Department for Work & Pensions

Government Social Research

Digital Skills, Channel Preference, and Access Needs

Personal Independence Payment Customers

March 2024

Executive Summary

This research aimed to understand the level of digital skills of DWP customers. This includes which digital tools they use, which they would like to use and their ability to engage with digital products. It also aimed to quantify current access and support needs, including barriers to accessing digital channels and support needs required to access digital channels, and customer preferences by channel and self-serve.

This report presents the findings of DWP customers whose latest benefit claimed was Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and complements the main report which covers the findings from DWP customers across 10 DWP benefit lines. For ease, throughout this report when we reference PIP customers, this represents the views and opinions of those who have most recently claimed PIP.

Methodology

- Ipsos conducted 3,008 interviews with PIP customers, between 20 March and 23 June 2023. 2,426 (81%) of these interviews were completed over the phone, and 582 (19%) were completed online. Customers were invited to take part in the online survey via email invite or by a push-to-web link included in a letter that informed them of the research. All who had not completed within two weeks were then contacted by telephone. The sample was provided by DWP.

Digital capabilities

- Overall, internet access was high amongst DWP customers whose latest benefit was Personal Independence Payment (PIP). More than 4 in 5 customers (84%) were accessing the internet at the time of the survey. There remained a minority (16%) of customers who were offline. This was made up of 9% who had never accessed the internet and 7% who no longer used the internet but had done so in the past.

- Digital confidence amongst PIP customers was mixed, but the level of internet confidence was driven by customer's age and level of education. Overall, 60% of customers were confident in their abilities to use the internet. Those reporting they were 'very confident' were most likely to be university educated (50% very confident) and under 45 years old (35% very confident).

- However, 40% of PIP customers were not confident in their ability to use the internet. Compared to the average (all PIP customers), particular groups of customers were significantly more likely to report not being confident in their ability to use the internet. This included customers who had no formal qualifications (64% not confident), were aged over 55 (52% not confident), whose employment status was long-term sick or disabled (49% not confident),

or had particular disabilities such as sensory impairments (44% not confident), or chronic illnesses (43% not confident).

- Overall, the majority of PIP customers who accessed the internet used a smartphone to go online (81%). Smartphones were the device most likely to be used regardless of disability type. However, if a PIP customer had a sensory impairment or physical condition, they were significantly more likely than the average to be tablet users and if they had learning difficulties or a cognitive disorder, they were significantly more likely to be a laptop or desktop user.

Barriers

- The most common barriers for those offline accessing the internet were that their health condition made using the internet difficult (55%), or that they had a lack of digital skills and worried about making mistakes due to their lack of confidence (52%).

- Amongst existing internet users, their biggest concern preventing them using the internet more was the risk of fraud and security related issues (48%), their health condition (42%), and their level of digital skill (39%).

Online Government Service usage

- At the time of the survey, PIP customers predominantly managed their claim using the telephone. However, with more than 4 in 5 (83%) of those who contacted DWP by telephone to manage their claim being current internet users, this suggests that there is potential to encourage these customers to engage digitally.

- Whilst three quarters (75%) of all PIP customers reported that they would be able to apply for or manage their benefits online, only around a third felt comfortable to do this on their own (30%), with the other 45% reliant on the help of others. A quarter (25%) felt they would not be able to apply for or manage their benefit online or did not know whether they would be able to.

- Assistive technologies were used by 42% of PIP customers, but particularly by those living with sensory impairment and communication disabilities (49%), those who accessed the internet outside of their homes (49%), customers with a university degree (48%) or vocational qualification (47%), and those who had caring responsibilities (46%).

- For simpler, more straightforward interactions, there was a level of openness towards engaging with DWP digitally. Specific activities for which PIP customers would most prefer to engage with DWP digitally (whether online through a website, over email and/or through an app) rather than the most popular analogue method, included updating their personal details (49%), receiving notifications or updates related to their claim (47%) or submitting

supporting evidence for their claim (44%). However, channel preference was driven by the complexity of the engagement, and PIP customers were more reluctant to resolve payment and non-payment related queries online, preferring the telephone.

Support and Digital Skills

- Keeping in touch with family and friends (34%) and free training courses to develop new skills (30%) were the key situations that would encourage PIP customers to further their digital skills in the future. This was more favourable amongst those who were employed or looking for work, compared to the average. Almost a third of employed PIP customers (32%) would be encouraged to develop their digital skills in future to upskill for a current role.

- However, there remained a minority (18%) of PIP customers who did not want to develop their digital skills in the future. These were more likely than average to be the long-term sick or disabled, be over 65, and those with no formal qualifications.

Conclusions

- Overall, concerns around fraud, privacy, security and scams were the main barrier preventing internet users from using the internet for more activities. Reassurances from DWP around website legitimacy and safety might build trust and encourage greater use of its digital services in future.

- For future digital services, it will be important that PIP customers find them easy to use and they should be compatible on multiple devices. However, DWP may still need to offer alternative channels of support as human interaction (for example, talking over the telephone) is preferred for some more complex elements of a benefit claim, including resolving payment and non-payment related queries, or disputing decisions and making complaints.

- PIP customers were more open to engaging with DWP online for easier interactions such as updating personal details, receiving notifications or updates about their claim, or submitting supporting evidence. DWP might consider digitalising certain simple aspects of the benefit process first to help PIP customers feel more comfortable managing their claim digitally.

- Though many customers are open to using digital more, targeted support will be needed to achieve DWP's ambition of increasing the number of PIP applications being processed and managed digitally. Telephone support will help both users and non-internet users to transition, as will the capabilities of family and friends to act on their behalf and help to make the service easy to navigate. Face-to-face support from a visiting officer at home might help former internet users back online.

- There is an opportunity for DWP to potentially signpost customers to other digital channels going forward, with appropriate support. If a PIP customer wants to use a digital service, the majority would prefer to receive guidance on how to make and manage a benefit claim digitally either over the phone with an adviser or in a written format. Those with a mental health condition were more likely than the average to want support over the phone (49%), from a visiting officer (20%) or video guidance (20%). Those with learning difficulties and cognitive disorders wanted written guidance (42%) more so than advice over the phone (39%) and were more likely than average to want support from a third-party organisation (22%). Therefore, the importance of personal interaction should not be underestimated.

- However, DWP should also be mindful that not all customers will want to engage digitally nor have internet access at home. 7% of all PIP customers were reluctant about any kind of online experience. These customers were typically retired and not likely to be new PIP claimants. DWP should be mindful that a digital only approach may not be the preference of all PIP customers and future service design should be reflective that a variety of channels might be needed.

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Acknowledgements

Authors credits

Juliette Albone, Associate Director, headed up the Ipsos team responsible for the research. Jack Watson, Research Manager, was responsible for the day-to-day management of the study. Anna Challen and Esme Burrage, Research Executives, worked on the fieldwork, delivery, and analysis for this project.

Glossary and abbreviations

Customers: The sample for this research was based on the latest benefit claimed, so this report is based on all customers whose latest benefit claimed was Personal Independence Payment (PIP). Throughout this report, any mentions of 'customers' refers to PIP customers.

Employment and Support Allowance: A benefit for customers who are unable to work or need support to get back into work. Customers can apply for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) if they have a disability or health condition that affects how much they can work. ESA applicants can be employed, self-employed or unemployed.

Health Transformation Programme: The Health Transformation Programme (HTP) is transforming the Personal Independence Payment service by introducing a simpler application process (including an option to apply online), improved evidence gathering and a more tailored journey for customers.

New Style Employment and Support Allowance: A contributory benefit, New Style ESA is a fortnightly payment that can be claimed on its own or at the same time as Universal Credit (UC).

Personal Independence Payment: A benefit for customers with both a long-term physical or mental health condition or disability, and difficulty doing certain everyday tasks or getting around due to a health condition. PIP claimants can be working, have savings or be receiving most other benefits.

Road to Digital and Data[1]: A common cross-government vision that by 2025, the UK government will be a transformed, more efficient digital government that provides better outcomes for everyone by exceeding public expectations, equipping civil servants for a digital future, and enhancing government efficiency and security.

Universal Credit: A payment to help with living costs. Claimants may be out of work, working (including self-employed or part time), or unable to work, for example because of a health condition.

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[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/roadmap-for-digital-and-data-2022-to-2025/transforming-for-a-digital-future-2022-to-2025-roadmap-for-digital-and-data#about-the-governments-2022-25-roadmap-for-digital-and-data

Abbreviations

DWP - Department for Work and Pensions

ESA - Employment and Support Allowance

HCP - Healthcare Professional

HTP - Health Transformation Programme

PIP - Personal Independence Payment

UC - Universal Credit

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The recent COVID-19 pandemic accelerated individuals' use of online services, including amongst those who had previously been digitally assisted or digitally excluded.[2]

Many digitalisation and service transformation projects are now already underway across the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) as part of the 2022-2025 Road to Digital and Data.[3]

Developing digital services is a key priority area for the department. However, there is currently a lack of data related to the digital skills, access needs and preferences of all DWP customers.

The findings from the research will be used to inform service design and channel strategies, which will shape the longer-term direction of DWP's transformation. This will include, but is not limited to, the Health Transformation Programme (HTP)[4], Move to Universal Credit[5], and retirement service transformation including Get Your State Pension[6].

The HTP aims to modernise benefit services to improve customer experience and build trust in DWP's services and the decisions it makes. The programme is developing a new Health Assessment Service and transforming the Personal Independence Plan (PIP) service over the longer term.

PIP is also proposed in the recent Health and Disability White Paper[7] to become a gateway benefit for the Support Group within New Style Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and the health component of Universal Credit (UC). Therefore, this research explores the differences in the digital skills of customers claiming PIP alone, or PIP alongside other benefits like ESA or UC as well as illustrating key differences in capabilities and support needs of those claiming PIP with different disability types.

1.2 Research objectives

This research aimed to quantify the level of digital skills of PIP customers, including which digital tools they use, which they would like to use and their ability to engage with digital products. It looked at the access and support needs of PIP customers, including the barriers to accessing digital channels and the support needs required to

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[2] https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/essential-digital-skills-uk-2020
[3] Transforming for a digital future: 2022 to 2025 roadmap for digital and data - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
[4] DWP (2023) Health Transformation Programme evaluation strategy - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
[5] DWP (2022) Completing the move to Universal Credit - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
[6] Get your State Pension - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
[7] DWP (2023) Transforming Support: The Health and Disability White Paper.

allow these customers to access digital channels provided by DWP. It also uncovered customer preferences by channel and self-serve, including which channels claimants preferred to engage with when contacting DWP, whether these preferences varied by reason for engagement and their overall preferences when accessing government services online. It provides an understanding of how the needs of customers with or without current internet access vary, as well as illustrating the difference across various sub-groups within the PIP population such as level of education, age, gender, disability type, employment type, and social grade.

1.3 Methodology

Ipsos conducted a multi-mode survey across online and telephone for this research. All PIP customers in the sample for whom we had an email address (641 records) were invited to take part in the survey via an online invitation. The email provided information about the survey and how their data would be used. It contained a unique embedded link for respondents to complete the survey as well as an unsubscribe link to opt out. Customers were sent two email reminders over the course of fieldwork.

PIP customers without an email address (18,389 records) were sent a letter informing them of the research and were encouraged to take part online through a push-to-web[8] URL link included within the letter text, alongside a unique code for them to access the survey online. This letter made clear that they would be contacted by a telephone interviewer after a specified date if they had not completed the survey online or contacted Ipsos to opt out of the research. For records within the sample that were flagged as having an appointee who could act on their behalf (3,108 records), letters were addressed to the appointee. This appointee was also able to complete the telephone interview once contacted as part of the follow up. Customers contacted by telephone could also be signposted to complete the online survey if they preferred to take part that way.

While efforts were made to be inclusive, by offering both online and telephone for people to respond to the survey and allowing for appointees to complete the survey on a customer's behalf, there may be some people in the population who were unable to answer the survey via either option. It is important to note the possibility of the responses being not fully representative due to this, and to consider that people who were not able to complete the survey may be more likely to have low digital skills. The demographic profile of respondents to the survey can be found in Chapter 2. Overall response rate to the survey was 15.8%.

A sequential multi-mode design was used to increase response rates, improve representativeness of customers and to reduce costs. It encouraged a substantial group of customers who were among the easiest to interview to take part online, rather than them being required to be called by a telephone interviewer. One of the motivations for offering the telephone mode in addition to the push-to-web survey

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[8] A push-to-web survey is a quantitative data collection method in which offline contact modes (in this case, a letter) are used to encourage sample members to go online and complete a web questionnaire.

was to provide those without digital access the opportunity to take part, particularly important for a survey related to digital skills of DWP customers.

Between 20 March and 17 May 2023, 3,008 survey interviews were completed with PIP customers. 2,426 (81%) of these interviews were over the phone and 582 (19%) were online.

1.3.1 Sample

The PIP sample was provided by DWP and stratified by type of benefit. To select the sample, each benefit customer was assigned to the benefit sampling strata based on their most recent claimed benefit. This therefore means that the definition of the study population is based on the last claimed benefit; in other words, the survey estimate for PIP is actually an estimate for customers for whom that benefit was the most recently claimed. DWP supplied the equivalent population estimates for the counts of customers also based on the last benefit claimed.   Please note, that as PIP customers were sampled based on their latest benefit claimed through DWP, the PIP customers referred to in this report may also be claiming other benefits. The demographic profile of those who responded to the survey can be found in Chapter 2.

1.3.2 Weighting

The weighting consisted of a single stage of rim weighting[9], carried out separately for the samples for each benefit to population totals provided by DWP. These population figures were based on the most recent benefit claimed, not the total benefit population overall. The aim of the calibration weighting was to make the weighted profiles match the population figures, so that any sub-groups that were under-represented in the sample due to differential non-response would be in their correct proportions in the analyses.

DWP supplied the equivalent population estimates for the counts of customers also based on their latest benefit claimed. Although not directly comparable to the general population of PIP customers, the allocation to the latest benefit claimed was consistent between our achieved sample and the population counts, it meant that we were able to weight directly to those counts.

The PIP sample was weighted to: age group by gender; original year of claim; region; current award for daily living and/or mobility and current award length.

Interpreting the data

Percentages referenced throughout the report may not always equal 100% due to rounding. Where subgroup analysis has been included this is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

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[9] Random Iterative Method

1.4 All PIP customers

Digital capabilities

Overall, internet access was high amongst PIP customers. More than 4 in 5 (84%) were accessing the internet at the time of the survey. However, around 1 in 7 (16%) customers were offline at the time of the survey. This consisted of 9% who had never accessed the internet, and 7% who no longer used the internet but had done so in the past.

Two thirds (66%) of PIP customers reported that their personal internet usage had remained the same over the past 12 months. However, similar proportions (15%) reported both increased and decreased usage.

Internet confidence amongst PIP customers was mixed, with the level of this confidence linked to a customer's age and level of education. Overall, 60% of customers were confident in their abilities to use the internet, with those reporting they felt 'very confident' most likely to be university educated (50%) and under 45 years old (35%).

However, 40% of PIP customers were not confident in their ability to use the internet. Compared to the average (all PIP customers), particular groups of customers were significantly more likely to report not being confident in their ability to use the internet. This included customers who had no formal qualifications (64% not confident), were aged over 55 (52% not confident), whose employment status was long-term sick or disabled (49% not confident), or had particular disabilities such as sensory impairments (44% not confident) or chronic illnesses (43% not confident).

While smartphones were the most used device by PIP customers to access the internet (81% of online PIP customers used one), customers with a sensory impairment or physical / musculoskeletal condition were significantly more likely than the average to use a tablet. Customers with a learning difficulty or a cognitive disorder were more likely to use laptops or desktops. The implication for DWP here is that future online services should ensure they are compatible on multiple devices.

Assistive technologies[10] were used by 42% of PIP customers, but particularly by those living with sensory impairment and communication disabilities (49%), those who accessed the internet outside of their homes (49%), customers with a university degree (48%) or vocational qualification (47%), and those who had caring responsibilities (46%). There is a potential opportunity for DWP to raise awareness and educate customers about the benefits these assistive services can offer.

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[10] Assistive technology is any item, piece of equipment, software program, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of those with a disability. Examples provided in the survey included voice assistants, screen readers, assistive touch, screen magnifiers and voice recognition software.

Barriers

The most common barriers to accessing the internet for those who were offline were that their health condition made using the internet difficult (55%), or that they had a lack of digital skills and worried about making mistakes due to their lack of confidence (52%). Amongst existing internet users, their biggest concern preventing them from using the internet more was the risk of fraud and security related issues (48%), their health condition (42%), and their level of digital skill (39%). Customers who were not confident at using the internet were significantly more likely to suggest concerns about fraud and security would prevent them from using the internet more (60%), in comparison to confident internet users (44%).

Accessing Government services

Encouragingly, three quarters (75%) of all PIP customers reported that they would be able to apply for or manage their benefits online, although less than a third (30%) felt comfortable to do this on their own and felt they would need to rely on the help of others.

More than 4 in 5 (83%) of those who contacted DWP by telephone to manage their claim were internet users at the time of the research, suggesting that there is potential to encourage some of these people towards a more online focused experience in future.

Channel preferences and support needed

Channel preference was driven by the complexity of the engagement. Specific activities where PIP customers would prefer to engage with DWP digitally (whether through a website, over email and/or through an app) rather than the most popular analogue method, included updating their personal details (49%), receiving notifications or updates related to their claim (47%) or submitting supporting evidence for their claim (44%). For these more straightforward interactions, there was a level of openness towards engaging with DWP digitally. However, PIP customers were more reluctant to resolve payment and non-payment related queries online (30% and 33% respectively), preferring the telephone (64% for payment queries and 62% for non-payment queries). When being assessed by a healthcare professional (HCP), there was a preference for this to be a face-to-face interaction (57%) or happen over the telephone (36%) rather than be any kind of digital interaction (18%).

If a single online portal was available for PIP customers to manage all of their benefits, almost 3 in 5 (57%) suggested they would use it. A similar proportion of PIP customers (59%) reported that they would use an online portal for all government services. There was considerable crossover amongst those who were open to a portal to manage their benefit and a portal for all government services. These were statistically more likely to be those currently in employment, customers under 55 years old, women, more educated customers and customers who had a caring responsibility.

Assuming they wanted to use a DWP digital service, the most commonly cited way in which PIP customers wanted support to manage their benefit claim digitally was over the phone with a DWP adviser (46%), closely followed by written guidance (39%).

Under the same assumption, only 5% of PIP customers suggested they would want to receive no support or guidance, and a similar percentage (6%) were unsure. This suggests initial non-digital support and guidance might help to make PIP customers feel more comfortable online in the future. Customers whose employment status was long-term sick or disabled were more likely to want digital support over the phone (48%). This difference was statistically significant if that disability was a chronic, systemic or progressive illness (51%), a musculoskeletal or physical injury (49%) or a mental health condition (49%). Customers with a learning difficulty or cognitive disorder would slightly prefer support in written form (42%) than over the phone (39%) and written guidance was of significant appeal to those with a sensory impairment or communication problems (47%).

More digital forms of support were less favourable overall. However, they resonated more strongly amongst the youngest age group. For example, they were significantly more likely than the average PIP customer to want support through video guidance (21% of 16-24s compared to 16% of all PIP customers) or via a pop-up chat box speaking to a person on the other end (21% of 16-24s compared to 16% of all PIP customers).

Working status also impacted the support needs that PIP customers expressed. Overall, a fifth (21%) of respondents were employed at the time of the survey. These customers were more likely than the unemployed to want support through a pop-up chat box (27% of employed customers compared to 14% of unemployed), video guidance (22% compared to 16%) or video calling (18% compared to 13%). This corresponds to the higher levels of digital confidence amongst PIP customers in employment.

Encouraging future digital use

Keeping in touch with family and friends (34%) and free training courses to develop new skills (30%) were the key situations that would encourage PIP customers to further their digital skills in the future. This was followed by accessing benefits through online government services (28%). Employed PIP customers would be encouraged by the desire to upskill for their current roles (32%). Customers also had the aim of developing new skills (27%), but this was significantly higher amongst those who were employed (36%) or looking for work (53%) compared to the average.

However, around a fifth (18%) of PIP customers did not want to develop their digital skills in the future. These customers were more likely than average to be long term sick or disabled and have no formal qualifications.

Customers may need to be supported in order to achieve DWP's ambition of increasing the number of PIP applications being processed and managed digitally, though many are open to using digital more. Telephone support will help both users and non-internet users to transition, as will the capabilities of family and friends to act on their behalf and help them to navigate digital services. For current internet users, additional reassurances over security and privacy will be important. For non-users, provision of assisted support will help. Although not the most preferred kind of support across all groups, providing virtual support will help to reduce the burden on

DWP advisers and help encourage younger PIP customers to transition towards digital engagements in the future.

