

Interacting with Government



December 2009

Australians' use and satisfaction
with e-government services

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Australian Government Information Management Office

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Foreword

This fifth annual study of Australians' use and satisfaction with e-government services confirms that the internet is the way most people contact government.

Australians have embraced the internet as a way of interacting with government. Over the last three years, the study has shown that more people would prefer to contact government by internet than any other way. Four out of five people would now prefer to contact government by internet or phone. For the first time, this year's study also shows that the internet is the most widely used method of contacting government for those aged 55-64, in addition to younger Australians.

The latest study confirms the significance of online information and services and provides further evidence that new technologies can assist governments to reach out and engage with citizens.

While the study shows a high level of satisfaction with government online services and websites, it also highlights opportunities for government to improve delivery of e government services, especially with expanding access to broadband. Australians have positive perceptions of online government services, but also expect that government will keep pace with technology changes in service delivery.

The challenge and opportunity for government is to respond to these changes as people's experiences with the internet continue to shape their expectations for government service delivery.

THE HON LINDSAY TANNER MP
Minister for Finance and Deregulation

one Executive summary

one

one Executive summary

1.1 ABOUT THE STUDY

This study is the fifth in a series exploring Australians' use and satisfaction with e government services (provided through the internet and telephone). It investigates:

- how people contact government (internet, telephone, in person or mail)
- satisfaction with these means of contacting government, including reasons for satisfaction and dissatisfaction
- reasons why people choose to use or not use e government services
- preferences for future delivery of government services.

The study was commissioned by the Australian Government, through the Australian Government Information Management Office in the Department of Finance and Deregulation.

1.2 MAJOR FINDINGS

Use of e government services is stabilising with similar proportions using internet, telephone and in person channels as in 2008. The number of people in older age groups who use e government services continues to grow.

- Internet remains the most frequent channel last used to contact government with two in five (38%) people doing so. This is followed by in person and telephone usage (32% and 30% respectively).
- While in previous studies the internet was the most frequently used channel for contacting the government among those aged 18 to 44, it is now also the most frequently used channel amongst those in the 55 to 64 years age group. Those in older age groups are also making increased use of communication technologies such as email, SMS, and social networking sites.

There is a strong preference for the use of e government service channels.

- A strong preference for using the internet or telephone over other channels such as in person contact or mail is evident among those who have used an e government channel before and those who have not.

Attitudes towards government websites remain unchanged.

- Ratings of key aspects of government websites remain high. The majority of people (85%) thought that in general, government websites were trustworthy. Positive ratings were also given for government website most recently visited in terms of being: up to date (91%), designed to help you find out information (83%), easy to use and clearly written (83%), designed to help you get things done quickly (80%).

People continue to be satisfied with e government service delivery, however there has been little increase in satisfaction scores.

- Overall satisfaction with the outcome of the service received is high (87%). This is consistent with previous studies and could indicate either that there has been little improvement in services or that services have improved at the same pace that public expectations around quality of service have increased.
- People are comparatively less satisfied with the time it took to receive a reply, although the rating remains high (83% satisfied to some degree).
- The level of satisfaction with outcomes varies depending on the service delivery channel used. Those who contacted government by internet have the highest level of satisfaction (91%), closely followed by those who did so in person (89%). Those who used mail had the lowest level of satisfaction (80%).

Convenience, channel features, and availability influence the decision to choose a particular service delivery channel to contact government.

- Convenience is the main reason four in five (82%) people use the internet to contact government. It is also an important factor for over two in five (44%) of those who use the telephone. Channel features are the main driver for half (55%) of those choosing to use the telephone while use of in person and mail channels are driven by availability (43% and 61% respectively)

- Improving access would encourage one in five (21%) of those who currently do not use the internet to contact government in this way. They could also be encouraged by improvements in their skill level (17%), in particular by improved familiarity with using the internet or computers in general.

