
8. If it became more difficult to access government services using other methods (e.g. telephone, in person, by post)
9. If other methods (e.g. telephone, in person, by post) were no longer available
10. If I had access to the internet
11. Other

- 12. None of the above
- 13. Don't know

SECTION F: DEMOGRAPHICS

ASK IF All who are self-employed

F1. How many people are employed by your business excluding yourself. Would you say there are...?
SINGLE CODE

1. 0
2. 1-4
3. 5-9
4. 10 or more

Don't know

ASK IF All who are self-employed

F2. What was your annual turnover from your business?
SINGLE CODE

1. Less than £15,000 per annum (p.a.)
2. Between £15,000 and £24,999 p.a.
3. Between £25,000 and £49,999 p.a.
4. Between £50,000 and £84,999 p.a.
5. Between £85,000 and £99,999 p.a.
6. Between £100,000 and £499,999 p.a.
7. Over £500,000 p.a.
8. Don't Know
9. Refused

ASK ALL

F3. Thinking about the TOTAL income you get from all sources, that is earnings from work, benefits and anything else, please indicate which of the following bands represents your TOTAL income from any sources before any deductions for tax, national insurance and so on?

SINGLE CODE

If you do not feel you can answer this question please select next (>) to reveal more options

<i>Annual</i>	<i>Weekly</i>	<i>Monthly</i>
1. Under £2,600	Under £50	Under £217
2. £2,600 - £5,199	£50 - £99	£217 - £434
3. £5,200 - £10,399	£100 - £199	£435 - £866
4. £10,400 - £12,499	£200 - £239	£867 - £961
5. £12,500 - £20,799	£240 - £399	£962 - £1,732
6. £20,800 - £25,999	£400 - £499	£1,733 - £2,166
7. £26,000 - £31,199	£500 - £599	£2,167 - £2,599
8. £31,200 - £36,399	£600 - £699	£2,600 - £3,032
9. £36,400 - £39,999	£700 - £769	£3,033 - £3,333
10. £40,000 - £44,999	£770 - £865	£3,334 - £3,749
11. £45,000 - £49,999	£866 - £961	£3,750 - £4,166
12. £50,000 - £59,999	£962 - £1,153	£4,167 - £4,999
13. £60,000 - £74,999	£1,154 - £1,442	£5,000 - £6,249
14. £75,000 - £99,999	£1,443 - £1,923	£6,250 - £8,333
15. £100,000 or more	£1,924 or more	£8,333 or more

Don't know

Don't want to answer

ASK ALL

F4. Which, if any, of the following state benefits or allowances are you currently receiving?
Your answers are completely confidential.

MULTICODE, RANDOMISE

1. Jobseekers Allowance (JSA)
2. Employment Support Allowance (ESA)
3. Income Support
4. State Retirement Pension
5. Pension Credit
6. Disability Living Allowance
7. Personal Independence Payment
8. Severe Disablement Allowance
9. Widowers/Bereavement Allowance
10. Universal Credit
11. Housing Benefit / Local Housing Allowance
12. No, none of these
13. Don't know
14. Refused

ASK ALL

F5. Which of these is your highest level of education qualification?

SINGLE CODE

1. University Degree or equivalent e.g. BTEC professional
2. A-Levels or Highers, or equivalent e.g. NVQ level 3 or 4 qualifications
3. GCSEs or equivalent e.g. NVQ level 2 or BTEC National award
4. Other qualifications (incl. entry level and foreign qualifications below degree level)
5. No formal qualifications
6. Don't know
7. Refused

ASK ALL

F6. Can I just check, do you have any problems with literacy (reading, writing or speaking English) or numeracy (numbers or simple arithmetic) at all?

MULTICODE, INVERT

1. Yes, reading English
2. Yes, writing English
3. Yes, speaking English
4. Yes, numeracy (numbers or simple arithmetic)
5. No
6. Don't know
7. Refused

ASK ALL

F7. Are you willing to answer a question about your health? This information is used by HMRC to help them ensure their services meet the needs of all customers. You can ask Kantar Public to withdraw this data on your health at any time. To do so please contact us using the following email address:

hmrcsurvey@kantarpublic.com

SINGLE CODE

1. Yes
2. No

ASK IF All willing to answer questions about their health

F8. Do you have any long-standing illness, health problems or disability which limits your daily activities or the work you can do?

By long-standing I mean anything that has troubled you over a period of time or that is likely to affect you over a long period of time.

SINGLE CODE

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know
4. Refused

ASK IF All who have a long-standing illness, health problem or disability

F9. Do any of these conditions or illnesses affect you in any of these areas?

Are you affected by this condition or illness...

MULTICODE

1. Vision (for example, blindness or partial sight)
2. Hearing (for example, deafness or partial hearing)
3. Mobility (for example, walking short distances or climbing stairs)
4. Dexterity (for example, lifting and carrying objects, using a keyboard)
5. Learning or understanding or concentrating
6. Memory
7. Mental health
8. Stamina or breathing or fatigue
9. Socially or behaviourally (for example associated with autism, attention deficit disorder or Asperger's syndrome)
 - A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. Refused