2. Demographic profile of PIP respondents

Below, we illustrate the weighted demographic profile of all PIP customers who responded to the survey. It details the proportion of responses to the survey by gender, disability, disability type, ethnicity, level of education, caring responsibilities, employment status and English as a second language. All demographic data is self-described. A tabled version of this data can be found in Section 9.2.

Man: 40%
Woman: 59%
Other: 1%

Lower secondary: 22%
Upper secondary: 11%
Vocational: 14%
University degree: 18%
No qualifications: 26%

Physical: 37%
Mental: 13%
Both: 44%
Not for more than 12 months: 7%

Caring responsibilities: 17%

Musculoskeletal: 54%
Mental health: 49%
Chronic / systemic / progressive: 41%
Sensory: 23%
Learning difficulties: 12%
Other (e.g. fatigue, memory): 29%

Employed or self-employed: 21%
Long-term disabled: 45%
Retired: 17%
Unemployed: 10%
Full-time carer: 3%
Student: 3%

Ethnic minority background: 13%

English as a second language: 8%

3. Level of digital skill

This chapter covers customers' internet usage; where customers access the internet, and what devices and assistive technologies they may use to go online. It discusses customers' confidence in their ability to go online, barriers to home access or internet use altogether, and further detail for customers who are currently online.

3.1 Internet usage

The survey opened with some questions designed to understand the proportion of PIP customers who were accessing the internet, whether their use of the internet had changed over the last year and how much they expected it to change in the coming year. It also included whether they had access inside and outside of the home, how much they used it, what assistive technologies they used to support that usage, and how confident they were overall in their ability to use the internet.

3.1.1 Current use

More than 4 in 5 (84%) PIP customers were accessing the internet at the time of the survey, compared to just under 1 in 10 (9%) who had never used the internet (Figure 3.1.1). A further 4% had 'tried it once or twice in the past, but not anymore' and 3% used the internet frequently in the past but had since stopped. Overall, 16% of PIP customers could therefore be considered non-users of the internet.

Figure 3.1.1: Have you ever accessed the internet?
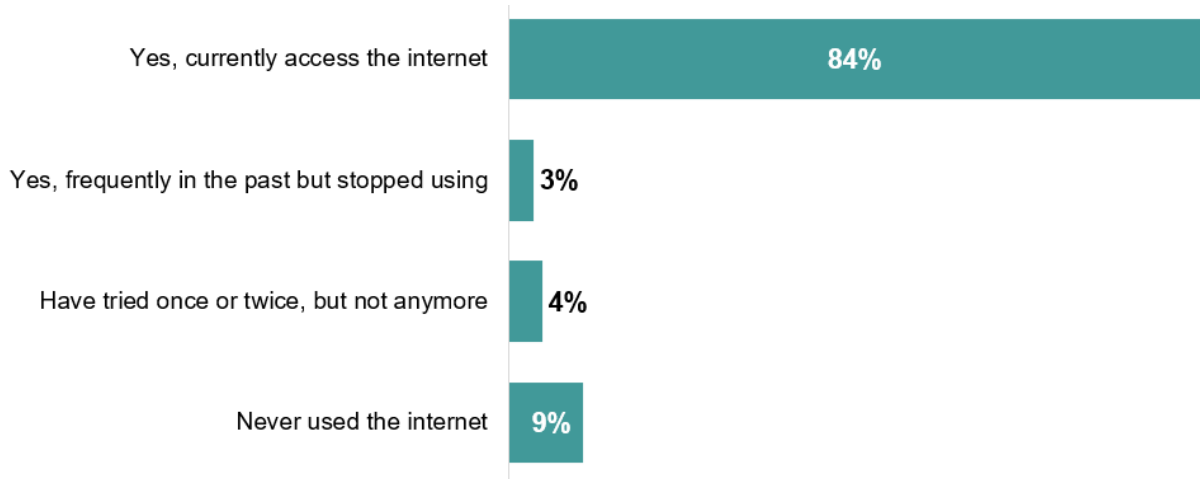
Base: All PIP customers (3,008)

The profile of those who were accessing the internet depended on a range of factors, including a customer's employment status. Almost all employed PIP customers were using the internet at the time of the research (97%) as well as a similarly high

proportion of students (96%) and those who were unemployed but looking for a job (91%).

Age was also a driving factor of internet usage. Younger customers aged 16-24 (95%) or 25-34 (91%) were significantly more likely to be internet users than the average PIP customer (84%).

Customers who were only claiming PIP were significantly more likely (88%) than those claiming multiple benefits (81%) to be users of the internet at the time of the research. This was reflective of the fact that only 10% of customers claiming multiple benefits were employed or self-employed, in comparison to over a third (35%) of customers whose only benefit claimed was PIP. Less than 4 in 5 (79%) of those claiming PIP and ESA were internet users at the time of the survey compared to 85% of those who were claiming both PIP and UC. However, this is unsurprising as UC is primarily managed digitally through the UC Online account.

Those whose working status was long-term sick or disabled (47% of all respondents) or retired (17% of all respondents), were the most likely to have never used the internet (both 12%).

There were no significant differences between disability categories in terms of what proportion of PIP customers were accessing the internet at the time of the research.

3.1.2 Usage trends

Over the past 12 months, two thirds of PIP customers who had used the internet (66%) reported that their personal use of the internet had stayed the same (Figure 3.1.2). 15% reported that their use had increased, and the same proportion (15%) said it had decreased.

Figure 3.1.2: In the last 12 months, has your personal use of the internet increased, stayed the same or decreased? In 12 months from now, do you think your personal use of the internet will increase, decrease, or stay the same?

Legend: ■ Increased / will increase ■ Stayed the same ■ Decreased / will decrease ■ Don't know

	Increased / will increase	Stayed the same	Decreased / will decrease	Don't know
Internet use over the last 12 months	15%	66%	15%	3%
Internet use in the next 12 months	12%	74%	7%	7%
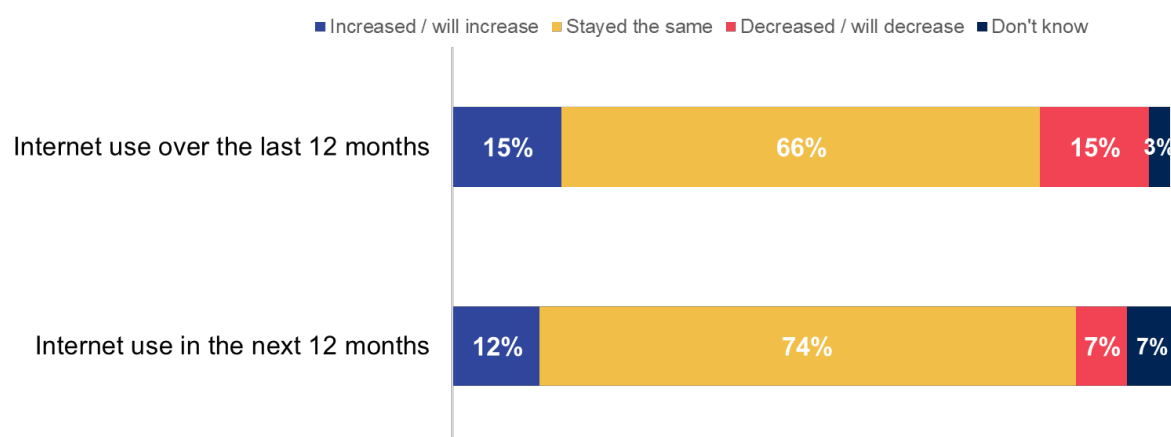
Base: All who have used the internet asked about the last year (2,706), all customers asked about the next year (3,008)

The most likely customer types who had increased their use of the internet included those with a working status of unemployed but looking for a job (25% had increased use), students (22%), the employed/self-employed (20%), as well as customers who speak English as a second language (23%) and 16–24-year-olds (21%).

Looking ahead 12 months (Figure 3.1.2), almost three quarters (74%) of all PIP customers thought that their personal use of the internet would stay the same and 12% thought it would increase. There was a similar profile amongst customers whose internet use had increased over the past 12 months as those who thought it would increase over the year to come.

A minority of PIP customers felt that their future usage would decrease (7%). Those more likely to express this sentiment included customers not confident in their ability to use the internet (11%), over 60s (10%), and those living with a sensory impairment (10%) or a mental health condition (9%). If a customer was only using the internet infrequently when surveyed, for example on a monthly basis, they were amongst the most likely to think their use of it would decrease even further in future (18%).

3.1.3 Internet access inside and outside the home

Almost 4 in 5 (79%) of all PIP customers who responded to the survey had internet access at home and used it via broadband.

The profile of those who had internet access at home was similar to the profile of those who currently accessed it generally; they were significantly more likely to be employed (94% of all employed customers had access at home), university educated (94% with a degree had access at home) and younger (93% of all 16-24 year olds had access at home).

However, internet access outside of the home was much less frequent (Figure 3.1.3). Overall, 45% of all PIP customers using the internet at the time of the research accessed it in a place other than their home.

Figure 3.1.3: Do you ever access the internet anywhere other than in your home at all?

Category	Percentage
No, do not access the internet away from home	55%
Through family or friends	16%
At a workplace	13%
Public computer at a library / public place	11%
School / college / university	4%
Public computer at a Jobcentre	1%
Other	16%
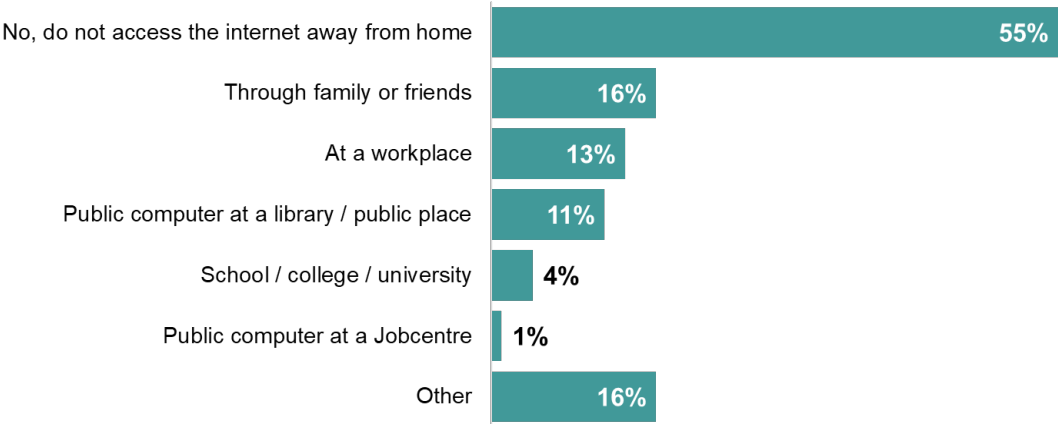
Base: All PIP customers who go online at home and/or elsewhere (2,494) - multi-code (multiple options could be selected). 'Other' was typically mobile broadband through a smartphone device.

There was some overlap in the options selected as customers could select more than one location when responding to this question. The most common ways to access

were through friends and family (16%), at a workplace (13%), at a public computer at a library or another public space (11%) or at school, college, or university (4%). 16% reported they accessed it outside of their home in another way, which tended to be through mobile broadband on their smartphone device.

Customers who accessed the internet outside of the home tended to be more regular users of the internet and were more likely than the average PIP customer to access the internet outside of their home if they had increased their use of the internet in the last 12 months (61% accessed outside of their homes) or planned to increase it over the next 12 months (55% accessed outside of their homes).

Compared to customers only claiming PIP, those claiming multiple benefits were significantly more likely to report they did not access the internet away from their homes (59%), par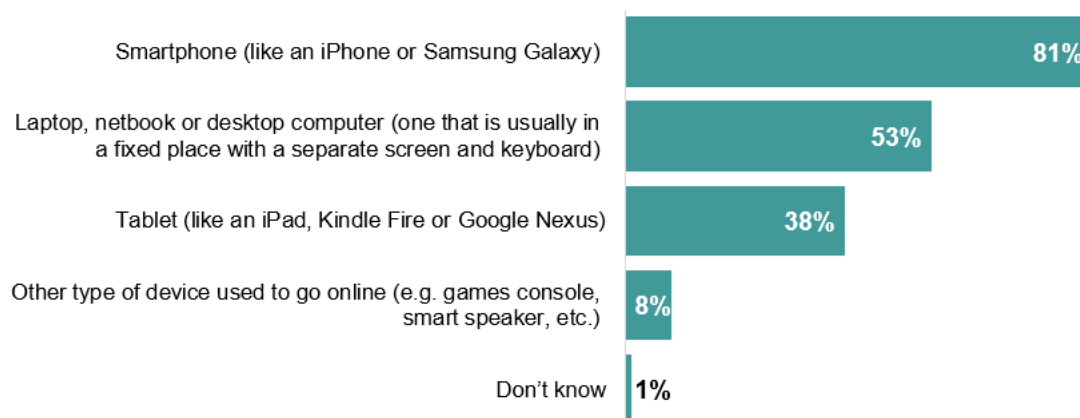ticularly if that additional benefit was ESA (64%). Other customer groups less likely to access the internet outside of their homes were those unemployed and not looking for a job (70%), those who were retired (66%), and customers who were long-term sick or disabled (65%).

3.1.4 Devices and assistive technology

Smartphone was the device used most frequently by PIP customers to access the internet. Given the high proportions of benefit lines accessing the internet via their smartphones, it is important that DWP online services remain mobile compatible. More than 4 in 5 (81%) of those who go online at home or elsewhere used a smartphone to access the internet (Figure 3.1.4). Just over half (53%) used a laptop or desktop computer, and a slightly lower percentage used a tablet like an iPad, Kindle Fire or Google Nexus (38%).

Figure 3.1.4: Which of these devices do you use to go online?

Device	Percentage
Smartphone (like an iPhone or Samsung Galaxy)	81%
Laptop, netbook or desktop computer (one that is usually in a fixed place with a separate screen and keyboard)	53%
Tablet (like an iPad, Kindle Fire or Google Nexus)	38%
Other type of device used to go online (e.g. games console, smart speaker, etc.)	8%
Don't know	1%

Base: All PIP customers currently accessing the internet (2,423) - multi-code (multiple options could be selected)

Smartphones were most likely to be used regardless of disability type. However, if a PIP customer had a mental health condition, they were significantly more likely than the average to be a smartphone user (84% compared to 81% average). If they had learning difficulties or a cognitive disorder, they were more likely than the average to be laptop or desktop users (65% compared to 53% average), or if they had a sensory

impairment or physical / musculoskeletal condition, they were more likely than the average to be tablet users (42% and 41% respectively compared to 38% average).

Assistive technologies were used by 42% of PIP customers, but particularly by those living with sensory impairment and communication disabilities (49%), those who accessed the internet outside of their homes (49%), customers with a university degree (48%) or vocational qualification (47%), and those who had caring responsibilities (46%).

The most used assistive technology amongst PIP customers accessing the internet (Figure 3.1.5) was a voice assistant such as Alexa, Siri or Google Assistant (31%).

Figure 3.1.5: Which, if any, of the following technologies do you use when accessing the internet?
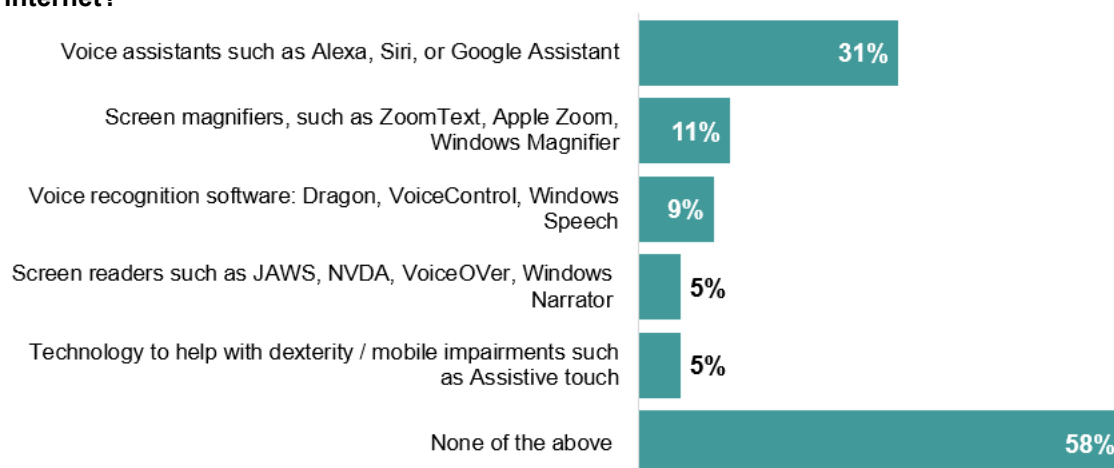
Base: All PIP customers currently accessing the internet (2,423) - multi-code (multiple options could be selected)

Compared to the average PIP customer, screen magnifiers like ZoomText, Apple Zoom and Windows Magnifier were significantly more likely to be used by those with sensory impairment and communication problems (16% compared to 11% average) or those with other conditions or disabilities like issues with concentration and memory (13%). Screen readers such as JAWS, NVDA VoiceOver and Windows Narrator were only used by 1 in 20 (5%) but were statistically significantly more likely to be used by those living with sensory impairments (8%) or those accessing the internet on a laptop (7%). Technology to help with dexterity or mobile impairments such as Assistive Touch was also used by 1 in 20 (5%) overall but was more likely used by students (11%) and those living with 'other' health conditions or disabilities like obesity, or problems due to alcohol or drug addiction (9%). Overall, those who had a sensory impairment or communication problems were the disabled customer type most likely to use any assistive technology to access the internet (49%).

3.1.5 Internet use

Just over 3 in 5 (61%) PIP customers who were accessing the internet at the time of the research used it several times a day or more, with a further 15% using it around once per day. Of internet users, more than three quarters (76%) used the internet daily. 18% used it weekly, either several times a week (13%) or around once a week

(4%) and 3% used it monthly or less. Taking into account non-internet users, 64% of all PIP customers used the internet daily, 15% weekly and 22% used it monthly or less often.

Overall, 20% of PIP customers were in employment. These customers were the most likely to use the internet several times a day (76%). This was significantly more than the 59% of unemployed PIP customers not looking for a job or those whose employment status was long-term sick or disabled (54%) who used the internet on a daily basis. Of those who were unemployed but looking for a job, over 7 in 10 (71%) were using it several times a day. If a PIP customer had internet access at home, then they were significantly more likely to be daily users of the internet (78%) than those who did not have access at home (28%).

3.1.6 Internet confidence

Overall, PIP customers were more confident than not in using the internet (Figure 3.1.6), though there was a wide range of reported levels of confidence from 'very confident' to 'not at all confident'. 60% reported that they were confident (very/fairly) in their abilities to use the internet compared to 40% who said they were not confident.

Figure 3.1.6: How confident, if at all, do you feel in your ability to use the internet?
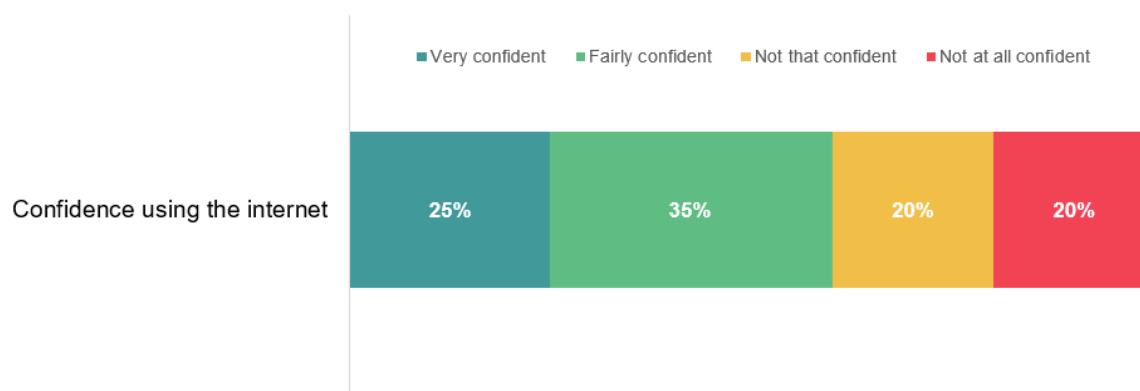
Base: All PIP customers, excluding 'don't know' and 'prefer not to say' (2,958)

Confidence was related to how often a PIP customer accessed the internet, with 75% of confident users accessing the internet several times a day compared to 31% of unconfident users. Customers with greater confidence were also more likely to access the internet outside of the home compared to unconfident users (53% compared to 26%).