Being unable to find information and use or understand government websites are the main reasons for unsuccessful attempts to find government information or services online

- A quarter (26%) of internet users and two per cent of those who reported not to be internet users said that they tried unsuccessfully to find government information or services online in the previous twelve months
- The main reasons cited were that the website did not have the information they wanted (42%) and that the website was too hard to use or understand (28%). Sixteen per cent did not know which department/agency/service to contact and 15% did not know where to find the website they wanted. A further 13% found the website they needed, but the search did not work for them.

Security remains an underlying concern when contacting the government by internet.

- Attitudes toward security remain consistent with previous studies. There is still some discrepancy between the desire to save time providing general information and government departments sharing personal details, with 69% preferring this convenience and 58% preferring complete anonymity. Three in five (58%) who contact the government by internet would prefer to have a high level of security than a shorter transaction time.

1.3 CONCLUSIONS

Internet use as a means for contacting the government is now well established.

- Internet use is now positioned as the main service delivery channel for Australians to interact with government. The use of the telephone is also strong.

There is scope for increasing use of e government channels for contacting the government.

- Comparison of actual channel use against preference indicates that, while mail and in person channels are still widely used, most people would prefer to use e government channels. Those who did not use their preferred channel did so because there were barriers which prevented use, such as no e government option being available, or the interaction had to be done in person.
- The growth in broadband connections is greater than the growth in government contact by internet. This suggests there is still scope to increase use of the internet to contact government.
- Use of communication technologies such as email and text messaging has increased, opening up greater communication options which could be used to encourage use of e government channels for contacting government.

Older users are increasingly adopting e government and other communication technology channels.

- Those in older age groups are increasingly using the internet to contact government. They are also adopting communication technologies such as email, SMS and social networking sites.
- The take up rate of those over 65 lags behind that of other age groups. Australians in this age group indicate that they might be more likely to use e government channels if they had better skills and/or improved access. However, over two in five of those in this group said that they were not interested in using this channel.

Image and awareness of government websites has remained unchanged.

- While people's satisfaction with and perceptions of government websites remain high there has been no significant increase in these ratings despite attempts by government agencies. As in 2008, this indicates growing community expectations arising from increased use and comparisons with commercial websites.
- The portion of Australians aware of australia.gov.au has not changed significantly since 2007.

two Introduction

two

two Introduction

2.1 ABOUT THE STUDY

This study is the fifth in a series exploring Australians' use and satisfaction with e government services (provided through the internet and telephone). The studies commenced in 2004–05 and have been repeated each year since 2006.

The studies¹ examine:

- how people contact government (internet, telephone², in person or mail)
- satisfaction with these means of contacting government, including reasons for satisfaction and dissatisfaction
- reasons why people choose to use or not use e government services
- preferences for future delivery of government services.

This study was commissioned by the Australian Government, through the Australian Government Information Management Office in the Department of Finance and Deregulation.

The study consists of a quantitative telephone survey and qualitative focus group research to better understand the results from the telephone survey. The telephone questionnaire was refined in 2008 to reflect technology changes and maintain the relevance of the studies for service delivery policy development and design. Some new questions were added and others modified or deleted. In addition, the 2008 and 2009 studies explored in greater depth some issues and trends highlighted in 2007. These include the gap between *preference* for contacting government by internet and *actually* doing so, and preferences for future service delivery.

More detail about the study and its methodology is contained in Appendix 1. Definitions of terms used in the study are in Appendix 2.

2.2 BACKGROUND

To provide a context for the findings about e government, the study explores general use of the internet. The general topics explored in the study have been expanded in recent years to include access to broadband and use of other communication technologies. These issues are explored in more detail in 2008 and 2009 than in previous years.