Internet confidence amongst PIP customers was closely associated with customer age, level of education and type of disability. Just over three quarters (77%) of 16–24-year-olds reported that they were confident, as did a slightly higher proportion of 25–34-year-olds (79%). Internet confidence gradually declined by age range, falling to 46% for those aged over 65 (Figure 3.1.7). Those under 35 were more likely than the average PIP customer to be employed or actively looking for a job, both situations in which they might be required to use certain digital skills.
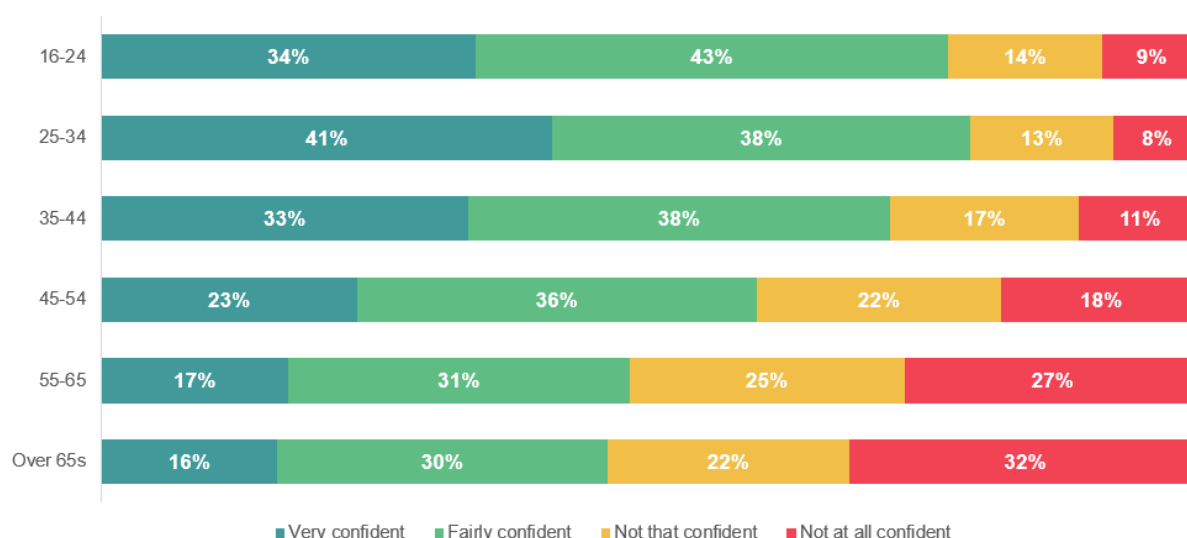
Figure 3.1.7: How confident, if at all, do you feel in your ability to use the internet?

Base: All PIP customers, excluding 'don't know' and 'prefer not to say': 16-24 (368), 25-34 (200), 35-44 (212), 45-54 (550), 55-65 (1,124), Over 65s (510)

The most confident PIP customers were those who were university educated. Of these customers, 85% were confident internet users with the majority being "very confident" users. In comparison, those customers with no formal qualifications had much lower confidence levels, with 39% reporting they were not confident at all in using the internet. Customers with no formal qualifications were more likely to be older so there was a level of interaction between these two factors impacting confidence. Almost two thirds of PIP customers (64%) with no qualifications reported that they were not confident in using the internet to some degree.

Compared to the overall PIP average (40% not confident), customers who had sensory impairments or communication problems (44% not confident), chronic, systemic or progressive illnesses (44% not confident) or musculoskeletal conditions (42% not confident) were all more likely to suggest they had low levels of confidence in using the internet.

3.1.7 Needing support when accessing the internet

Customers who had used the internet at any point were asked whether they could perform certain activities online, either with or without help (Figure 3.1.8)[11].

Almost 9 in 10 (88%) of those who had accessed the internet at any point said they could find information on websites to solve problems either alone or with help, with more than half (57%) able to do this activity alone.

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[11] There was an additional proportion of customers who did not access the internet and so were not asked this question. It is unclear whether they would be able to do the online activities listed below with help, or not at all, but it can be assumed that they would not be able to do them alone. However, their ability to perform online tasks will be covered in more detail in Chapter 4.

Figure 3.1.8: Thinking now about the following general activities that you can do on the internet. Which, if any, of the following activities could you do online either with or without help?
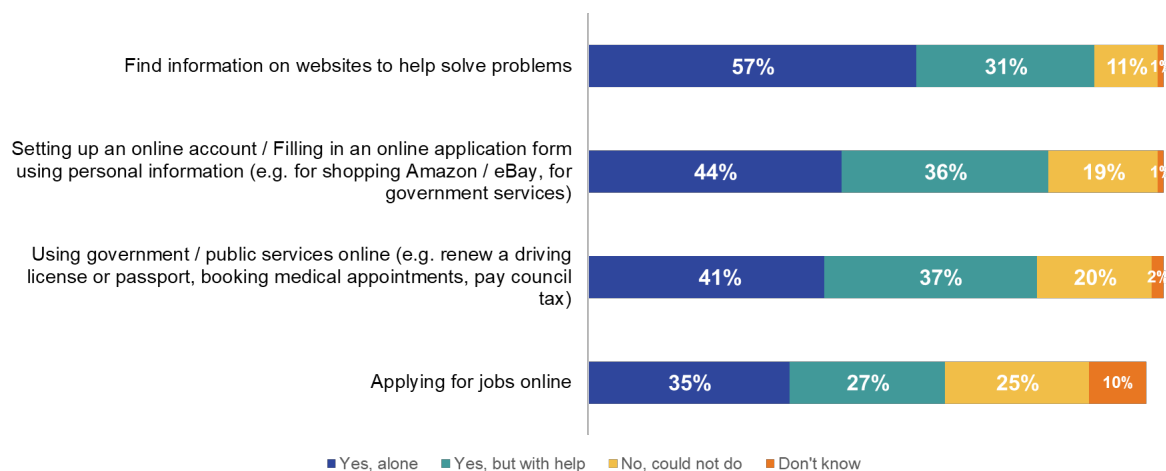
Base: All PIP customers who have used the internet, currently or in the past (2,706)

Four in five (80%) said they could set up an online account or fill in an online application form using personal information and just under half said they were able to do this alone (44%). A similar percentage (78%) could use government or public services online, for example to renew a driving license, passport, or pay their council tax. Just over 2 in 5 (41%) could do this task alone.

Significantly fewer PIP customers felt they could apply for jobs online (62%), with only around a third (35%) suggesting they could do this alone without help. Those who could not apply for jobs online were more likely to have had no formal education (45%) or were long-term sick or disabled (34%). Employment status also influenced whether PIP customers felt able to do this task. Almost 9 in 10 (88%) of the currently employed felt able to do it, as well as 82% of those currently looking for a job. Considering disability types, those with learning difficulties and cognitive disorders were most likely to say they could not do this task (44%) as well as those with sensory impairments and communication problems (32%). These customers also showed lower levels of internet confidence compared to other groups.

For those that identified they needed help with some online activities, they would usually turn to family members who lived with them to help (55%) or to family members who lived elsewhere (35%). A smaller proportion of PIP customers received help from a friend (15%), their carers (8%), support organisations like Citizens Advice (7%) or from an organisation or department providing a tailored service (5%).

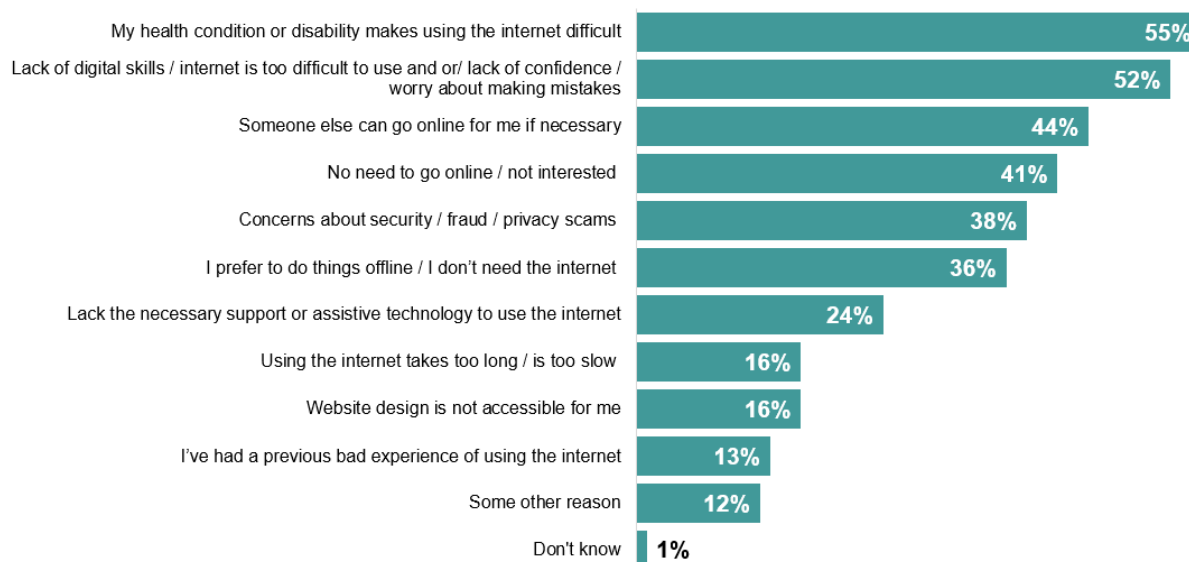# 3.2 Barriers to internet use

A series of questions intended to understand barriers to internet use were asked to different kinds of PIP customer. These barriers uncovered reasons why offline customers did not use the internet, why online customers did not use the internet for more activities than they currently did and what would encourage further use in future for both users and non-users of the internet.

3.2.1 Offline customers

Overall, more than 1 in 7 PIP customers (16%) were offline at the time of the survey. These customers were asked for reasons why they do not use the internet (Figure 3.2.1).

Figure 3.2.1: Which of these, if any, are reasons why you do not use the internet?

Reason	Percentage
My health condition or disability makes using the internet difficult	55%
Lack of digital skills / internet is too difficult to use and or/ lack of confidence / worry about making mistakes	52%
Someone else can go online for me if necessary	44%
No need to go online / not interested	41%
Concerns about security / fraud / privacy scams	38%
I prefer to do things offline / I don't need the internet	36%
Lack the necessary support or assistive technology to use the internet	24%
Using the internet takes too long / is too slow	16%
Website design is not accessible for me	16%
I've had a previous bad experience of using the internet	13%
Some other reason	12%
Don't know	1%

Base: All PIP customers who are currently offline (502) - multi-code (multiple options could be selected)

The most frequently given reason was that for these customers, their health condition or disability made using the internet difficult (55%). Of non-users, those significantly more likely to cite their health condition as a reason for not using the internet were those with learning difficulties or a cognitive disorder (70%), a sensory impairment or communication problems (66%), a mental health condition (61%) or other conditions and disabilities (67%) like problems due to alcohol or other drugs, or fatigue and memory problems.

Another common barrier for those who were offline and not using the internet included their perception that they lacked digital skills, felt the internet was too difficult to use, and/or they worried they would make mistakes (52%). Those with musculoskeletal or physical injuries (60%) and chronic, systemic or progressive illnesses (61%) in fact felt that this was their main barrier, more so than their health condition. Customers with these kinds of disabilities were often older than the average PIP customer and had lower levels of internet confidence in general (see Section 3.1.6).

Amongst this offline group, women (59%) were also significantly more likely than men (45%) to suggest a lack of digital skills was a barrier, with this also being a greater barrier for women compared to their health condition (53%).

3.2.2 Current internet users

For everyone using the internet (84% of all PIP customers), we asked what was preventing them from using the internet for more activities than they were at the time of the research (Figure 3.2.2).

Figure 3.2.2: Which, if any, of the following reasons are stopping you from using the internet for more activities than you use it for now?

Reason	Percentage
Concerns of fraud / privacy / security / scams	48%
My health condition or disability makes using the internet difficult	42%
Lack of digital skills / internet is too difficult to use and or/ lack of confidence / worry about making mistakes	39%
Prefer to do things offline / I don't need the internet	21%
Using the internet takes too long / is too slow	16%
Previous bad experience	14%
Would be too expensive	10%
Don't have the time	7%
Some other reason	8%
Nothing, I already use the internet for a lot of activities	21%
Don't know	1%
Prefer not to say	1%

Base: All PIP customers who access the internet (2,494) - multi-code (multiple options could be selected)

Around 1 in 5 (21%) suggested that nothing was a barrier and that they already used the internet for a lot of activities. The main concern for most was fraud, privacy, security, and/or scams (48%), with customers between the ages of 55-65 particularly concerned about this (54% cited fraud and security as a barrier to more use). Younger customers, aged 16-24, were the least concerned of all age bands, but concerns of fraud, privacy, security, and/or scams was still their main barrier overall (38%). Fraud, privacy, security and scams were more of a concern if a person was not confident in their ability to use the internet (60%).

42% felt that their health condition or disability was a barrier to them using the internet more, and if that disability was a learning difficulty (59%) or sensory impairment (55%), then these customers felt that their condition was a greater barrier than fraud and security issues. Additionally, customers claiming both PIP and ESA reported their health conditions as being a barrier (53%) more than concerns regarding fraud and security (51%).

Almost 2 in 5 (39%) internet users felt their lack of digital skills were a barrier to using the internet more, especially true for those PIP customers also claiming ESA (43%), the long-term sick or disabled (45%), those with learning difficulties (50%) and those with no formal qualifications (53%).
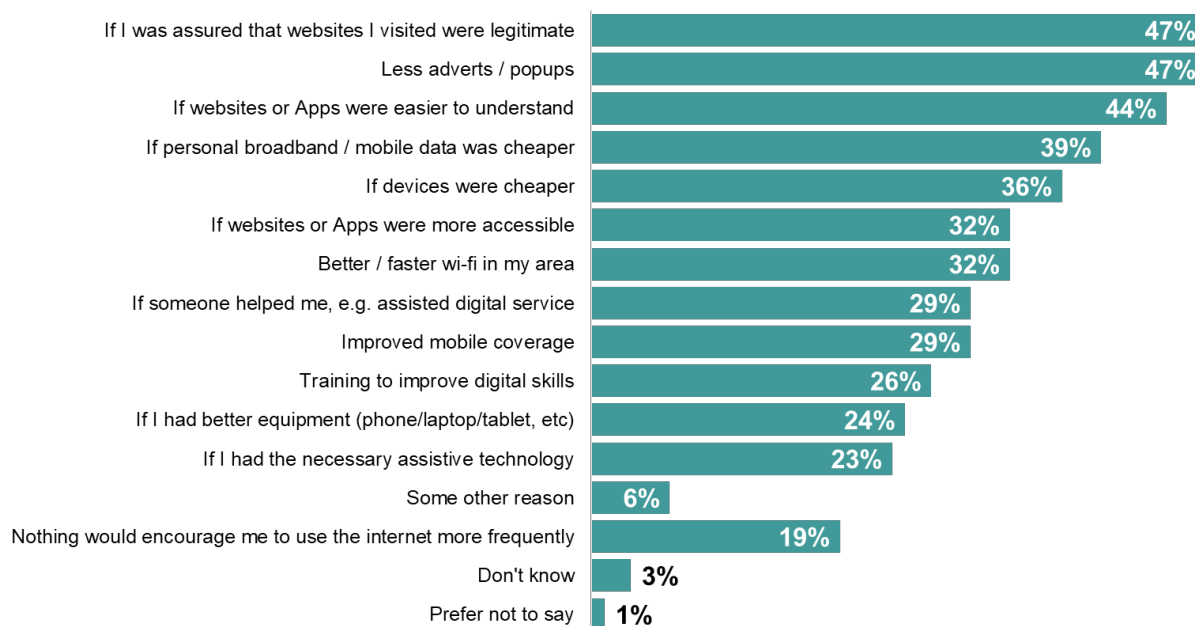
Outside of these three main barriers, PIP customers reported that they preferred to do some things offline (21%), using the internet was too slow or took too long (16%),

that they had had a previous bad experience (14%) or thought it would be too expensive (10%).

3.2.3 Encouraging further internet use in the future

All PIP customers using the internet were asked what would encourage them to use the internet for more activities in the future (Figure 3.2.3).

Figure 3.2.3: Which, if any, of the following would encourage you to use the internet for more activities in the future?

If I was assured that websites I visited were legitimate	47%
Less adverts / popups	47%
If websites or Apps were easier to understand	44%
If personal broadband / mobile data was cheaper	39%
If devices were cheaper	36%
If websites or Apps were more accessible	32%
Better / faster wi-fi in my area	32%
If someone helped me, e.g. assisted digital service	29%
Improved mobile coverage	29%
Training to improve digital skills	26%
If I had better equipment (phone/laptop/tablet, etc)	24%
If I had the necessary assistive technology	23%
Some other reason	6%
Nothing would encourage me to use the internet more frequently	19%
Don't know	3%
Prefer not to say	1%

Base: All PIP customers using the internet (2,494) - multi-code (multiple options could be selected)
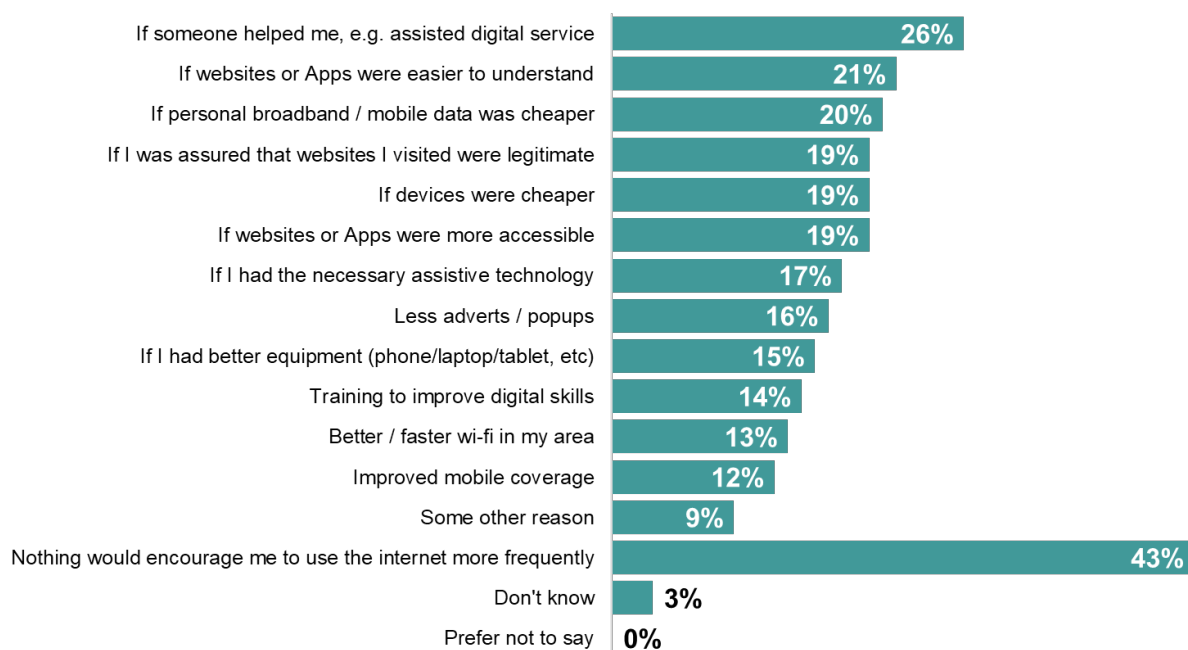
For internet users, who have been shown (see [Section 3.1.1](#)) to be younger, employed or actively looking for a job and claiming just a single benefit (in PIP), they would be most encouraged to use the internet for more activities in the future by being assured that websites were legitimate or seeing less advert or pop-ups when browsing.

Making websites easier to understand would also help to encourage more internet use. Customers who said that they had the most issues with understanding websites tended to have vocational qualifications (49%), have a mental health condition (43%) or were women (43%).

Just under one in five current users (19%) suggested that nothing would encourage them to use it more frequently, although a high proportion of these customers were already using the internet on a frequent basis.

Non-internet users were generally more resistant to using the internet for more activities in the future (Figure 3.2.4). More than 2 in 5 (43%) suggested that nothing would encourage them to use the internet more, with this being a more common response amongst non-internet using retired customers (56%) and those who had never used the internet (51%).

Figure 3.2.4: Which, if any, of the following would encourage you to use the internet for more activities in the future?

If someone helped me, e.g. assisted digital service	26%
If websites or Apps were easier to understand	21%
If personal broadband / mobile data was cheaper	20%
If I was assured that websites I visited were legitimate	19%
If devices were cheaper	19%
If websites or Apps were more accessible	19%
If I had the necessary assistive technology	17%
Less adverts / popups	16%
If I had better equipment (phone/laptop/tablet, etc)	15%
Training to improve digital skills	14%
Better / faster wi-fi in my area	13%
Improved mobile coverage	12%
Some other reason	9%
Nothing would encourage me to use the internet more frequently	43%
Don't know	3%
Prefer not to say	0%

Base: All PIP customers not using the internet (502) - multi-code (multiple options could be selected)

However, the thing that would most encourage non-users to use the internet for more activities in the future was if somebody helped them or they were able to use an assisted digital service (26%). Assisted services were of particular interest to those with learning difficulties or cognitive disorders (38%) and those with mental health conditions (33%).
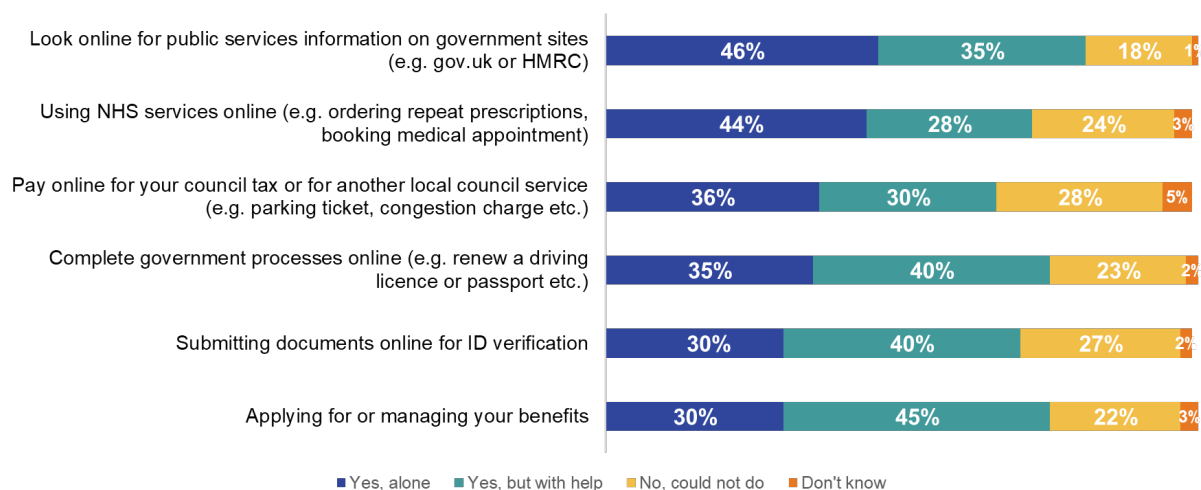
4. Internet use for government (and DWP) services

This chapter covers the extent to which PIP customers perform a range of online activities either alone, with help, or not at all. It details how customers currently prefer to contact DWP, their awareness and use of assistive services provided by DWP and their experiences of using GOV.UK. It outlines customer preferences for using an online portal, including what would stop them from accessing a portal online, as well as customer preferences by channel for engaging with DWP for a range of activities that might occur as part of a benefit claim.

4.1 Online government service usage

All PIP customers were asked, if government or public services were available online, which activities could they do alone, which they could do but with help, or could not do (Figure 4.1.1).

Figure 4.1.1: Thinking now about using government or public services online. If they were available, which, if any, of the following services could you do online either with or without help?

Service	Yes, alone	Yes, but with help	No, could not do	Don't know
Look online for public services information on government sites (e.g. gov.uk or HMRC)	46%	35%	18%	1%
Using NHS services online (e.g. ordering repeat prescriptions, booking medical appointment)	44%	28%	24%	3%
Pay online for your council tax or for another local council service (e.g. parking ticket, congestion charge etc.)	36%	30%	28%	5%
Complete government processes online (e.g. renew a driving licence or passport etc.)	35%	40%	23%	2%
Submitting documents online for ID verification	30%	40%	27%	2%
Applying for or managing your benefits	30%	45%	22%	3%

■ Yes, alone ■ Yes, but with help ■ No, could not do ■ Don't know

Base: All PIP customers (3,008)

Just over 4 in 5 (81%) of all PIP customers reported that they could look online for public services information on government websites, for example GOV.UK or HMRC, with almost half (46%) of all PIP customers being able to do this alone. Three quarters (75%) reported that they would be able to apply for or manage their benefits online, although less than a third (30%) felt comfortable to do this on their own. A similar proportion (75%) felt able to complete government processes online, for

example renewing a driving license or passport, with a slightly higher proportion (35%) suggesting they would be able to do this alone.

Just over 7 in 10 (72%) felt they could use NHS services online, although more than 2 in 5 (44%) felt able to do this alone. 70% could submit documents online for ID verification and almost two thirds (66%) felt they could pay online for their council tax or another council service, like paying a parking ticket or congestion charge.
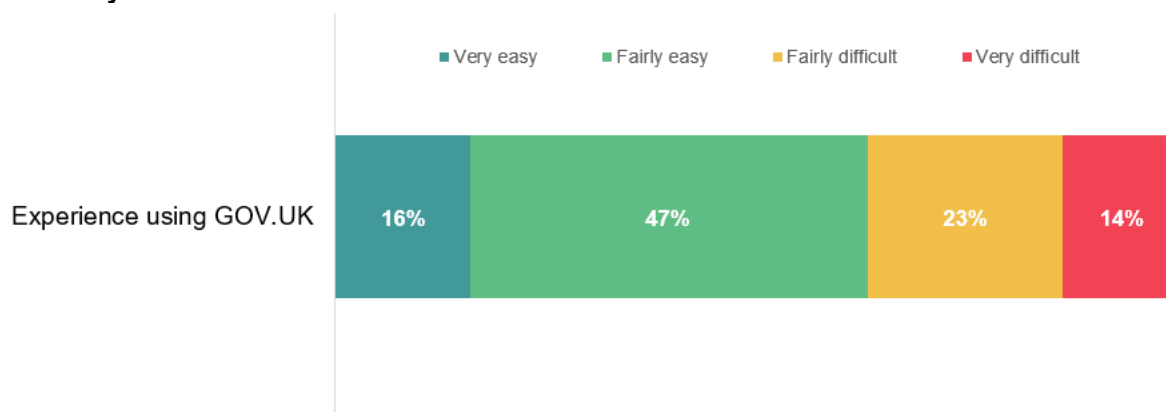
The characteristics of those who said they could do a task compared to those who could not, were the same for all online tasks. If a customer was employed or unemployed but actively looking for a job, if their disability only reduced their day-to-day abilities a little, if they were university educated, had internet access at home and felt confident in their abilities to use the internet, they were more likely to be able to perform these online tasks.

However, if their employment status was long-term sick or disabled, they had learning difficulties or sensory impairment problems, had no formal qualifications, did not have internet access at home and claimed both PIP and ESA, then they were more likely to say they could not do these tasks either alone or with help.

4.1.1 Using GOV.UK

Overall, three quarters (75%) of PIP customers had used the GOV.UK website. More than 3 in 5 (63%) found their last visit to the website very or fairly easy to find all of the information they needed compared to 37% who found it difficult (Figure 4.1.2). Customers mostly found the experience 'fairly easy', however, with only 16% reporting that they found it 'very easy'.

Figure 4.1.2: Thinking back to when you last used the government website, WWW.GOV.UK, how easy or difficult was it to find all the information needed?

Legend: ■ Very easy ■ Fairly easy ■ Fairly difficult ■ Very difficult

Experience using GOV.UK: 16% Very easy, 47% Fairly easy, 23% Fairly difficult, 14% Very difficult

Base: All who had used GOV.UK excluding 'Don't know' and 'Prefer not to say' (1,883)

Those who found using GOV.UK very difficult were more likely to have a physical or mental health condition, with it especially difficult for those who had both (18% found it 'very difficult'), and amongst those who had used the internet frequently in the past but had stopped using it at the time of the survey (36% found it 'very difficult').

Customers without internet access at home found the GOV.UK website to be more difficult (56% of those who had used it) than easy (44%). Of those without internet access at home, almost half (49%) had never used the website.

4.2 Preferences for DWP

This section covers how PIP customers interact with DWP and their preferences in doing so for a wide range of activities that may occur as part of their benefit claim.

4.2.1 Contacting DWP

We asked how do PIP customers usually contact DWP in relation to managing their PIP claim. Customers were mostly using the telephone (72%) to contact, just over a quarter (26%) were using post and just under 1 in 5 (17%) were using the internet or an online account. If a customer was claiming both PIP and UC, the proportion using online to contact DWP and manage their PIP claim was greater, at 33%. At the time of the survey, contacting DWP online to manage a PIP claim was only in a testing phase, so we would not expect to see such a high proportion of PIP customers contacting DWP in this way. For those also claiming UC, there may have been some conflation between managing their UC claim and managing their PIP claim.

Of those who contacted DWP by phone (72%), more than 4 in 5 (83%) were internet users at the time of the survey. This would suggest that 60% of all PIP customers (those who currently use the phone to manage their PIP claim but do use the internet) could be encouraged to manage their claim online. However, confidence levels amongst this group of customers did vary. Of this group of internet users who manage their PIP claim over the phone, 29% were 'very confident' internet users and 40% were 'fairly confident'. This suggests that two in five (41%) PIP customers (who used the phone to contact DWP but felt confident online) would be confident moving towards a digital experience in future when managing their claim.

Of those who contacted DWP by post (26%), the majority were internet users at the time of the survey (87%), of which 68% were 'very' or 'fairly' confident users. This group (i.e. those who used the post to contact DWP but felt confident online) represents 15% of all PIP customers surveyed, who also might easily transition towards a digital experience in the future.

There was some overlap between customers contacting DWP by both phone and post, so the total proportion of PIP customers who contacted by either of these two methods but were online and felt confident in their ability to use the internet was 45%. The barriers for more internet use from this group of customers were the same as internet users more generally (see Section 3.2.2).

When contacting DWP about their claim (Figure 4.2.1), PIP customers tended to predominantly rely on support from a family member or friend (57%) and for some, support from a professional like a welfare rights adviser (21%). Around 1 in 10 (12%) used communication by email, face-to-face JobCentre Plus support (10%) or home visits from visiting officers (8%). Customers claiming UC as well as PIP were significantly more likely than single-benefit PIP customers to rely on face-to-face JobCentre Plus support (21%).

Figure 4.2.1: Which, if any, of the following assistive or support services provided by DWP, are you aware of? When contacting DWP about your claim, do you use any of the following assistive or support services?
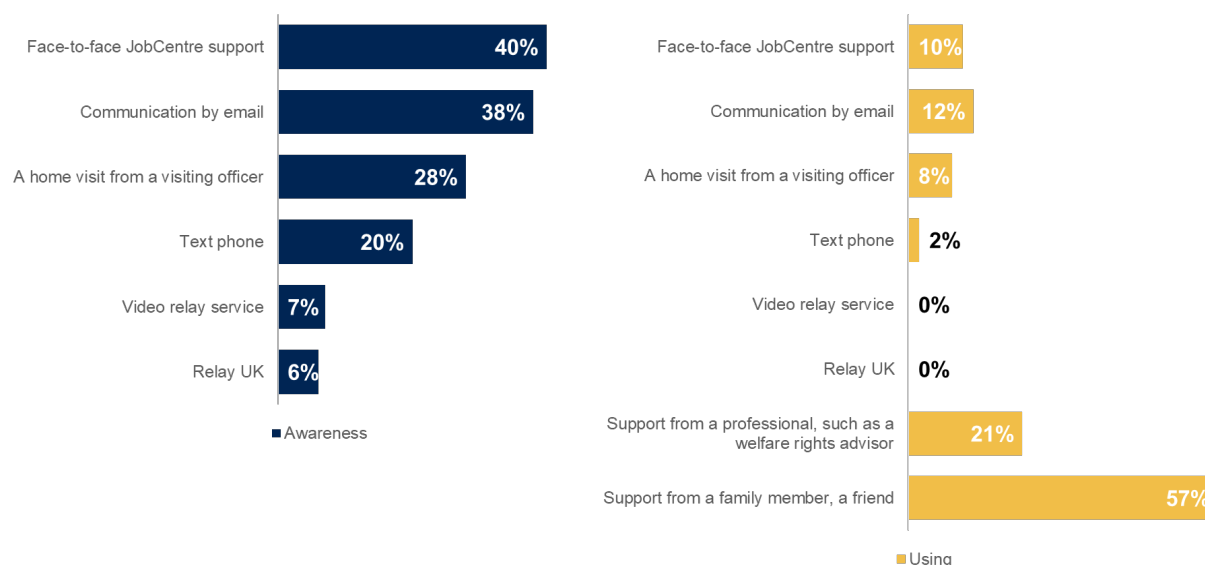
Base: All PIP customers (3,008) - multi-code (multiple options could be selected)

*Awareness for support from a family member, friend or professional not asked

Around a third of PIP customers were unaware of any kind of assistive and support services provided by DWP (32%). The most known services were face-to-face support at a JobCentre Plus (40%), communication via email (38%), home visits from a visiting officer (28%) and the text phone service (20%). A smaller proportion were aware of Video Relay (7%) and Relay UK (6%).

4.2.2 Preferred ways of engaging with DWP

We asked customers their preferred methods for communicating with DWP for a variety of activities that occur throughout the duration of a PIP claim. These activities included things such as:

- Registering an initial claim

- Completing the 'how your disability affects you' questionnaire

- Submitting supporting evidence

- Being assessed by a HCP

- Checking the progress of a claim

- Disputing decisions or resolving payment and non-payment related queries

- Updating personal details

- Reporting a change in circumstances

- Receiving notifications related to a claim.

Customers gave their preferences for ways to engage with DWP for each of these activities and could select from online or through the website, through an app, by email, over the phone, face-to-face, or by post. Customers were able to choose all methods they would like to use, not just their first preference. In this section, when we refer to 'digital', we mean any of 'online / website', 'email' or 'app'. 'Online' refers only to those who selected 'online / website' as an option.

Channel preference was typically driven by the complexity of the engagement, Personal interaction with DWP was preferred for more complex issues. Overall, the telephone was the most preferred channel of interaction for resolving any payment related queries or issues (Figure 4.2.2), as well as many other benefit claim engagements, listed below in chronological order as a customer makes a benefit claim from start to finish. For all activities that might occur as part of a PIP claim, online was not the preferred way to engage with DWP, though this might be because PIP customers cannot currently use that method to communicate with DWP.

Figure 4.2.2: If it were available, in which of the following ways would you most prefer to engage with DWP for each of the following activities that might occur as part of your Personal Independence Payment claim? Most commonly preferred method shown alongside percentage selected

Base: All PIP customers (3,008) - multi-code (multiple options could be selected)

PIP customers still most preferred to do some activities through the post, including submitting supporting evidence, receiving updates related to their claim and for completing their 'how your disability affects you' questionnaire. Being assessed by a HCP was the only activity for which PIP customers had a preference for face-to-face, though just over a third (36%) would prefer to do this over the phone.

The types of customers who preferred to engage with DWP over the phone were more likely to have no formal qualifications, be long-term sick or disabled, were older customers and were current non-users of the internet.

For more straightforward interactions, however, there was a level of openness towards engaging with DWP digitally. Here, a larger proportion of PIP customers expressed a preference for digital engagements either online, through an app or over email for these simple engagements compared to more complex interactions. The activity that customers were most open to engaging with DWP through a website was for updating their personal details such as bank or home address information (39%). This was only one percentage point below the proportion of PIP customers who reported a preference to do this activity over the phone (40%). The type of customer most open to doing this online had a working status as either a student (57%) or employed (53%), were confident in their abilities to use the internet (55%), had at least a secondary education (53%), and were under 35 (51%).

Figure 4.2.3 illustrates the proportion of customers who selected a preference for a digital engagement with DWP, either online through a website, through an app, or over email for each of the listed activities that might occur as part of a benefit claim. For all of the activities, fewer than half of PIP customers would prefer a digital engagement, suggesting DWP will still need to offer methods of communication outside of a fully digital benefit experience. However, the cumulative proportion of customers to select one of the digital options did mean there was a preference for digital over telephone or post for some of the straightforward interactions already mentioned. When taking into account those who prefer to use online, email or app as part of their PIP claim, 49% would prefer to update their personal details this way, 47% would prefer to receive notifications related to their claim digitally, and 44% would prefer to submit supporting evidence digitally or report a change in their circumstances.

Figure 4.2.3: If it were available, in which of the following ways would you most prefer to engage with DWP for each of the following activities that might occur as part of your Personal Independence Payment claim? Proportion preferring digital methods (selected online and/or email and/or app)
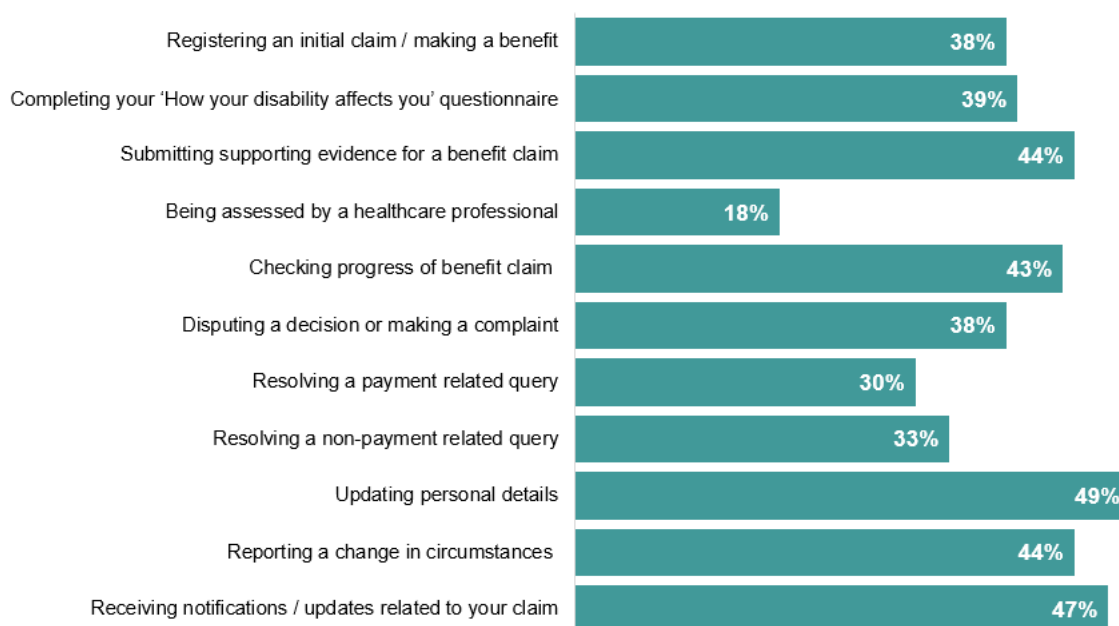
Base: All PIP customers (3,008)

Registering an initial claim / making a benefit

As shown in Figure 4.2.2, the most preferred way for customers to perform this interaction was over the phone (46%), which remained higher than the cumulative proportion who would prefer to perform this engagement digitally (38%). The easiest customers to transition towards a digital engagement for registering their PIP claim would be those with a university degree (60% prefer a digital engagement for this activity), the employed (55%), students (53%), and customers aged 16-34 (50%).

More than 1 in 5 (21%) preferred to register their claim by post, particularly customers aged over 55 (24%) and 16% preferred to do it face-to-face, particularly those who speak English as a second language (22%) and non-white customers (21%). As telephone was still the most preferred option above the cumulative proportion of customers who'd like to register their claim digitally, offering multiple ways to claim could ensure that some customers are not excluded.

Completing the 'How your disability affects you' questionnaire

Around a third (32%) of customers would prefer to complete the 'how your disability affects you' questionnaire or submit evidence to support a claim online through a website, although doing this by post was the most preferred method (36%). When taking into account customers who would prefer to do this over email or through an app as well as online through a website, the proportion of customers who would prefer a digital engagement rose to 39%, suggesting there is some scope for this interaction to happen digitally. However, fewer than 2 in 5 had a preference for this digital engagement.

The type of customer who preferred to complete their 'how your disability affects you' questionnaire digitally was similar to those who preferred digital for all other activities. They were more likely to be either employed or a student, aged 16-34, university educated, confident users of the internet and thought that their use of the internet would increase over the next year.

Submitting supporting evidence for a benefit claim

When submitting supporting evidence for a benefit claim, 44% of PIP customers preferred to do this digitally. Digital methods were preferred ahead of submitting evidence through the post (43%). Both telephone (14%) and face-to-face (13%) were less popular options here, suggesting that PIP customers would mostly choose to do this activity digitally, if it were available, or by mail, as that is the main method by which they usually submit evidence at present.

Most students (67%) and employed customers (63%) would like to do this activity digitally. There were no significant differences between disability types in terms of a preference for a digital engagement for this activity, though customers were more likely to prefer digital if their disability reduced their day-to-day abilities 'a little' (50%) rather than 'a lot' (43%).

Being assessed by a healthcare professional (HCP)

More than half of PIP customers (57%) expressed a preference for HCP assessments to be done face-to-face. More than a third (36%) mentioned that they would be happy for the assessment to take place over the telephone. Being

assessed by a healthcare professional had the lowest proportion of customers wanting this activity to take place via a digital interaction (18%).