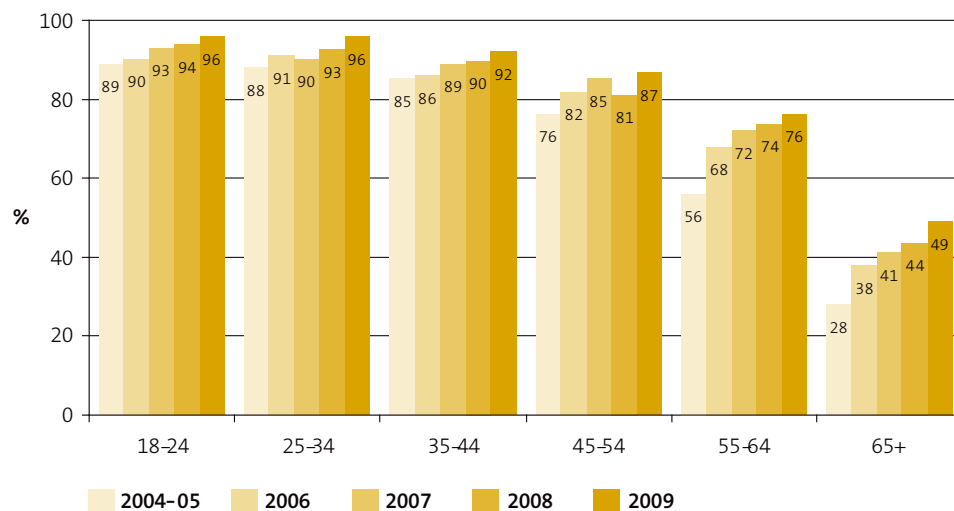
2.3 GENERAL USE OF THE INTERNET

The population covered by this time series is Australians over 18 years old who had contact with government in the previous twelve months. The proportion of these who are internet users (but not necessarily for contact with government) is similar to 2006, 2007 and 2008: four in five (82%).

There are some differences in internet use among different groups of the population. The relationship between age and internet use identified in 2007 continued in 2008 and remains evident in 2009, with most people aged 18 to 54 using the internet. The group that has seen the biggest increase in internet use since last year are the 45 to 54 year olds, whose rate of internet use has increased from 81% in 2008 to 87% in 2009. Three quarters (76%) of those aged 55 to 64, and half (49%) of those 65 or more now use the internet.

1 The studies collect data about an individual's most recent contact with government in the previous 12 months and the extent to which they have used the internet during this period. It was not designed to collect all contacts nor the extent to which people use multiple ways of contacting government to resolve an issue. In some cases an individual has reported using more than one service delivery channel as part of their most recent contact with government. This data about use of multiple channels for contact with government should be regarded as indicative only.

2 Telephone—This refers to use of a landline in this report. In 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009 respondents have also had the option of nominating a mobile phone, SMS, or using a mobile phone to access the internet as the way they last made contact with government. To date the numbers of responses in these categories have not been of sufficient size to allow extensive analysis. Where possible, mobile phone results have been noted, but some caution should be taken due to the relatively small sample sizes. Where sample sizes were too small to allow meaningful analysis, mobile phone results are included in the 'Other' category where relevant. References to the telephone in the 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009 reports exclude these means of contact.

Figure 1 Trends in general internet use by age

Q1. Do you use the internet?

Base: All respondents (n=3667)

Overall, those living in regional Australia (1,000 to 100,000 residents) are still the least likely to use the internet (76%), and their rate of growth in internet use has not been as strong as those who live in other areas (74% in 2008). Those from a metropolitan area (over 100,000 residents) and those who live in rural or remote communities (under 1,000 residents) have the highest levels of internet use (both 85%, compared with 79% and 80% respectively in 2008).

One regional focus group participant explained his view on why metropolitan and rural communities may have higher rates of internet access than those in regional areas.

'I think it depends on the physical situation. I can deal with any Council matters every time I go to the post office because the [shire] office is right next door. If you are in a big city you have got to have access to something like the web these days. If you are out in the country the web can be very handy if you have got broadband.'