Demographic groups for which more than 1 in 5 reported a preference for an online engagement on a website for this activity were those unemployed but looking for a job (31%), university educated customers (25%), students (24%), those in the social grade ABC1 (24%) and amongst those who were employed (23%).

Checking progress of a benefit claim
Overall, PIP customers preferred using the telephone for checking the progress of a benefit claim (46%), with a slightly lower proportion (43%) preferring any digital method. A third (33%) would welcome this activity to happen online, 12% over email and 7% on an app. Nearly 1 in 5 (17%) preferred to check the progress of their benefit claim through post whereas fewer than 1 in 10 (8%) wanted this activity to occur face-to-face.

Customers who preferred to check the progress of a benefit claim digitally had similar characteristics to those who preferred a digital engagement for registering their initial claim. They were more likely to be employed or a student, be educated to a secondary or university level, be under 35 and be confident in their abilities to use the internet. They had usually increased their use of the internet over the last 12 months and thought that their use of it would increase over the next 12 months as well.

Disputing a decision or making a complaint
The proportion (45%) who would prefer to dispute a decision or make a complaint over the telephone was similar to the proportion who preferred the phone for other activities like registering an initial claim (46%) or checking the progress of their benefit claim (45%).

If it were available, the proportion of PIP customers who would prefer to dispute a decision or make a complaint digitally was fewer than 2 in 5 (38%). A quarter (25%) reported that they would like to do this online on a website and, choosing from multiple options, 17% said they would prefer doing this activity via email. Amongst current internet users, the proportion who preferred telephone (44%) and digital methods (43%) for this activity were very similar, with no clear favourite way to engage.

Resolving payment and non-payment related queries
Resolving queries, both payment and non-payment related, is a considerably more complex engagement whereby customers preferred a level of human interaction to find a solution. Outside of being assessed by a HCP, these two activities had the lowest proportion of customers who preferred any kind of digital engagement (payment queries: 30%; non-payment queries: 33%).

For resolving payment queries, the preference for telephone was dominant (64%), more than three times the proportion of customers who would like to do this online, the second most preferred individual option (21%). There were, however, some significant differences between disability types for those who did have a preference for doing this activity digitally. Those with sensory impairments or communication problems (35%) or musculoskeletal / physical injuries (33%) were significantly more

likely to choose a digital method of engagement for this activity than the average PIP customer. Though both still had a strong preference for telephone, those with communication problems were more likely to want this engagement over email (17% vs 14% for all other disability types) and those with physical injuries were more likely than the average to prefer online / website (22%).

Customers still preferred to contact DWP over the phone to resolve non-payment related queries (62%), almost twice as many who would prefer to do this via any digital method (33%). Again, there were some significant differences between disability types, with those with musculoskeletal / physical injuries (35%) or an 'other' type of disability like issues with concentration or memory (37%) significantly more likely than the average to say they would prefer to do this activity digitally.

Updating personal details
Updating personal details was the activity which had the highest proportion of PIP customers expressing a preference for a digital engagement with DWP in the future. If it were available, nearly half of all PIP customers (49%) said they would like to engage digitally when needing to do this in future, more than the most preferred analogue method of doing this over the telephone (40%).

The characteristics of customers who would like to do this digitally were similar to those covered for other activities with a higher preference for digital. In this case, they were typically university educated (73% preferred a digital engagement), students (71%) or employed (66%), in the ABC1 social grade (70%), confident internet users (66%) and aged under 35 (62%).

Reporting a change in circumstances
The telephone was still the preferred method for engaging with DWP for this activity (50%), more so than the proportion of customers who expressed a preference for any kind of digital engagement (44%). Post / letter (17%) and face-to-face (8%) were less popular methods for this engagement, which was specific to those claiming PIP and/or UC.

Receiving updates / notifications related to their claim
A lower proportion (23%) than for some other activities would prefer to receive notifications and updates related to their claim on a website. However, this activity had the highest proportion of customers who would prefer email for this engagement with DWP (28%), suggesting there is scope for an online experience for receiving updates or notifications in the future. In fact, looking at the cumulative digital preference for this activity (47%), more would prefer a digital engagement than the highest analogue method, post (39%). However, around a third (31%) wanted this engagement to happen over the telephone, again reinforcing the notion that DWP should still consider the preferences of a significant percentage of customers who would not prefer any kind of digital engagement for a wide range of activities.

Multiple benefit customers
If a customer was claiming UC (and PIP), then they were significantly more likely to prefer to report a change in circumstances online through a website (46%), although for this activity and customer type, the preferred channel was still over the phone

(47%). When considering any kind of digital engagement for this activity, however, more than half those claiming PIP and UC (55%) expressed a preference for engaging with DWP in a digital way.

Those claiming just PIP (38%) were significantly more likely than those claiming multiple benefits (32%) to prefer reporting a change in circumstances online. Almost 2 in 5 (39%) internet users would prefer to report changes in circumstances online compared to just 8% of non-users (who represent 16% of the PIP population).

Those claiming PIP and UC were also significantly more likely than the average to prefer to check the progress of their benefit claim online through a website (40%), but the slight preference for the telephone still existed amongst these customers for this activity (43%). Almost 2 in 5 (38%) internet users would prefer to check the progress of their claim online compared to 7% of non-users. More than half (56%) of non-users preferred to do this activity over the telephone.

Across all activities, those claiming both PIP and UC were more open to a digital experience than those claiming PIP and ESA.

4.2.3 Potential online portal use

Within the survey, customers were asked their preferences on online portals. They were informed that a portal refers to a webpage or website that provides users an entryway to a variety of information, tools and links. If a single portal was available to manage all their benefits online, almost 3 in 5 (57%) PIP customers suggested they would use it (Figure 4.2.4). A third (33%) reported they would not and a further 10% did not know. A similar proportion indicated that they would use a single portal if it was available for all government services, for example to manage their benefits but also to manage their health and their tax (59%). With similar results for both kinds of portal, there was not a significant perception difference between benefits alone and all government services in terms of a portal to manage them. The proportion of customers that said they would use a portal to manage both their benefits online and for all government services was just over half (51%).

Figure 4.2.4: If a single portal was available to manage all of your benefits online, would you use the portal? If there was a single portal available for ALL government services (e.g. managing your benefits, managing your health, managing tax) would you use it?
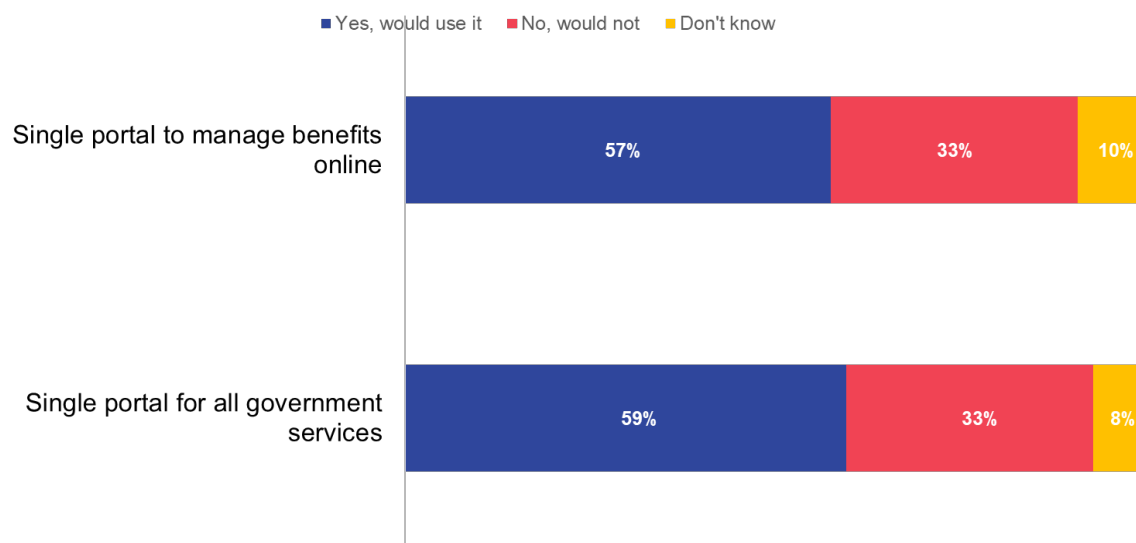
Base: All PIP customers (3,008)

Customers claiming UC as well as PIP were more likely to want to use a portal to manage all their government services (65%), perhaps due to interacting already with DWP through the UC online account. Employed or self-employed customers were also significantly more likely than customers with any other employment status to be open to the concept of an online portal to manage their benefits (76%), as were those with university level (76%) or vocational qualifications (70%), those confident at using the internet (75%), and customers aged 16-24 (69%).

Around two thirds (65%) of current internet users indicated they would use a portal for all government services. Just over a quarter (27%) of non-users said the same, suggesting that if a portal existed, some offline customers could be persuaded to go online to access it.
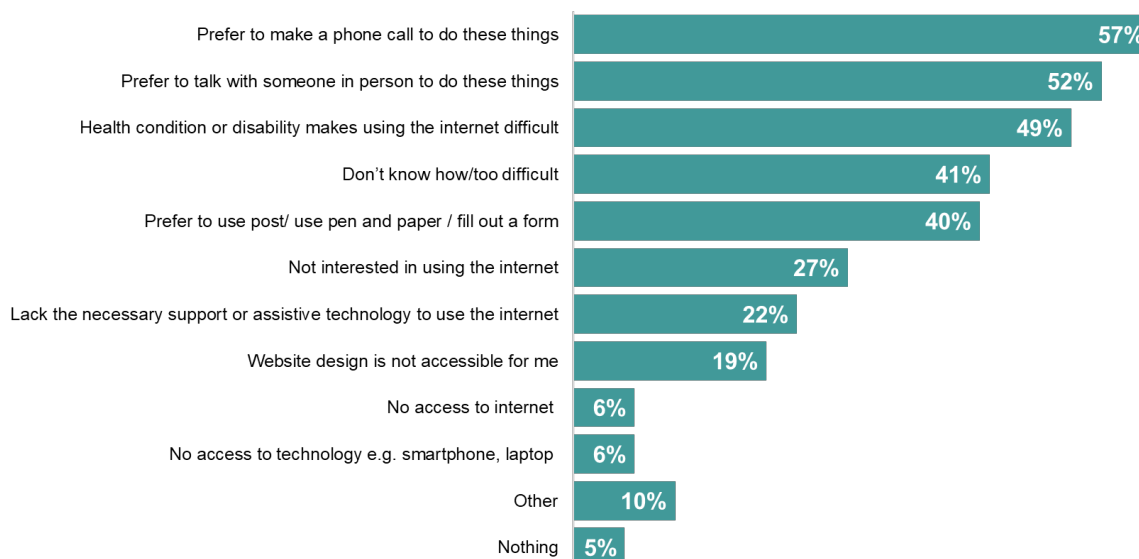
Most of these non-users were unconfident in their abilities to go online (80% not confident). However, they were more likely than the overall sample to be approaching retirement age (43% were aged 55-65, compared to only 32% of the overall PIP sample), suggesting that customers within this age bracket were somewhat open to learning a new skill.

Three in ten customers (30%) were resistant to using both an online portal to manage their benefit online *and* a portal to manage all government services. Compared to the average PIP customer, this type of customer was significantly more likely to have no formal qualifications and have low levels of internet confidence.

A slightly higher proportion (38%) reported that they would not use either of the two portal options presented in the survey (either a portal to manage benefits or a portal to manage all government services). The main reasons given (Figure 4.2.5) were that they prefer to make a phone call to do these things (56%) or that they prefer to talk in person (52%). This was especially the case for those who had physical disabilities (59% over the phone, 53% in person) or were aged over 60 (60% over the phone,

57% in person). There were no significant differences between internet users and non-users for preferring to manage their benefits over the phone or face-to-face rather than online.

Figure 4.2.5: Which, if any, of the following reasons would stop you from accessing government services online?

Reason	Percentage
Prefer to make a phone call to do these things	57%
Prefer to talk with someone in person to do these things	52%
Health condition or disability makes using the internet difficult	49%
Don't know how/too difficult	41%
Prefer to use post/ use pen and paper / fill out a form	40%
Not interested in using the internet	27%
Lack the necessary support or assistive technology to use the internet	22%
Website design is not accessible for me	19%
No access to internet	6%
No access to technology e.g. smartphone, laptop	6%
Other	10%
Nothing	5%

Base: All PIP customers who would not use a portal to access government services online (1,165) - multi-code (multiple options could be selected)

Around half (49%) of the customers that would not use either online portal reported that their health condition or disability made using the internet difficult and would likely stop them from accessing services online, with this the case across the full range of disability types. Those with an employment status of long-term sick or disabled were also significantly more likely to say they did not know how to access online (46%). If a customer had a combined physical and mental health condition or a mental health condition only, they were significantly more likely than the average PIP customer to say they lacked the necessary support or assistive technology to use the internet (26% and 25% respectively).

5. Future support needs

This chapter covers the ways in which PIP customers would want to receive support or guidance on how to make and manage benefit claims digitally, including what DWP could do to make PIP customers more likely to use DWP digital services. It covers situations which might encourage customers to further develop their digital skills and the extent to which digital skills are used by currently employed customers in their job roles.

5.1 Support and digital skills

5.1.1 Support and guidance for DWP digital services

For DWP to encourage more PIP customers to transition to a digital service, support and guidance will need to be provided. We asked PIP customers how they would want to receive support or guidance on making and managing a benefit claim through a DWP digital service (Figure 5.1.1).

Figure 5.1.1: Assuming you wanted to use a DWP digital service, in what ways would you want to receive support or guidance on how to make and manage a benefit claim?
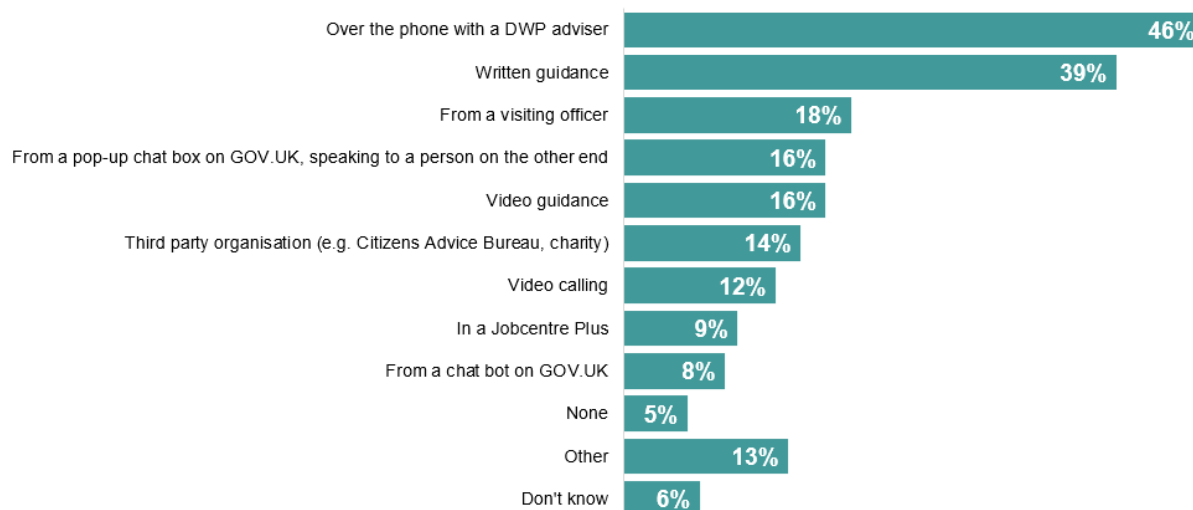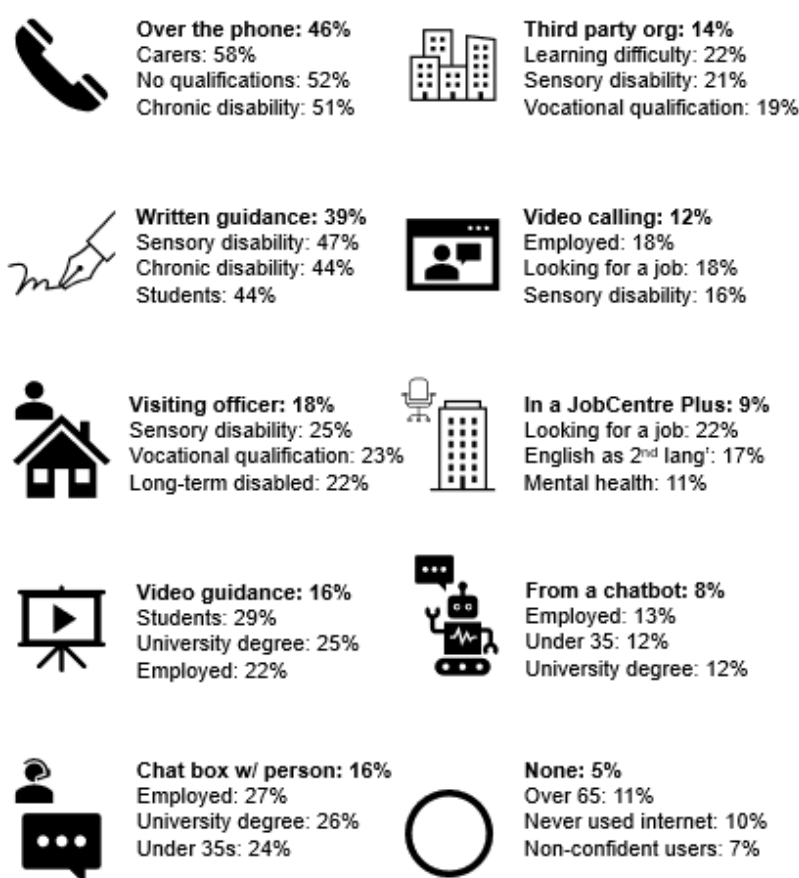

Base: All PIP customers (3,008) - multi-code (multiple options could be selected)

The most cited way in which PIP customers wanted support with digital activities was over the phone with a DWP adviser (46%), followed by written guidance (39%). Potentially having written guidance or setting up introductory phone calls with customers to guide them through a digital service could provide them with the skillset required to manage their benefit claim online.

Older customers were significantly more likely than younger customers to want guidance over the phone (47% of over 55s compared to 40% of under 35s) or support from a visiting officer (20% of over 55s compared to 13% of under 35s). Younger customers (16–34-year-olds) were more likely than older customers to be open to using a pop-up chat box speaking to a person on the other end (23% compared to 11% of over 55s) or to want video guidance (21% compared to 12% of over 55s).

Employment status, education level and disability type were also associated with support needs that PIP customers wanted (Figure 5.1.2). Employed PIP customers were more likely to want video guidance, a pop-up chat box and video calling. Whereas unemployed PIP customers, although still wanting phone calls with a DWP adviser and written guidance, were significantly more likely to want support in a JobCentre Plus (16%), especially those who were unemployed and looking for work (22% wanted support in a JobCentre Plus). Full-time carers (58%) and the long-term sick or disabled (48%) were the most likely employment types to want support over the phone with a DWP adviser, and the long-term sick were most likely to want support from a visiting officer (22%).

Figure 5.1.2: Assuming you wanted to use a DWP digital service, in what ways would you want to receive support or guidance on how to make and manage a benefit claim?