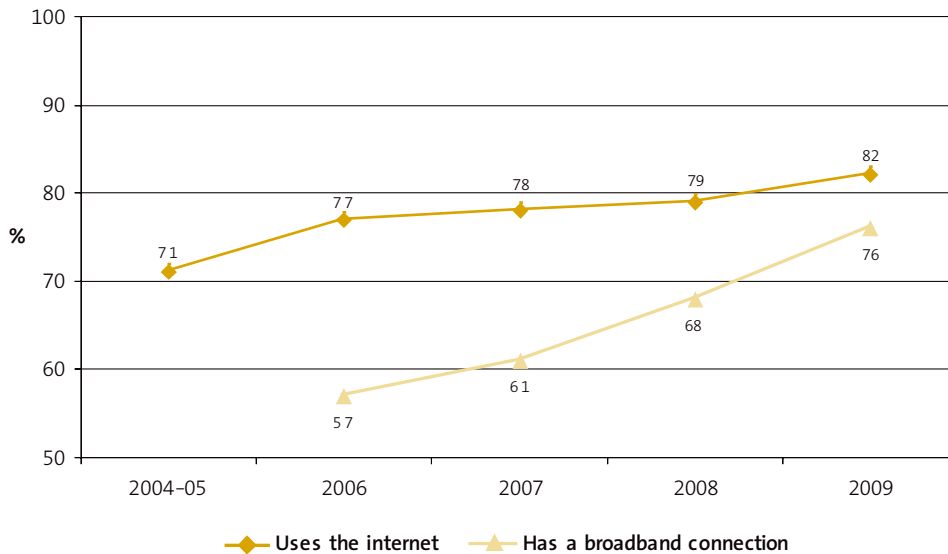
Others in regional areas noted the different channel choices that they make depending on which level of government they are dealing with.

'Well I'm happy to work with the Local Regional Council over the counter. They are people we meet in the shop. They probably live 300 metres down the road. We're all part of the community together. It's different when you're dealing with some of the State or particularly with the Federal departments.'

2.4 BROADBAND CONNECTION

The proportion of people with a broadband connection has increased from 68% in 2008 to 76% in 2009.

Figure 2 General internet use and broadband connection



Q1. Do you use the internet?

Q2A. Do you have a broadband connection?

Base: All respondents (n=3667)

Note: The question on broadband connection was not asked in 2004-05.

Three quarters (73%, up from 66% in 2008) of those who have contacted government in the past twelve months use the internet and have a broadband connection. A further four per cent do not use the internet even though they have a broadband connection.

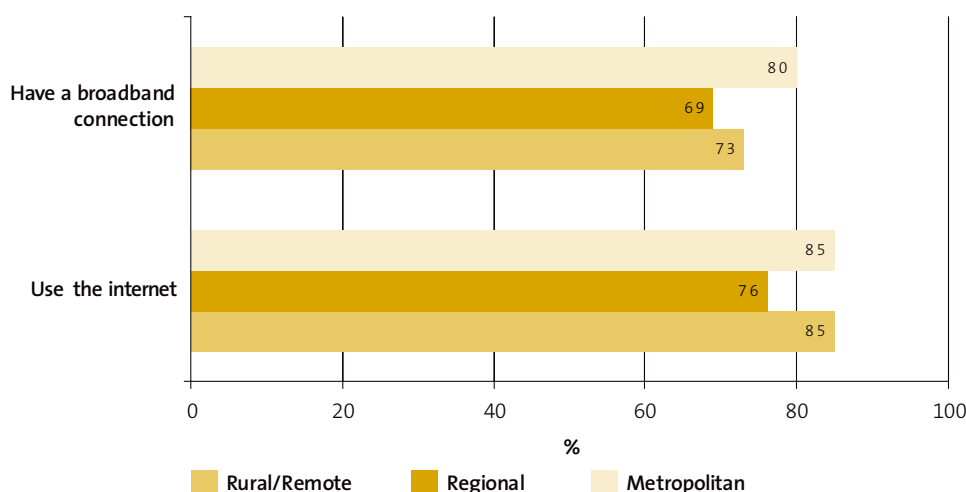
One in ten (9%) use the internet but do not have a broadband connection. One in seven (14%) do not use the internet and do not have a broadband connection.

Although those living in metropolitan and rural/remote areas have the same level of internet use (85%), there are differences in broadband access. Four in five (80%) who live in metropolitan areas have a broadband connection, in contrast to three quarters (73%) of rural/remote residents. While all areas have seen a similar level of growth in broadband access, regional residents have had a slower rate of growth in internet use than those living in other areas.