Over the phone: 46%
Carers: 58%
No qualifications: 52%
Chronic disability: 51%

Third party org: 14%
Learning difficulty: 22%
Sensory disability: 21%
Vocational qualification: 19%

Written guidance: 39%
Sensory disability: 47%
Chronic disability: 44%
Students: 44%

Video calling: 12%
Employed: 18%
Looking for a job: 18%
Sensory disability: 16%

Visiting officer: 18%
Sensory disability: 25%
Vocational qualification: 23%
Long-term disabled: 22%

In a JobCentre Plus: 9%
Looking for a job: 22%
English as 2nd lang': 17%
Mental health: 11%

Video guidance: 16%
Students: 29%
University degree: 25%
Employed: 22%

From a chatbot: 8%
Employed: 13%
Under 35: 12%
University degree: 12%

Chat box w/ person: 16%
Employed: 27%
University degree: 26%
Under 35s: 24%

None: 5%
Over 65: 11%
Never used internet: 10%
Non-confident users: 7%
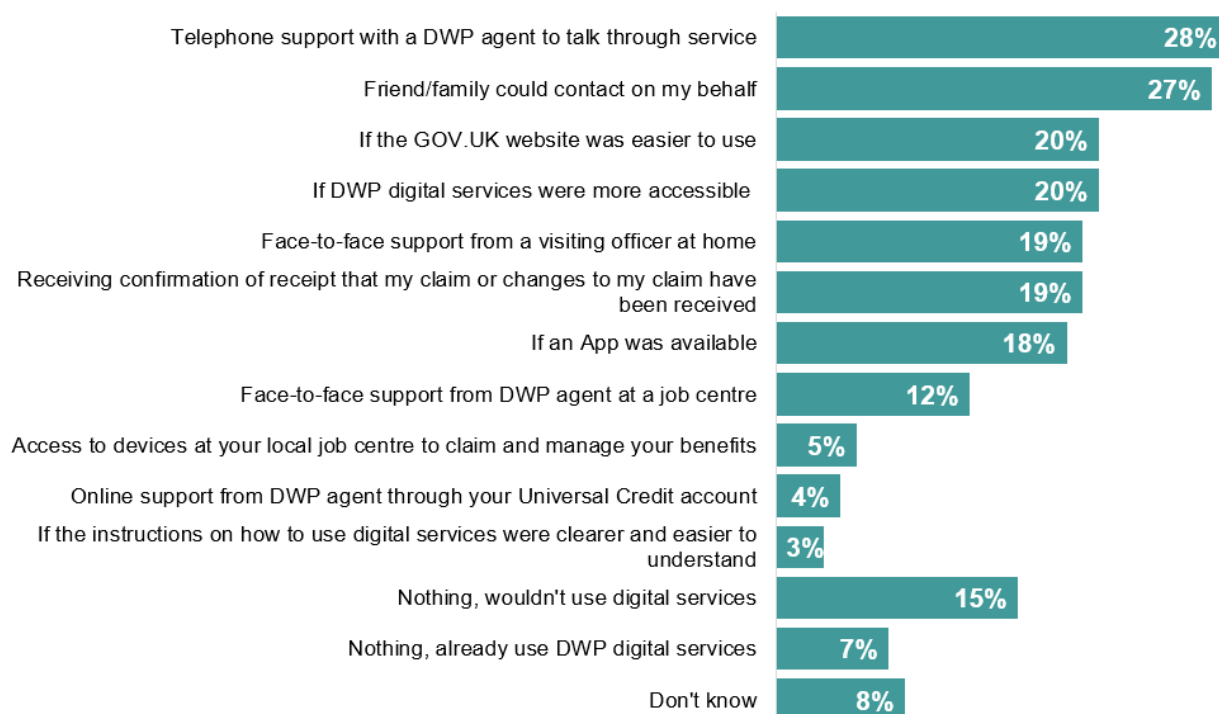
Base: All PIP customers (3,008)

Students and pupils were more interested than the average PIP customer in receiving support through video guidance (29% compared to 16%).

Those with a mental health condition were more likely than the average to want support over the phone (49%), from a visiting officer (20%) or video guidance (20%). Those with learning difficulties and cognitive disorders wanted written guidance (42%) more so than advice over the phone (39%) and were more likely than average to want support from a third-party organisation (22%). Around half of those with a musculoskeletal injury (50%) or chronic illness (51%) wanted phone advice as well, significantly more than the average.

5.1.2 What DWP can do to make customers more likely to use digital services

To make PIP customers more likely to use DWP digital services (Figure 5.1.3), customers expressed a variety of things that DWP could do, although there was no clear-cut solution across the PIP customer base. Encouragingly, for the majority of PIP customers, DWP was seen as having a role in making them more likely to use digital services. The most common suggestions, selected from a multiple option list, were mentioned by just over a quarter of respondents; telephone support with a DWP agent to talk them through the service (28%) and for DWP to allow for a friend or family member to contact them on their behalf (27%).

Figure 5.1.3: What, if anything, could DWP do to make you more likely to use DWP digital services?

Option	%
Telephone support with a DWP agent to talk through service	28%
Friend/family could contact on my behalf	27%
If the GOV.UK website was easier to use	20%
If DWP digital services were more accessible	20%
Face-to-face support from a visiting officer at home	19%
Receiving confirmation of receipt that my claim or changes to my claim have been received	19%
If an App was available	18%
Face-to-face support from DWP agent at a job centre	12%
Access to devices at your local job centre to claim and manage your benefits	5%
Online support from DWP agent through your Universal Credit account	4%
If the instructions on how to use digital services were clearer and easier to understand	3%
Nothing, wouldn't use digital services	15%
Nothing, already use DWP digital services	7%
Don't know	8%

Base: All PIP customers (3,008) - multi-code (multiple options could be selected)

Customers with communication problems (36%), chronic and systemic illnesses (33%) and mental health conditions (31%) were more likely to be encouraged if an

agent talked the service through with them over the phone. Customers who had used the internet frequently in the past but had now stopped using it could also be made more likely to re-adopt internet use if they received telephone support (32%).

Younger customers, especially those aged 25-34, had a stronger preference for friends and family to contact DWP on their behalf (36%). Men (30%) were also significantly more likely than women (24%) to want others to contact DWP for them. Those whose internet use had decreased over the last 12 months, and who thought their internet use will decrease in the coming 12 months were also more likely to say this would encourage them.

1 in 5 (20%) would be encouraged to use DWP digital services if digital services were more accessible, and the same proportion (20%) would be encouraged if the GOV.UK website was easier to use. Younger customers were looking for more accessible services, in particular those aged between 25-34 (26%) and current users of the internet (21%), more so than non-users (8%).

18% would be more likely to use DWP digital services if an app was available, with this a significant preference amongst employed customers (27%), those with a sensory impairment or communication problems (24%), those with a university education (24%) and those who accessed the internet several times a day (23%).

Two thirds of non-users (66%), or 11% of the total PIP sample, outlined ways in which DWP could make them more likely to use digital services. These customers were more likely than the average PIP customer to have a mental health condition (64% compared to 58% overall), have no formal qualifications (51% compared to 25% overall) to be a man (45% compared to 39% overall), and speak English as a second language (12% compared to 8% overall). In terms of what DWP can do to reach this difficult audience, more than a third hoped DWP could provide telephone support to talk through the service and enable a friend or family member to contact on their behalf (both 36%).

Reporting that DWP could not do anything to make them more likely to use digital services was a more significantly held view amongst customers without any formal qualifications (24%) and older customers (20% of 61–65-year-olds and 23% of over 65s) compared to the overall sample (15%).

5.1.3 Future digital skills development

Customers would be motivated to develop digital skills in future (Figure 5.1.4) if it helped them to keep in touch with family and friends (35%), if free training courses were available (30%), if certain services were not available offline (29%), if they could access their benefits through online government services (28%), or if they wanted to develop a new skill (27%).

Figure 5.1.4: Which, if any, of the following situations would encourage you to further develop your digital skills in the future?

Situation	Percentage
Keeping in touch with family and friends	34%
If free training courses were available	30%
If services weren't available offline (e.g. face-to-face, telephone)	28%
Accessing benefits through online Government services	28%
Wanting to develop a new skill	27%
Boosting employment prospects/promotion	7%
Wanting to upskill for current role	6%
Other	4%
None, I don't want to develop digital skills in the future	18%
None, I don't need to develop my digital skills any further	16%
Don't know	5%
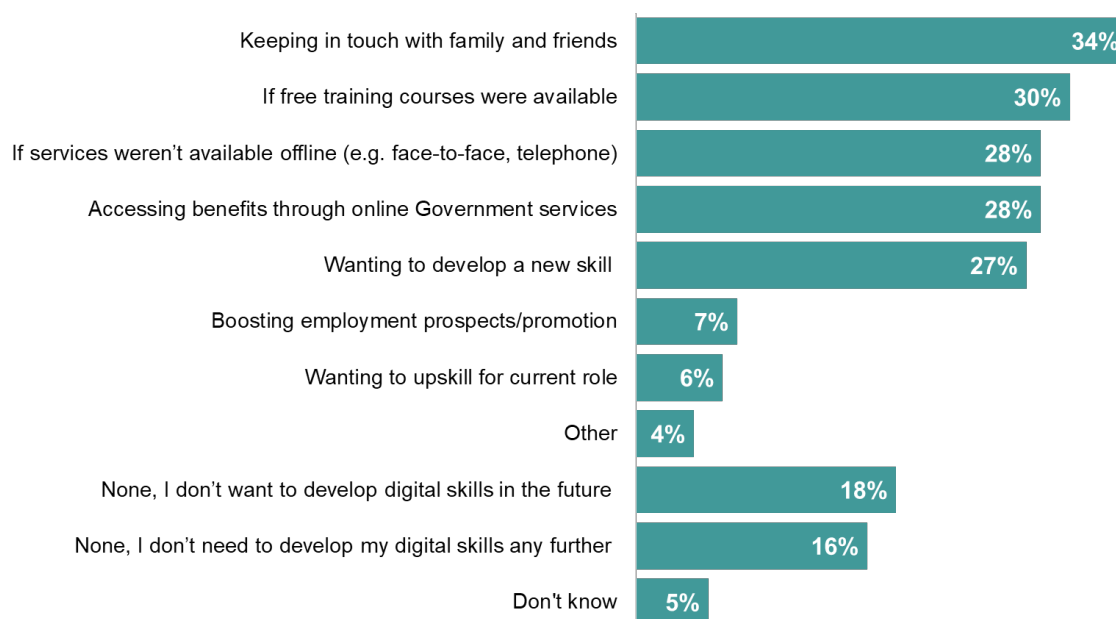
Base: All PIP customers (3,008) - multi-code (multiple options could be selected)

A third (32%) of those in work (20% of the overall sample) also reported that they could be encouraged to further their digital skills in future to upskill in their current role. More than 2 in 5 (41%) of those who were unemployed and looking for work would be encouraged to develop their digital skills in order to boost their employment prospects. Generally, the employed and unemployed but looking for work reported they would be more encouraged than the average PIP customer by the prospect of free training courses, developing new skills, and by accessing their benefit through an online government provided service.

Almost 1 in 5 (18%) PIP customers outlined that nothing would encourage them because they did not want to develop their digital skills in the future, likely down to their disinterest in engaging digitally as 39% of non-users answered this. These customers were more likely to be long-term sick, living with a chronic/progressive disability, or retired. Around a third of those with no formal qualifications also held this view, as well as 3 in 10 of those with low internet confidence.

A further 16% (made up of an equal proportion of internet users and non-users) stated that nothing would encourage them because they did not need to develop their digital skills any further in the future. Some of these customers were part of the already engaged group of customers (18% of confident internet users said they did not need to develop further compared to 12% of unconfident users) but also retired customers were more likely to report not needing to (21%), as well as not wanting to (24%).

5.2 Digital skills and employment

A minority of PIP customers were either employed or self-employed and also accessed the internet at their workplace (9% of all PIP customers). We asked them how much they would say they used their digital skills in their day-to-day jobs (Figure 5.2.1).

Figure 5.2.1: How much, if at all, would you say you use your digital skills in your day-to-day job?
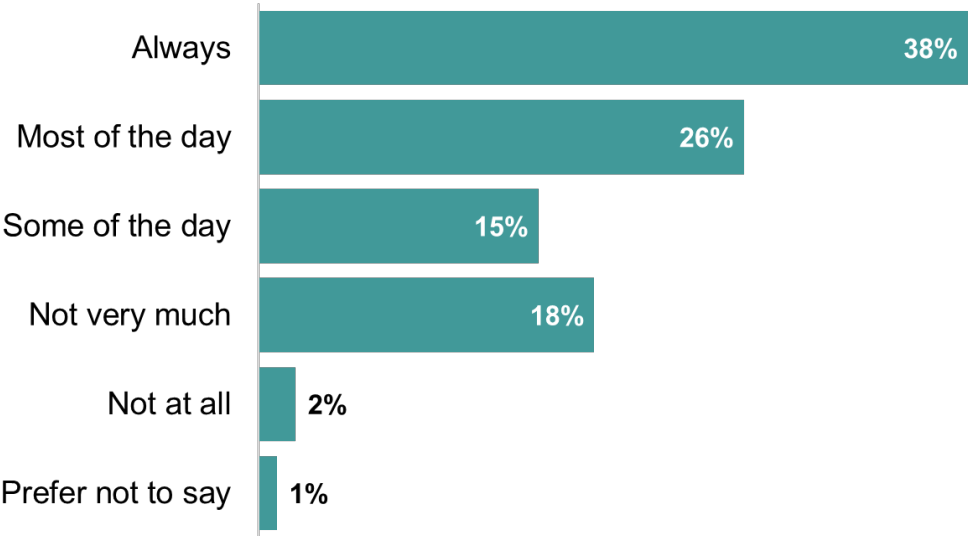
Base: All employed customers who access the internet at their workplace (269)

Over a third (37%) reported that they were always using their skills, with a further quarter (26%) saying they used them for most of the day as part of their job. There were little differences in terms of age, gender, or disability for those who used it this often, although these people were more likely than not to be university educated (50% educated to this level used it always in their jobs). Those using their digital skills always or for most of the day in their job roles were amongst the customers most interested in using an online portal to manage their benefits or for all government services. Although a minority, employed customers using the internet are amongst the easiest customers to encourage towards a digital-led service in future.

6. Conclusions

Digital capabilities

Internet usage of PIP customers was relatively high with more than 4 in 5 accessing the internet (84%). Over the past 12 months, their internet use had mostly stayed the same, but PIP customers who had increased their use included the employed or self-employed, those actively seeking work, and younger customers aged under 35. Customers who were either employed, used digital skills in their day-to-day jobs, were university educated or were amongst the youngest PIP customers were typically more engaged digitally. They are therefore amongst some of the easier customer types to encourage towards digital interactions with DWP in future.

However, a minority of PIP customers remained offline (16%). These customers had either never used the internet (9%), used it once or twice in the past but not anymore (4%) or had frequently used it in the past but no longer did (3%). Those who had never used it were more likely to be claiming multiple benefits (specifically PIP and ESA), be long-term sick or disabled, aged over 65 and had no formal qualifications.

Overall, 60% of PIP customers felt 'very' or 'fairly' confident in using the internet. The level of digital confidence was linked to a customer's age, level of education and type of disability condition they were living with. Customers who had sensory impairments or communication problems (44% not confident), chronic, systemic, or progressive illnesses (43% not confident), or musculoskeletal conditions (41% not confident) were all significantly more likely than the average PIP customer to suggest that they were not confident in using the internet. Of all disability types, those with learning difficulties and cognitive disorders (54% confident, 46% not confident) had the lowest average confidence and would likely need the most additional support to address their lack of digital skills and close the digital capability gap.

Raising confidence levels with targeted support

There was a perception amongst many PIP customers (40%) that they lacked digital skills, or felt the internet was too difficult to use and they were worried they would make mistakes. These customers were more likely to have an employment status of long-term sick or disabled, had particular disabilities such as sensory impairments or chronic illnesses, were aged over 55, and had no formal qualifications. There is therefore scope for DWP to acknowledge the low confidence levels amongst various customer groups and provide training materials that are targeted to the varied needs of PIP customers.

Offer compatible digital services

Smartphones were the most used device to go online regardless of disability type. However, customers with a sensory impairment or physical / musculoskeletal condition were significantly more likely than the average PIP customer to be tablet users and customers with a learning difficulty or a cognitive disorder were significantly more likely to use laptops or desktops to access the internet. Therefore, it is important that future DWP digital services are tailored to be compatible with a range of different devices.

Barriers

The most common barrier preventing those who were offline (16% of all PIP customers) from accessing the internet was that their health condition or disability made using the internet difficult (55%). Of these non-users, those significantly more likely to cite their health condition as a reason for not using the internet were those with learning difficulties or a cognitive disorder (70%), a sensory impairment or communication problems (66%), a mental health condition (61%) or other conditions and disabilities (67%) like problems due to alcohol or other drugs, or fatigue and memory problems.

Another barrier preventing offline customers from accessing the internet was the perception that they lacked digital skills or felt that the internet was too difficult to use (52%). Those with chronic, systemic or progressive illnesses (61%) and musculoskeletal or physical injuries (60%) were more likely to report this as their main barrier, instead of citing their health condition. Customers with these kinds of disabilities were more likely to be aged over 55, which correlated with lower levels of internet confidence in general.

However, of the 16% of PIP customers who were offline at the time of survey, or 7% of the total PIP sample, 2 in 5 (43%), suggested that nothing would encourage them to use the internet for more activities in the future. These customers would remain hesitant about any kind of online experience and could be difficult to transition towards digital interactions with DWP. These customers were more likely to be retired, and so not likely to be new PIP claimants.

Assisted services were of particular interest to non-users with learning difficulties or cognitive disorders (38%) and those with mental health conditions (33%). However, almost 3 in 5 (58%) internet-using customers did not use any assistive technology to access the internet.

Amongst internet users, their main barrier to using the internet more frequently were concerns around fraud, privacy, security and scams. A customer's health condition was also a specific barrier to more internet use for some. For example, those with learning difficulties or sensory impairments felt that their condition was a greater barrier to greater internet use than fraud and security issues.

Demonstrate trust and security

DWP might consider reassuring customers that they can be trusted, and that high levels of online safety and security are in place to protect their data to help allay any fears around fraud and privacy.

Channel preferences

At the point of being surveyed, the majority of PIP customers (72%) were using the telephone in order to contact DWP and manage their benefit claim. Just under 1 in 5 (17%) were using online methods to engage with DWP[12]. Of those who contacted DWP by phone, more than 4 in 5 (83%) were current internet users. This would suggest that 60% of all PIP customers (those who used the phone to manage their PIP claim but did use the internet) could, in theory, be encouraged to manage their claim online. It is important to note though, that confidence levels amongst this group of customers did vary. Of this 60%, 29% were 'very confident' internet users and 40% were 'fairly confident', suggesting further that 41% of all PIP customers (i.e. those who used the phone to contact DWP but felt confident online) would be confident about moving towards a digital experience when managing their claim.

Looking at the proportion of customers who contacted DWP by post, 87% were internet users at the time of the survey, of which 68% were 'very' or 'fairly' confident users. This represents 15% of all PIP customers (i.e. those who used the post to contact DWP but felt confident online) who might also be transitioned towards a digital experience in the future. There was some overlap between customers contacting DWP by both phone and post, so the total proportion of PIP customers who contacted by either of these two methods but were online and felt confident in their ability to use the internet was 45%.

For a wide range of activities that might occur as part of a benefit claim, PIP customers would still mostly like to engage with DWP over the telephone. The type of customer who preferred to engage with DWP over the phone was typically more likely to have no formal qualifications, be over 55 and were current non-users of the internet.

Channel preference was driven by the complexity of the engagement. For more simple, straightforward interactions, there was a level of openness towards engaging with DWP digitally (either online through a website, over email or via an app). Specific activities for which PIP customers would most prefer to engage with DWP digitally (whether online through a website, over email and/or through an app) rather than the most popular analogue method, included updating their personal details (49%), receiving notifications or updates related to their claim (47%) or submitting supporting evidence for their claim (44%). Although not preferred over the telephone, almost half of all PIP customers expressed a digital preference for reporting a change in circumstances (44%) or checking the progress of their benefit claim (43%).

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[12] As explained earlier in the report, managing a PIP claim online is currently in a testing phase so we would not expect to see such a high proportion managing their claim digitally. For multiple benefit customers also claiming UC, there may have been some conflation between managing their UC claim online and managing their PIP claim.

Providing targeted support

The type of customer who was most open to digital interactions with DWP in the future was similar for more straightforward engagements. They typically had a working status as either a student or employed, were confident in their abilities to use the internet, had at least a secondary education (but were most likely university educated), and were under 35 years old.

Some interactions were strongly preferred to still be non-digital. These included resolving payment and non-payment related queries, which were preferred to happen over the phone, and being assessed by a HCP, which was preferred to happen face-to-face or over the telephone.

Ensure digital services are fully accessible

Websites and apps need to be easy to understand and be accessible, to encourage customers to engage digitally. Awareness of the current support provided by DWP was low, so educating customers on the assisted technologies available to them may boost digital engagement.

Ensuring services are easy to use and fully accessible is key for DWP and might encourage more digital engagements in the future for simpler interactions like updating personal details or checking the progress of a claim.

Support needed

With the preferred method for many interactions still being over the telephone, the importance of a personal interaction should not be underestimated. Assuming a PIP customer wants to use a digital service, most wanted to receive guidance on how to make and manage a benefit claim digitally either over the phone with an adviser or in written format. Those with a mental health condition were more likely than the average to want support over the phone (49% compared to 46% overall), from a visiting officer (20% compared to 18% overall) or video guidance (20% compared to 16% overall). Those with learning difficulties and cognitive disorders wanted written guidance (42%) more so than advice over the phone (39%) and were more likely than average to want support from a third-party organisation (22% compared to 14% overall). Around half of those with a chronic illness (51%) or musculoskeletal injury (50%) wanted telephone advice as well, significantly more than the average (46%).

There remains a harder to convert group of non-internet users (11% of all PIP customers), but the data suggests that there are ways DWP could do something to make them more likely to use digital services in future. These customers were more likely than the average PIP customer to have a mental health condition, have no formal qualifications, to be male, and speak English as a second language. Amongst this non-user audience, more than a third suggested that DWP could provide telephone support to talk through the service or enable a friend or family member to contact DWP on their behalf (both 36%).

Encouraging future digital use

Keeping in touch with family and friends or free training to develop new skills were the key situations that would encourage customers to further their digital skills in the future. However, different preferences were apparent amongst customers who were employed or unemployed but looking for work. These customers would be more encouraged by the prospect of free training courses, developing new skills, and by accessing their benefit through an online government provided service. This reinforces the notion that this group of PIP customers would be the easiest to transition towards a digital service in future.

Recognise the importance of personal interaction

Telephone was the primary communication channel for many customers, often cited as a way to foster their engagement with digital channels. For DWP, it will therefore be important to consider the role of telephone, for example as part of a blended channel offering.

PIP customers who preferred to engage with DWP over the phone were more likely to have no formal qualifications, be over 35 years of age, and be non-users of the internet. These customers had lower digital confidence levels, so there is an opportunity for DWP to signpost these customers to other digital channels with appropriate support going forward. However, a variety of channels may still be required and not all PIP customers will want to engage digitally.

Similarities were seen amongst all PIP customers in terms of what would stop them accessing government services online. A preference to make phone calls to do activities that might occur as part of their claim was a key factor stopping these customers from accessing government services online. The majority of all PIP customers reported a stronger preference for telephone and written guidance.

Telephone support was also preferred by customers when dealing with more complex issues and queries, particularly relating to their payments, disputing decisions or resolving queries. There is scope for digitally led interactions between DWP and PIP customers for some activities but a proportion of customers are either offline, do not have internet access at home or do not feel like they want or need to improve their digital skills. Maintaining alternative ways to contact DWP could avoid excluding these customers.

9 Appendices

9.1 Survey

Below is a full copy of the survey that was asked to all PIP customers as part of this digital skills, channel preferences and access needs research.

A1 – BENEFITS

ASK ALL
A0. Which of the following benefits, if any, are you currently receiving?
MULTI CODE, AUTOPUNCH BENEFIT SAMPLED FOR AFTER QUESTION ANSWERED

CATI: PROMPT TO CODE

ONLINE: Please select all that apply

1   Employment and Support Allowance
2   Universal Credit
3   Job Seekers Allowance
4   Personal Independence Payment
5   Child Disability Living Allowance
6   State Pension / Pension Credit
7   Carers Allowance
8   Attendance Allowance
9   Bereavement Support Payment
10 Child Maintenance
11 Cold Weather Payments
12 Winter Fuel Payments
13 Other
14 Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT, [EXCLUSIVE]
15 No longer in receipt of any benefits [THANK AND CLOSE]

A2 – EMPLOYMENT

ASK ALL
A1. How would you describe your current working status? We are asking this because some of the survey questions relate to digital skills at work, or when looking for work.
SINGLE CODE

CATI: PROMPT TO CODE

ONLINE: Please select one option

1   Employed full-time or part-time
2   Employed, but not currently working – e.g. on sick leave, maternity
3   Self-employed
4   Unemployed but looking for a job

    5   Not currently looking for a job
    6   Long-term sick or disabled
    7   Full-time carer
    8   Retired
    9   Student/Pupil
    10 Other
    11 Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

A3 – USAGE

SHOW ALL B4A2_INFO
The questions that follow will ask about **internet use**. This includes E-mail, web browsing/surfing and other online services such as downloading but does not cover time when you were connected but not using it.

ASK CATI ONLY, AUTOCODE CODE 1 FOR ONLINE
A2. Have you ever accessed the internet?
SINGLE CODE

CATI: PROMPT TO CODE
ONLINE: Please select one option

    1   Yes, I currently access the internet
    2   Yes, used frequently in the past but have now stopped using
    3   Have tried it once or twice or in the past, but don't anymore
    4   Never used the internet
    5   Don't know DO NOT READ OUT
    6   Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

ASK IF CURRENTLY USING INTERNET (A2=1)
A3. Do you have access to the internet at HOME (via any device, e.g. PC, mobile phone etc.)?
SINGLE CODE

CATI: PROMPT TO CODE
ONLINE: Please select one option

    1   I have access to the internet and use it at home via home broadband
    2   Yes, used frequently in the past but have now stopped using
    3   I have access to the internet, but I don't use it at home
    4   I do not have internet access at home
    5   Don't know DO NOT READ OUT

ASK ALL WHO USE THE INTERNET (A2=1)
A4. Do you ever access the internet anywhere other than in your home at all?
MULTI CODE

CATI: PROMPT TO CODE
ONLINE: Please select all that apply

    1   Your Workplace
    2   School / College / University

3   Public computer at a jobcentre
4   Public computer at a library or in a public place e.g. café / shops / parks etc
5   Through family or friends
6   Other – please specify [TEXT BOX]
7   No - I do not access the internet away from home [EXCLUSIVE]

ASK ALL WHO GO ONLINE AT HOME (A3 = CODE 1-2) AND/OR ELSEWHERE (A4 = CODE 1- 7)
A5a. Which of these devices do you use to go online?
MULTI CODE

CATI: PROMPT TO CODE
ONLINE: Please select all that apply

1   Smartphone (like an iPhone or Samsung Galaxy)
2   Tablet (like an iPad, Kindle Fire or Google Nexus)
3   Laptop, netbook or desktop computer (one that is usually in a fixed place with a separate screen and keyboard)
4   Other type of device used to go online (e.g. games console, smart speaker, etc.) – please specify [TEXT BOX]
5   Don't know DO NOT READ OUT, [EXCLUSIVE]

ASK ALL WHO GO ONLINE AT HOME (A3 = CODE 1-2) AND/OR ELSEWHERE (A4 = CODE 1- 8)
A6. Which, if any, of the following technologies do you use *when accessing the internet*?
MULTI CODE, RANDOMISE

CATI: READ OUT
ONLINE: Please select all that apply

1   Screen readers such as JAWS, NVDA, VoiceOver, Windows Narrator
2   Technology to help with dexterity / mobile impairments such as Assistive touch
3   Screen magnifiers, such as ZoomText, Apple Zoom, Windows Magnifier
4   Voice assistants such as Alexa, Siri, or Google Assistant
5   Voice recognition software: Dragon, VoiceControl, Windows Speech
6   None of the above [EXCLUSIVE, FIXED]

ASK ALL
A7. How confident, if at all, do you feel in your ability to use the internet?
SINGLE CODE

CATI: READ OUT
ONLINE: Please select one option

1   Very confident
2   Fairly confident
3   Not that confident
4   Not at all confident
5   Don't know DO NOT READ OUT
6   Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OU

ASK ALL WHO HAVE USED INTERNET (A2=1-3)
A8. How often [A2=1: do] [A2=2-3: did] you use the internet? [If working, A1=1-3: Please include both work and personal use.]
SINGLE CODE

CATI: PROMPT TO CODE
ONLINE: Please select one option

1 Several times a day (or more)
2 Around once a day
3 Several times a week
4 Around once a week
5 2 or 3 times a month
6 Around once a month
7 Less than once a month
8 Never but you have access
9 Never but you do not have access
10 Don't know DO NOT READ OUT
11 Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

ASK ALL WHO HAVE USED INTERNET (A2=1-3)
A9. Thinking now about the following general activities that you can do on the internet. Which, if any, of the following activities could you do online either with or without help?
SINGLE GRID

CATI: READ OUT ROWS. For each activity, please tell me whether you could do this task alone, could do it but with help or could not do it
ONLINE: Please select one option for each activity

ROWS
a. Find information on websites to help solve problems
d. Applying for jobs online
g. Setting up an online account / Filling in an online application form using personal information (e.g. for shopping Amazon / eBay, for government services)
h. Using government / public services online (e.g. renew a driving license or passport, booking medical appointments, pay council tax)

COLUMNS, SINGLE CODE
1 Could do this task alone
2 Could do this task, but with help
3 Couldn't do this task
4 Don't know DO NOT READ OUT
5 Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

A10. You identified that you need help with some online activities, who would normally help you with these tasks?
MULTI CODE

CATI: PROMPT TO CODE

ONLINE: Please select all that apply

1 A family member who lives with me
2 A family member who lives elsewhere
3 A friend
4 A carer
5 An organisation/department providing a service
6 A support organisation e.g. citizen's advice, community group, charity
7 Someone else – please specify [TEXT BOX]
8 Don't know DO NOT READ OUT
9 Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

B - BARRIERS

B1. Which of these, if any, are reasons that you don't have internet access at home?
MULTI CODE

CATI: READ OUT

ONLINE: Please select all that apply

1   No need to go online / not interested
2   Cost to access internet is too high
3   Cost of devices and equipment to use the internet is too high
4   Using the internet is too complicated
5   Happy to use the internet at work / public
6   Someone else can go online for me if necessary
7   Broadband is too slow where I live
8   Concerned about security / fraud / privacy / scams
9   My health condition or disability makes using the internet difficult
10 Lack the necessary support or assistive technology to use the internet
11 Website design is not accessible for me
12 Some other reason– please specify [TEXT BOX]
13 Don't know DO NOT READ OUT [EXCLUSIVE]
14 Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT [EXCLUSIVE]

B2. Which of these, if any, are reasons why you do not use the internet?
MULTI CODE

CATI: READ OUT

ONLINE: Please select all that apply

1   No need to go online / not interested
2   Concerns about security / fraud / privacy scams
3   Lack of digital skills / internet is too difficult to use and or/ lack of confidence / worry about making mistakes
4   I've had a previous bad experience of using the internet
5   Using the internet takes too long / is too slow
6   I prefer to do things offline / I don't need the internet
7   My health condition or disability makes using the internet difficult
8   Lack the necessary support or assistive technology to use the internet
9   Website design is not accessible for me
10   Someone else can go online for me if necessary
11   Some other reason – please specify TEXT BOX
12   Don't know DO NOT READ OUT [EXCLUSIVE]
13   Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT [EXCLUSIVE]

ASK ALL WHO ACCESS INTERNET (A2=1)
B3. Which, if any, of the following reasons are stopping you from using the internet for more activities than you use it for now?
MULTI CODE

CATI: READ OUT

ONLINE: Please select all that apply

1   Concerns of fraud / privacy / security / scams
2   Lack of digital skills / internet is too difficult to use and or/ lack of confidence / worry about making mistakes
3   Using the internet takes too long / is too slow
4   My health condition or disability makes using the internet more difficult
5   Prefer to do things offline / I don't need the internet
6   Don't have time
7   Would be too expensive
8   Previous bad experience
9   Some other reason – please specify [TEXT BOX]
10   Nothing, I already use the internet for a lot of activities [EXCLUSIVE]
11   Don't know DO NOT READ OUT [EXCLUSIVE]
12   Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT, [EXCLUSIVE]

ASK ALL
B4. Which, if any, of the following would encourage you to use the internet for more activities in the future?

MULTI CODE

CATI: READ OUT
ONLINE: Please select all that apply

1   If websites or Apps were easier to understand
2   If websites or Apps were more accessible
3   Better/faster wi-fi in my area

4   Less adverts / popups
5   If I was assured that websites I visited were legitimate
6   Improved mobile coverage
7   If I had better equipment (phone/laptop/tablet, etc)
8   If devices were cheaper
9   If personal broadband / mobile data was cheaper
10 Training to improve digital skills
11 If someone helped me, e.g. assisted digital service
12 If I had the necessary assistive technology
13 Some other reason – please specify [TEXT BOX]
14 Nothing would encourage me to use the internet more frequently [EXCLUSIVE, CATI CODE IF NOTHING ABOVE SELECTED]
15 Don't know DO NOT READ OUT [EXCLUSIVE]
Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT [EXCLUSIVE]

C – ONLINE GOVERNMENT SERVICE USAGE

SHOW ALL B4C1_INFO

We will now ask about your use of government and public services. Government and public services include services used to renew driving licenses and passports, as well as healthcare services, such as booking a medical appointment and ordering repeat prescriptions.

ASK ALL

C1. Thinking now about **using government or public services online**. If they were available, which, if any, of the following services could you do online either with or without help?

SINGLE GRID

CATI: READ OUT ROWS. For each activity, please tell me whether you could do this task alone, could do it but with help or could not do it

ONLINE: Please select one option for each activity

ROWS
   a. Look online for public services information on government sites (e.g. gov.uk or HMRC)
   b. Complete government processes online (e.g. renew a driving licence or passport etc.)
   c. Applying for or managing your benefits
   d. Using NHS services online (e.g. ordering repeat prescriptions, booking medical appointment)
   e. Pay online for your council tax or for another local council service (e.g. parking ticket, congestion charge etc.)
   f. Submitting documents online for ID verification

COLUMNS
   1. Could do this task alone
   2. Could do this task, but with help

3. Couldn't do this task
4. Don't know DO NOT READ OUT
5. Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

ASK ALL
C2. If a single portal was available to manage all of your benefits online, would you use the portal? By portal, we mean a webpage or website that provides users an entryway to a variety of information, tools, links and more.
SINGLE CODE

CATI: READ OUT
ONLINE: Please select one option

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know DO NOT READ OUT

ASK ALL
C3. If there was a single portal available for **ALL** government services (e.g. managing your benefits, managing your health, managing tax) would you use it?
SINGLE CODE

CATI: READ OUT
ONLINE: Please select one option

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know DO NOT READ OUT

ASK IF WOULD NOT USE INTERNET TO ACCESS GOVERNMENT SERVICES ONLINE (C2=2 AND/OR C3=2)
C4. Which, if any, of the following reasons would stop you from accessing government services online?
MULTI CODE

CATI: READ OUT
ONLINE: Please select all that apply

1 Prefer to make a phone call to do these things
2 No access to internet [ONLY SHOW IF A2=2-6]
3 No access to technology e.g. smartphone, laptop [ONLY SHOW IF A2=2-6]
4 Don't know how/too difficult
5 Prefer to use post/ use pen and paper / fill out a form
6 Prefer to talk with someone in person to do these things
7 Not interested in using the internet
8 Lack the necessary support or assistive technology to use the internet
9 Health condition or disability makes using the internet difficult
10 Website design is not accessible for me
11 Other (please specify) [TEXT BOX]
12 Nothing [EXCLUSIVE]

13 Don't know DO NOT READ OUT, [EXCLUSIVE]
14 Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT, [EXCLUSIVE]

ASK ALL
C5. [CATI: Now, please can you tell me how] [ONLINE: How do] you usually contact DWP in relation to managing your [insert benefit sampled for] claim? By managing your benefit we mean making claims, reporting a change in circumstances, or providing evidence to keep your records up to date.
MULTI CODE

CATI: PROMPT TO CODE
ONLINE: Please select all that apply

1   Online/online account
2   Phone/By phone (Pension Service Helpline) –SHOW FOR SP/PC
3   Post
4   Through next Generation Text service (for speech and hearing difficulties)
5   Through attending a JobCentre Plus
6   Other - please specify [TEXT BOX]
7   Don't know DO NOT READ OUT, [EXCLUSIVE]
8   Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT, [EXCLUSIVE]

ASK ALL
C6. Which, if any, of the following assistive or support services provided by DWP, are you aware of?
MULTI CODE

CATI: READ OUT
ONLINE: Please select all that apply

1   Relay UK
2   Text phone
3   Video relay service
4   Communication by email
5   A home visit from a visiting officer
6   Face-to-face JobCentre support
7   Other - please specify [TEXT BOX]
8   None [EXCLUSIVE]
9   Don't know DO NOT READ OUT, [EXCLUSIVE]
10 Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT, [EXCLUSIVE]

ASK ALL, FOR CODES 1-6 SHOW ONLY THOSE SELECTED AT C6
C7. When contacting DWP about your claim, do you use any of the following assistive or support services?
MULTI CODE

CATI: READ OUT
ONLINE: Please select all that apply

1   Relay UK
2   Text phone
3   Video relay service
4   Communication by email
5   A home visit from a visiting officer
6   Face-to-face JobCentre support
7   Support from a family member, a friend
8   Support from a professional, such as a welfare rights adviser
9   Other – please specify [TEXT BOX]
10 I don't use any support or assistive services [EXCLUSIVE]
11 Don't know DO NOT READ OUT, [EXCLUSIVE]
12 Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT, [EXCLUSIVE]

ASK ALL UC CLAIMANTS (A0=2)
C8. Overall, how easy or difficult do you find using the internet to access your Universal Credit online account?
SINGLE CODE

CATI: PROMPT TO CODE
ONLINE: Please select one option

1   Very easy
2   Fairly easy
3   Fairly difficult
4   Very difficult
5   I don't have access to an online account
6   Don't know DO NOT READ OUT
7   Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

ASK ALL

C9. If it were available, in which of the following ways would you most prefer to engage with DWP for each of the following activities that might occur as part of your [Benefit name] claim?

MULTI GRID

CATI: READ OUT ROWS. For each activity, please tell me how you'd most like to engage with DWP. You may choose from online, app, telephone, email, face to face, or by mail

ONLINE: Please select your most preferred options for each activity

ROWS

  a. Registering an initial claim / making a benefit
  b. [PIP only, A0=4] Completing your 'How your disability affects you' questionnaire
  c. Submitting supporting evidence for a benefit claim, such as medical documents or proof of rental costs or, submitting documents for ID verification
  e. [PIP only, A0=4] Being assessed by a healthcare professional
  f. Checking progress of benefit claim
  g. Disputing a decision or making a complaint
  i. Resolving a payment related query
  j. Resolving a non-payment related query
  k. Updating personal details (such as updating your bank details or home address)
  l. [PIP and UC only, A0=2, 4] Reporting a change in circumstances (such as changes to health condition or starting employment)
  m. Receiving notifications / updates related to your claim

COLUMNS

  1. Online / website
  2. App
  3. Telephone
  4. Email
  5. Face-to-face
  6. Post / letter
  7. Don't know DO NOT READ OUT
  8. Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

ASK ALL WHO HAVE USED INTERNET (A2=1-3)

C10. Thinking specifically about when you last used the government website WWW.GOV.UK to access benefit information, please can you tell me how easy or difficult it was to find all the information you needed?

SINGLE CODE

CATI: PROMPT TO CODE

ONLINE: Please select one option

1. Very easy
2. Fairly easy
3. Fairly difficult
4. Very difficult
5. I have never used WWW.GOV.UK
6. Don't know DO NOT READ OUT
7. Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

ASK IF USED JOBCENTRE PLUS (C5=5)

C11. If available at your local Jobcentre Plus, which of the following digital services, if any, would you use?

MULTI CODE

CATI: READ OUT

ONLINE: Please select all that apply

1. A check-in device to let staff know you had arrived for your appointment
2. A self-service device to navigate your benefit claim and find out other information
3. I wouldn't use any of these [EXCLUSIVE]
4. Don't know DO NOT READ OUT, [EXCLUSIVE]

D SUPPPORT

ASK ALL

D1. Thinking now about using digital services from DWP. Assuming you wanted to use a DWP digital service, in what ways would you want to receive support or guidance on how to make and manage a benefit claim?

MULTI CODE

CATI: PROMPT TO CODE AND PROBE FULLY (I.E. "ANYTHING ELSE?")

ONLINE: Please select all that apply

1 Written guidance
2 Video guidance
3 Over the phone with a DWP adviser
4 In a Jobcentre Plus
5 From a visiting officer
6 From a chat bot on GOV.UK
7 From a pop-up chat box on GOV.UK, speaking to a person on the other end
8 Video calling

9 Third party organisation (e.g. Citizens Advice Bureau, charity)
10 None [EXCLUSIVE]
11 Other - please specify [TEXT BOX]
12 Don't know DO NOT READ OUT, [EXCLUSIVE]
13 Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT, [EXCLUSIVE]

ASK ALL
D2. What, if anything, could DWP do to make you more likely to use DWP digital services?
MULTI CODE

CATI: PROMPT TO CODE AND PROBE FULLY (I.E. "ANYTHING ELSE?")
ONLINE: Please select all that apply

1 Friend/family could contact on my behalf
2 Telephone support with a DWP agent to talk through service
3 Face-to-face support from DWP agent at a job centre
4 Face-to-face support from a visiting officer at home
5 Access to devices at your local job centre to claim and manage your benefits
6 [UC only, A0=2] Online support from DWP agent through your Universal Credit account
7 [UC only, A0=2] If the instructions on how to use digital services were clearer and easier to understand
8 Receiving confirmation of receipt that my claim or changes to my claim have been received
9 If the GOV.UK website was easier to use
10 If an App was available
11 If DWP digital services were more accessible
12 Other - please specify [TEXT BOX]
13 Nothing, wouldn't use digital services [EXCLUSIVE]
14 Nothing, already use DWP digital services [EXCLUSIVE]
15 Don't know DO NOT READ OUT, [EXCLUSIVE]
16 Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT, [EXCLUSIVE]

E DIGITAL SKILLS TRAINING

ASK ALL WHO HAVE USED INTERNET AT A2 (A2=1-3)
E3A. **In the last 12 months**, has your personal use of the internet increased, stayed

the same or decreased?