Since the last study, there has been an increase in the proportion of people living in rural or remote areas who do not have a broadband connection because it is not available in their area. In 2009, a third (34%) of those without broadband reported this as the reason for not having it, compared with one in five last year (18%). This compares with one in five (18%) of those from regional areas who do not have a broadband connection because it is not available and six per cent of those who live in a metropolitan area.

A focus group participant from a regional area noted that they only had broadband connected recently.

'We only got ours eight months ago. They rang and said oh you now qualify for broadband, we had dialup. It's a lot quicker.'

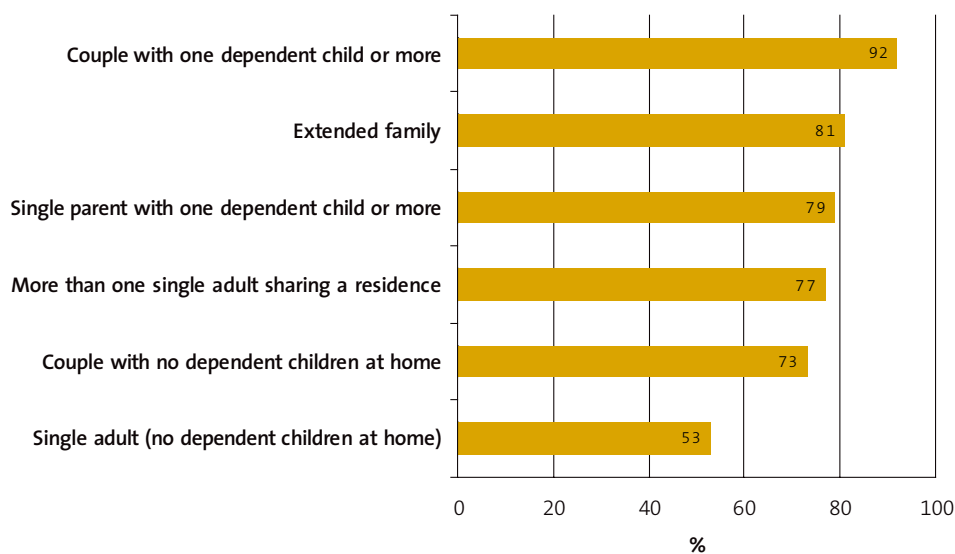
Figure 3 Broadband connection and internet use by location

Q1. Do you use the internet?

Q2A. Do you have a broadband connection?

Base: All respondents (n=3667)

Households with children are more likely to have a broadband connection than households without children. Nine in ten (92%) households of couples with children have a broadband connection, higher than couples with no dependent children (73%). Single parents with dependent children are more likely to have a broadband connection (79%) than single adults with no dependent children at home (53%).

Figure 4 Broadband connection by household type

Q2A. Do you have a broadband connection?

QD2. Which of the following best describes your household?

Base: Respondents with a broadband connection (n=2743)

2.4.1 Reasons for not having a broadband connection

The most common reasons for not having broadband are a belief it is too expensive (26%) and that no benefit could be seen in a connection (19%). Twelve per cent did not use the internet enough to require it, while some (9%) simply had not got around to it or found it too difficult or too complicated (7%). One in ten (12%) reported that broadband was not available where they lived and a similar proportion did not have a computer (11%). These results are similar to 2008.

2.5 USE OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

All respondents were asked about their use of communication technologies. Nine in ten (88%) people undertake at least one of these activities at least monthly, if not more regularly.

2.5.1 Use of email and SMS

Email and text messaging continue to have relatively high levels of use:

- email, used by 80% (up from 75% in 2008)
- text messaging using a mobile (SMS³), used by 69% (up from 61% in 2008).

2.5.2 Use of other communication technologies

While there was no significant shift in patterns of use between the 2007 and the 2008 studies for the other communication technologies, the results from the 2009 study show a greater rate of take up, particularly for social networking sites, SMS and accessing the web via a mobile phone or similar portable device. The most popular of the other communication technologies are:

- news feeds (RSS⁴), used by 43% (up from 39% in 2008)
- social networking sites⁵, used by 36% (up from 26% in 2008)
- instant messaging⁶, used by 31% (up from 29% in 2008)
- blogs⁷, read by 25% (up from 22% in 2008)
- phone calls over the internet, 20% (up from 14% in 2008)
- wikis⁸, used by 20% (up from 16% in 2008)
- Twitter, used by 4%⁹.

3 SMS—Short Messaging Service

4 RSS—Really Simple Syndication – An online file format used to let people know when a certain website or part of a website has been updated with new content (e.g. news bulletins).

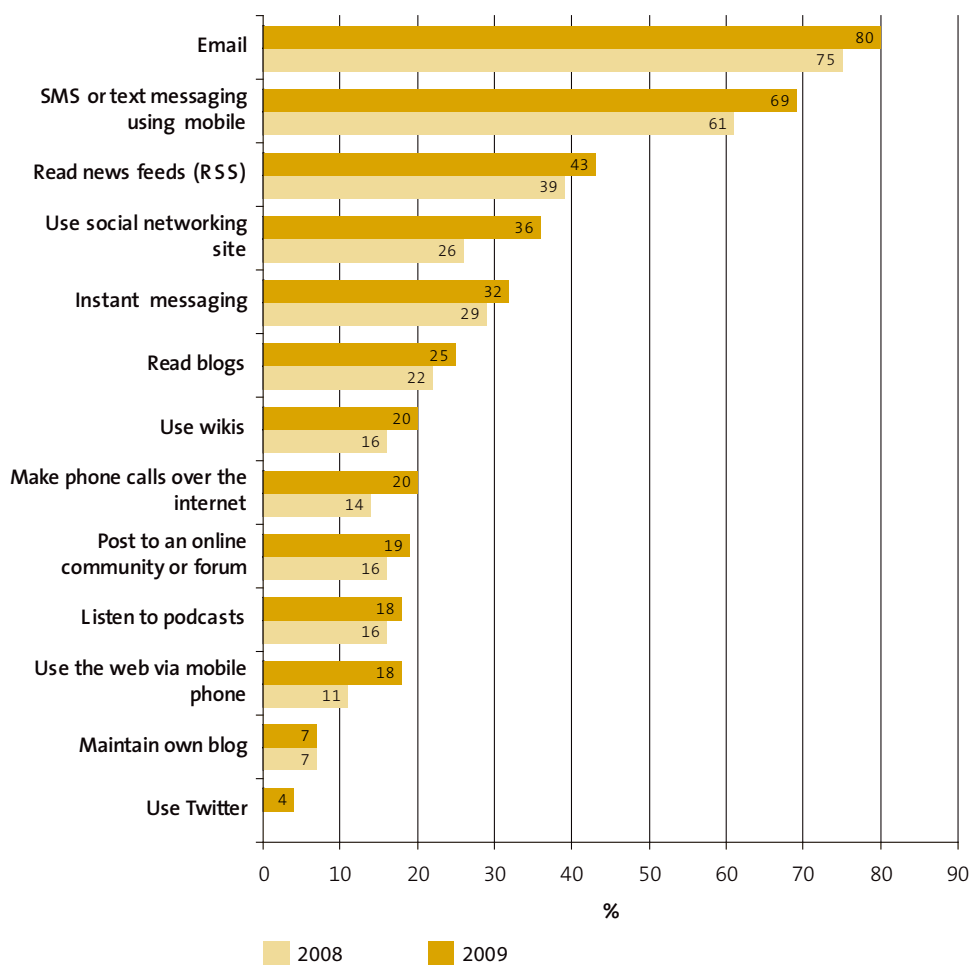
5 Websites such as Facebook or MySpace that let people create profiles about themselves and then communicate with others and form online networks.