SINGLE CODE

CATI: PROMPT TO CODE
ONLINE: Please select one option

1 Increased
2 Stayed the same
3 Decreased

4   Don't know DO NOT READ OUT
5   Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

E3B. **In 12 months from now**, do you think your personal use of the internet will increase, decrease, or stay the same?
SINGLE CODE

CATI: PROMPT TO CODE

ONLINE: Please select one option

1   Increase
2   Stay the same
3   Decrease
4   Don't know DO NOT READ OUT
5   Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

E4. Which, if any, of the following situations would encourage you to further develop your digital skills in the future?
MULTI CODE

CATI: READ OUT

ONLINE: Please select all that apply

1   [IF IN WORK, A1=1-3] Wanting to upskill for current role
2   Wanting to develop a new skill
3   Keeping in touch with family and friends
4   [IF IN WORK/LOOKING FOR WORK, A1=1-4] Boosting employment prospects/promotion
5   If free training courses were available
6   Accessing benefits through online Government services
7   If services weren't available offline (e.g. face-to-face, telephone)
8   Other - please specify [TEXT BOX]
9   None, I don't want to develop digital skills in the future [EXCLUSIVE]
10 None, I don't need to develop my digital skills any further [EXCLUSIVE]
11 Don't know DO NOT READ OUT, [EXCLUSIVE]
12 Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT, [EXCLUSIVE]

F – DIGITAL SKILLS IN EMPLOYMENT

Earlier you mentioned that you are employed and use the internet at your workplace.

ASK ALL WHO ARE CURRENTLY IN WORK AND USE DIGITAL SKILLS AT WORK (A1 = 1,2,3 AND A4=1)
F1. How much, if at all, would you say you use your digital skills in your day to day job?
SINGLE CODE

CATI: READ OUT
ONLINE: Please select one option

1. Always
2. Most of the day
3. Some of the day
4. Not very much
5. Not at all
6. Don't know DO NOT READ OUT
7. Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

ASK ALL WHO ARE CURRENTLY LOOKING FOR WORK (EMPLOYMENT A1=4)

F2. In your current search for a job, have you done any of the following:
SINGLE GRID

CATI: READ OUT
ONLINE: Please select one answer per row

ROWS

a. Used an online job finding tools/search engines to look for a new job
b. Applied for a job online
c. Created a digital CV

COLUMNS

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know DO NOT READ OUT
4. Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

G – COST OF LIVING

G1. Given the increasing cost of living in the UK driven by higher prices on goods and services such as food, energy, and fuel, which, if any, of the following apply to you?
MULTI CODE

CATI: READ OUT
ONLINE: Please select all that apply

1 I plan to give up broadband internet or mobile data to be able to afford my other bills (food/rent)
2 I plan to reduce costs in other areas of my life to afford broadband internet or mobile data
3 I plan to look for cheaper internet or mobile data plans to be able to afford my other bills
4 I plan to make more use of public Wi-Fi hotspots to save my mobile data
5 I plan to rely more heavily on libraries or community centres for device usage or free Wi-Fi
6 I have already taken steps to reduce costs associated with internet or mobile data usage to allow me to continue to afford my other bills [food/rent?]
7 I will not be able to afford to start using an internet or mobile data plan of my own
8 The rising cost of living is having no impact on my ability to go online
9 I will use IT/digital services to help me reduce my costs (e.g. email instead of post; online order instead of travelling to store; etc)
10 None of the above [EXCLUSIVE]

SHOW ALL
Broadband social tariffs are provided by internet service providers and offer cheaper broadband and phone packages to people claiming a means tested state benefit such as [SHOW BENEFIT LINE AS PER SAMPLE]. Some providers call them 'essential' or 'basic' broadband. Broadband social tariffs are delivered in the same way, it is just that they are available at a lower price for those citizens eligible.

ASK ALL
G2. Are you aware of social broadband tariffs that are mainly available to customers who are
receiving a means tested state benefit such as [CATI: INSERT BENEFIT SAMPLED FOR] [ONLINE:
Universal Credit, Pension Credit, Employment and Support Allowance, Jobseeker's Allowance and
Income Support]?
SINGLE CODE

CATI: READ OUT
ONLINE: Please select one option

1   Yes
2   No
3   Don't know DO NOT READ OUT
4   Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

ASK ALL AWARE OF SOCIAL BROADBAND TARRIFS (G2 = 1)
G3. And have you applied for a social broadband tariff?
SINGLE CODE

CATI: READ OUT
ONLINE: Please select one option

1   Yes – I have applied but am awaiting the outcome
2   Yes – I have applied and I'm on a social tariff
3   No
4   Don't know DO NOT READ OUT
5   Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

H DEMOGRAPHICS

B4H1_INFO: SHOW ALL

This is the final section and [CATI: I'd just; ONLINE: we would] like to ask you a few details about yourself. This information will be used to monitor the experiences that different groups have when they are dealing with DWP. You do not have to give an answer if you do not want to.

All of your answers will be treated in the strictest confidence, DWP will not be able to identify you from the anonymised responses that Ipsos supply.

ASK ALL
H1. Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for
12 months or more?
SINGLE CODE

CATI: READ OUT
ONLINE: Please select one option

INTERVIEWER ADD IF NECESSARY/SHOW AS POP UP FOR ONLINE: By this [CATI: I; ONLINE: we] mean any physical or mental health condition that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

1   Yes – Physical condition
2   Yes – Mental health condition
3   Yes – both physical and mental health condition
4   No
5   Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

ASK ALL WHO HAVE A PHYSICAL OR MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION OR ILLNESS (CODE 1,2,3 AT H1).
H2. Could you tell me what your illness, health condition or disability is?
MULTI CODE

CATI: PROMPT AS NECESSARY
ONLINE: Please select all that apply.

MENTAL HEALTH
1. Depression
2. Stress or anxiety
3. Any other mental health condition (please specify)

LEARNING DIFFICULTIES & COGNITIVE DISORDERS
4. Learning difficulties including dyslexia
5. Asperger's syndrome / Autism / Autism Spectrum Disorder

MUSCULOSKELETAL / PHYSICAL INJURY
6. Problems with your arms or hands
7. Problems with your legs or feet
8. Problems with your neck or back
9. Pain or discomfort
10. Any other musculoskeletal problem or physical injuries (please specify)

SENSORY IMPAIRMENT AND COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS
11. Difficulty with seeing
12. Difficulty with hearing
13. Dizziness or balance problems
14. Speech problems
15. Any other sensory impairment problem (please specify)

CHRONIC / SYSTEMIC / PROGRESSIVE
16. Problems with your bowels, stomach, liver, kidneys, or digestion including Crohn's disease
17. Chest or breathing problems including asthma
18. Heart or blood pressure problems including angina
19. Skin conditions or allergies
20. Cancer or other progressive illness not covered above
21. Diabetes
22. Any other chronic / systemic illness (please specify)

OTHER CONDITION OR DISABILITY
23. Problems due to alcohol
24. Problems due to drug addiction
25. Fatigue or problems with concentration or memory
26. Obesity
27. Any other health condition or disability issue (please specify)
99. Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

ASK ALL WHO HAVE A PHYSICAL OR MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION OR ILLNESS (CODE 1,2,3 AT H1).
H3. Does your condition or illness reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities?
SINGLE CODE

CATI: READ OUT

ONLINE: Please select one option

1   Yes, a lot
2   Yes, a little
3   No, not at all
4   Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

ASK ALL
H4. What is your ethnic group?
SINGLE CODE

CATI: PROMPT TO CODE

ONLINE: Please select one option

1   White
2   Mixed/ multiple ethnicity
3   Asian/ Asian British
4   Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British
5   Other
6   Don't know DO NOT READ OUT
7   Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

ASK ALL
H10 How would you describe your gender?
SINGLE CODE

CATI: READ OUT

ONLINE: Please select one option

1. Man
2. Woman
3. Non-binary
4. Other (please describe) [TEXT BOX]
5. Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

ASK ALL
H11. Now thinking about language, is English your first language?
SINGLE CODE

CATI: READ OUT

ONLINE: Please select one option

1. Yes
2. No
3. Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

ASK IF ENGLISH IS NOT THEIR FIRST LANGUAGE (H11=2)
H12. To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I need support with English
SINGLE CODE

CATI: READ OUT
ONLINE: Please select one option

a. Strongly agree
b. Agree
c. Disagree
d. Strongly disagree
e. Don't know DO NOT READ OUT
f. Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

ASK ALL
H13. What is the highest educational or professional qualification, if any, that you have obtained to date?
SINGLE CODE

CATI: READ OUT
ONLINE: Please select one option

1 Lower Secondary (e.g. GCSE or O Level, typically at age 16)
2   Upper Secondary (e.g. A- Level, typically at age 18)
3   Vocational qualifications
4   University degree
5 Other
6 No formal qualifications
7 Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

ASK IF EMPLOYED (A1=1-3)
H14. What is your occupation?
CATI: RECORD OCCUPATION OF CHIEF INCOME EARNER THEN CODE CLASS BELOW Position / rank / grade: Qualifications / degrees / apprenticeships: Industry / type of company: Number of staff responsible for: (PROBE FOR PENSION)
OPEN RESPONSE

CATI: RECORD OCCUPATION
ONLINE: Please describe [TEXT BOX]

ASK ALL
H16. Aside from any children, do you have any caring responsibilities?
SINGLE CODE

CATI: ADD IF NECESSARY: By caring responsibilities, we mean caring for anyone who needs help with everyday life due to illness, disability or old age. This could include help with grocery shopping, bathing, dressing, laundry.

ONLINE: By caring responsibilities, we mean caring for anyone who needs help with everyday life due to illness, disability or old age. This could include help with grocery shopping, bathing, dressing, laundry.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know DO NOT READ OUT
4. Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

ASK ALL
H17. Before the age of 17, did you ever live with foster parents or in children's residential care?
SINGLE CODE

1. Yes
2. No
3. Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

ASK ALL
H20. Have you ever been declared homeless?
SINGLE CODE

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know DO NOT READ OUT
4. Prefer not to say DO NOT READ OUT

ASK ALL
H22. For research and statistical purposes only, the Department would like to link your answers to other information they hold so they can further analyse the survey. Your responses will remain completely confidential, and your dealings DWP will not be affected in any way.

Are you happy to let DWP link your survey responses to benefit claim information they have about you for further research analysis? The linking is done with a unique survey id number that retains your anonymity
SINGLE CODE

1. Yes
2. No

THANK AND CLOSE

9.2 Sample breakdown

The PIP sample was provided by DWP and stratified by the most recent benefit claimed. The definition of the study population is therefore based on the last claimed benefit, not all benefits currently claimed. Please note, that as PIP customers were sampled based on their latest benefit claimed through DWP, the PIP customers referred to in this report may also be claiming other benefits. Question A0 in the survey (see Section 9.1) asked which benefits the respondent was receiving at the time of the research. The table below outlines which, if any, other benefits PIP customers were in receipt of. Overall, 58% of PIP customers were multiple benefit customers, compared to 42% claiming PIP alone.

Benefit	N – total number	% of all PIP customers
PIP	3,008	100%
ESA	741	25%
UC	509	17%
SP/PC	277	9%
Cold Weather Payments	197	7%
CA	176	6%
Winter Fuel Payments	162	5%
DLAc	54	2%
Child Maintenance	32	1%
JSA	27	1%
AA	11	*
BSP	1	*

A sample breakdown of other demographics (see Section 2) can be seen in the tables below.

Gender	Man	Woman	Other
	40%	59%	1%

Disability	Physical	Mental	Both	No, not for more than 12 months
	37%	13%	44%	7%

Disability type	Musculo-skeletal	Mental health	Chronic / systemic / progressive	Sensory	Learning difficulties	Other (e.g. fatigue / memory)
	54%	49%	41%	23%	12%	29%

Ethnicity	White	Mixed	Asian / Asian British	Black African / Caribbean / British	Other
	86%	2%	5%	4%	2%

Education	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	Vocational	University degree	Other	No formal qualification
	22%	11%	14%	18%	8%	26%

Caring responsibilities	Yes	No	Prefer not to say
	17%	81%	1%

Employment status	Employed or self-employed	Unemployed	Long-term disabled	Retired	Full-time carer	Student
	21%	10%	45%	17%	3%	3%

English as a second language	Yes	No
	8%	92%

Lived in foster care	Yes	No	Prefer not to say
	5%	94%	2%

Declared homeless	Yes	No	Don't know / prefer not to say
	13%	86%	1%

9.3 Cognitive testing of the questionnaire

Ipsos researchers conducted cognitive interviews with 10 DWP customers over the phone or Microsoft Teams in February 2023. Participants who took part were either PIP or UC customers and they were invited to take part through an email invitation. The sample for the cognitive testing was randomly selected from the full sample file provided by DWP.

The purpose of the cognitive interviews was to test how the questions worked and were understood. It used qualitative methods to try and identify any hidden issues around:

- comprehension (how participants understand questions)

- recall (how participants retrieve the necessary information to answer)

- judgement (how participants decide what answer is the correct one), and

- response (how participants decide which answer to give – which may take into account issues related to social desirability and perceived sensitivity)

.

The interviewing outlined a few issues with the initial draft questionnaire which were addressed before launching full quantitative fieldwork. These included:

- reducing the number of long 'read out' questions to 'prompt to code' where possible, as for many simple questions (for example A3, A5a) participants felt able to answer without being presented with possible answer options

- removing any duplication of answer options or simplifying closely related answer options into one more succinct option, particularly within the barriers section of the questionnaire

- providing reassurance that a description of an online portal was necessary and in its final format, was understood by the target audience

- reducing the overall length of the survey by removing any questions that were misunderstood or were not focused on main research objectives
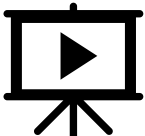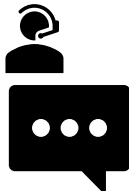
9.4 Future support wanted

The tables below are a version of Figure 5.1.2 found in [Section 5.1](). The tables summarise responses to question D1: 'Assuming you wanted to use a DWP digital service, in what ways would you want to receive support or guidance on how to make and manage a benefit claim?' and outline demographic subgroups significantly more likely to want each type of support.

Over the phone	Total	Carers	No qualifications	Chronic disability
	46%	58%	52%	51%

Written guidance	Total	Sensory disability	Chronic disability	Students
	39%	47%	44%	44%
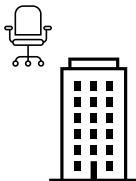
From a visiting officer	Total	Sensory disability	Vocational qualifications	Long-term disabled
	18%	25%	23%	22%
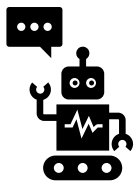
Video guidance	Total	Students	University degree	Employed
	16%	29%	25%	22%
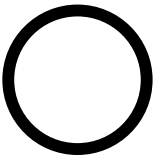
Chat box speaking to a person on the other end	Total	Employed	University degree	Under 35s
	16%	27%	26%	24%

From a third party organisation	Total	Learning difficulty	Sensory disability	Vocational qualifications
	14%	22%	21%	19%

Video calling	Total	Employed	Looking for a job	Sensory disability
	12%	18%	18%	16%

In a JobCentre Plus	Total	Looking for a job	English as a second language	Mental health
	9%	22%	17%	11%

From a chatbot	Total	Employed	Under 35s	University degree
	8%	13%	12%	12%

None	Total	Over 65s	Never used the internet	Non-confident internet users
	5%	11%	10%	7%

9.5 Weighting

The weighting structure used for this research is explained below.

weight0 is the weight used for analyses of the survey data, used in the main body of the report and is based on a customer's most recent benefit claim. To select the sample, each benefit recipient was assigned to the benefit sampling strata based on their most recent claimed benefit. This therefore means that the definition of the study population is based on the last claimed benefit. The survey weight was a calibration weight which forced the weighted sample to look like its population for each benefit. The PIP sample was weighted to age and gender category, year of claim, region, Daily Living Award, Mobility Award, current award length and additional support requirements.

Weighted and unweighted sample profiles for PIP customers whose most recently claimed benefit was PIP can be found in the table below.

	Population figures (%)	Sample - unweighted (%)	Sample - weighted (%)
Gender & Age			
Male 16-24	13.8	16.8	13.8
Male 25-34	12.7	8.3	12.7
Male 35-44	13.9	6.4	13.9
Male 45-54	18.5	17.6	18.5

Male 55-60	16.0	13.4	16.0
Male 61-65	14.9	23.1	14.0
Male 66-74	10.2	14.4	10.2
Female 16-24	7.5	8.8	7.5
Female 25-34	10.5	6.0	10.5
Female 35-44	14.1	7.6	14.1
Female 45-54	20.5	19.5	20.5
Female 55-60	17.9	14.8	17.9
Female 61-65	15.8	23.7	15.8
Female 66-74	13.6	19.5	13.6
Year of claim			
2014	4.7	4.2	4.7
2015	6.2	7.0	6.2
2016	12.9	14.4	12.9
2017	11.1	11.6	11.1
2018	11.1	12.0	11.1
2019	14.4	14.7	14.4
2020	10.4	8.8	10.4
2021	14.1	13.1	14.1
2022	15.2	14.2	15.2
Region			
East Midlands	8.7	9.2	8.7
East of England	8.6	8.9	8.6
London	11.3	10.7	11.3
North East	6.5	6.4	6.5
North West	15.8	14.2	15.8
South East	11.2	12.3	11.2
South West	8.7	9.8	8.7
Wales	7.7	7.5	7.7
West Midlands	11.0	11.0	11.0
Yorkshire & H	10.5	9.8	10.5

Daily Living Award			
Enhanced	50.8	48.0	50.8
Standard	44.9	47.8	44.9
Nil	4.3	4.2	4.3
Mobility Award			
Enhanced	49.9	51.8	50.5
Standard	28.3	28.4	27.9
Nil	21.8	19.8	21.6
Award length			
Short term (0<2 years)	8.4	6.6	8.4
Longer term (2-10 years)	36.3	34.7	36.3
Ongoing (>10 years / no review date)	35.8	40.3	35.8
Expired (review date now passed)	19.5	18.4	19.5
Additional support			
Confirmed	21.9	16.1	21.9
Not confirmed	25.7	25.8	25.7
Not recorded	52.3	58.1	52.3

As the research is based on the most recent benefit claimed, we performed some additional analysis using a 2nd weight (not used in the main report) that grosses survey responses to the overall PIP population.

The second weight is grossweight – a weight that allows analyses of the survey responses for PIP customers, regardless of whether it was their most recent benefit claim or not. This allows for comparisons to be made between survey responses for all PIP customers against the reported estimates and hence highlights any impact from basing the PIP sample on the last claim only.

Comparisons between survey responses for those whose latest benefit was PIP and PIP customers, regardless of whether their latest benefit claimed was PIP can be seen in the table below.

	weight0 (latest benefit is PIP)	grossweight (all PIP)
Gender		
Male	40%	39%
Female	59%	60%
Other	1%	1%
Disability		
Physical	37%	34%
Mental	13%	14%
Both	44%	46%
No, not for more than 12 months	7%	7%
Disability type		
Musculoskeletal	54%	53%
Mental health	49%	53%
Chronic / systemic / progressive	41%	43%
Sensory impairment	23%	22%
Learning difficulties / cognitive disorders	12%	12%
Other (e.g. fatigue / memory)	29%	30%
Ethnicity		
White	86%	87%
Mixed	2%	2%
Asian / Asian British	5%	5%
Black African / Caribbean / British	4%	4%
Other	2%	1%
Education		
Lower secondary	22%	23%

Upper secondary	11%	11%
Vocational	14%	15%
University degree	18%	17%
Other	8%	9%
No formal qualifications	26%	25%
Caring responsibilities		
Yes	17%	19%
No	81%	79%
Prefer not to say	1%	2%
Employment status		
Employed or self-employed	21%	15%
Unemployed	10%	11%
Long-term disabled	45%	50%
Retired	17%	15%
Full-time carer	3%	5%
Student	3%	2%
English as a second language		
Yes	8%	7%
No	92%	93%
Lived in foster care		
Yes	5%	6%
No	94%	93%
Prefer not to say	2%	1%
Declared homeless		
Yes	13%	15%
No	86%	84%
Prefer not to say	1%	1%

Internet access		
Yes, currently accessing the internet	84%	85%
Yes, frequently in the past but have now stopped using	3%	3%
Have tried once or twice in the past but don't anymore	4%	3%
Never used the internet	9%	9%
Internet confidence		
Very confident	25%	24%
Fairly confident	34%	34%
Not that confident	20%	21%
Not at all confident	19%	20%
Don't know / prefer not to say	1%	1%