6 Instant messaging—Real time communication between two or more people over the internet.

7 Blog (Weblog) —A website which provides a list of text articles, videos or opinion pieces and allows people visiting the website to post their own comments on the articles.

8 Wikis—Wikis are websites which allow multiple users to create, modify and organise web page content in a collaborative manner. Examples include Wikipedia.

9 Twitter—A web-based service that lets users send short text messages to a group of people

Figure 5 Use of email, SMS and other communication technologies

QD1. Do you do any of the following online activities at least monthly?

Base: All respondents (n=3667)

Note 1: Respondents were able to provide more than one activity.

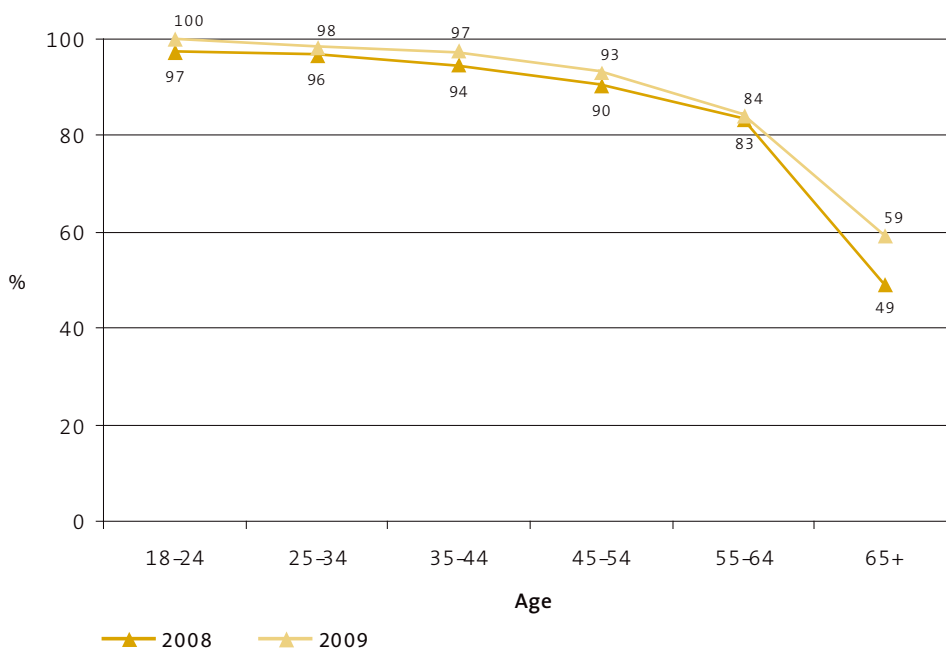
Note 2: 'Used wikis' and 'use a social networking site' were not asked in 2007. 'Use Twitter' was added in 2009. 'Text messaging using your mobile' became 'SMS or text messaging using your mobile' in 2009. 'Use the web via your mobile phone' became 'Use the web via your mobile phone or similar portable device' in 2009.

There is a strong correlation between use of communication technologies and age, with nearly all those under 55 involved in some form of activity at least once a month. Although those aged 65 or more remain the lowest users of these technologies, they are the group who has seen the biggest increase, rising from 49% in 2008 to 59% in 2009.

Social networking and SMS are the technologies that have seen the biggest increases since 2008.

- The proportion of people who have engaged in social networking at least monthly has increased from a quarter (26%) in 2008 to a third (36%) in 2009. This growth has been driven by females and those under 55. While all locations have increased their use of social networking sites, those in rural areas have had larger increases than those in metropolitan or regional areas.
- The proportion of people who have used SMS at least monthly has increased from 61% in 2008 to 69% in 2009, with the biggest growth coming from those aged 18 to 24.

Figure 6 Use of email, SMS and other communication technologies—by age



QD1. Do you do any of the following online activities at least monthly?

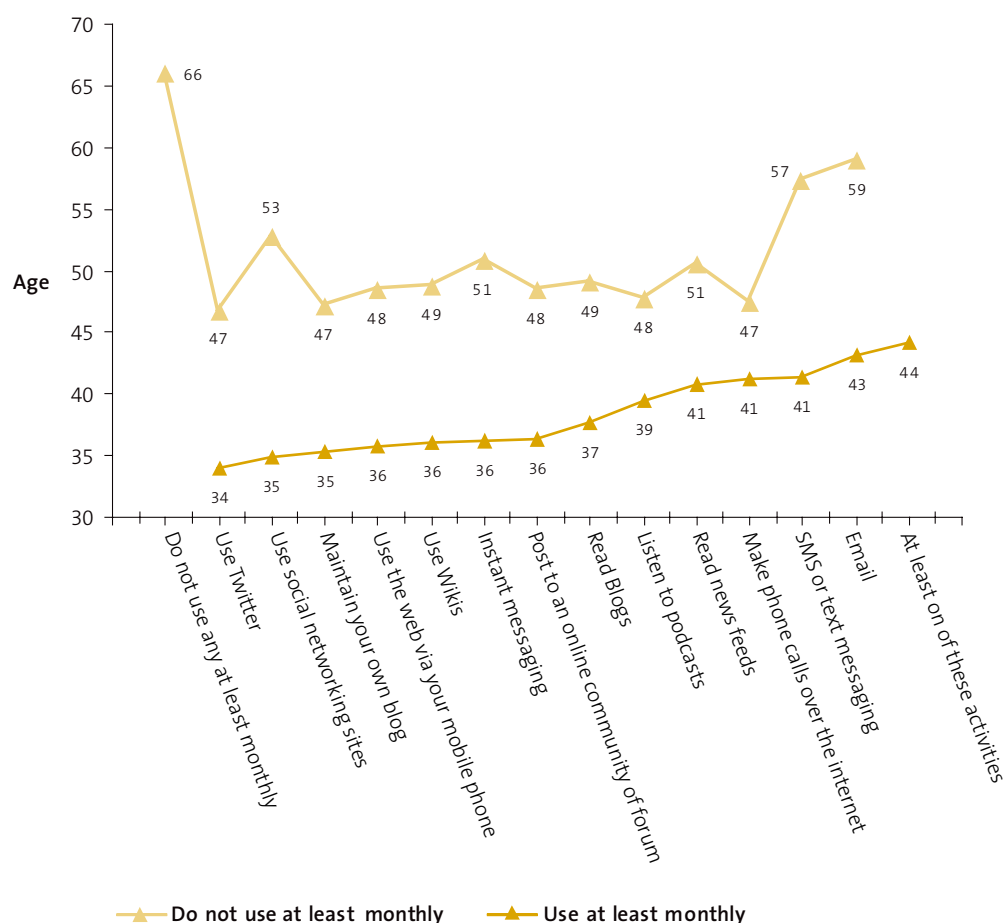
Base: All respondents (n=3667)

In 2008 there were differences in the age profile of those who used specific technologies at least monthly and those who did not. These trends persist in 2009 however the mean age for use of each technology has increased.

Social networking sites, for example, are more likely to be used by younger people with an average age of 35, compared with an average age of 53 for non users. Those using a mobile phone to access the web are also likely to be younger, with an average age of 36 compared with 48 for non users. There is less of an age difference, however, between those making phone calls over the internet (41 years compared with 47 years). There is a 21 year gap between the average age of those who use at least one newer communication technology monthly (44 years) and those who do not use any (66 years).

The average of those who do not use any of these technologies (at least once a month) is 66 years.

The following figure shows the relative gap between the average age of those who use each specific technology at least monthly and those who do not.

Figure 7 Use of communication technologies—average age of users and non users

QD1. Do you do any of the following online activities at least monthly?

Base: All respondents (n=3667)

As noted earlier, those living in regional areas are the least likely to use the internet, although three quarters (76%) do. A similar pattern can be seen in the use of communication technologies. While the difference is relatively small, people living in rural/remote and metropolitan regions generally have a higher take up rate than regional residents.

Given the relatively high levels of use of communications technologies, there is considerable potential for governments to expand the ways services are delivered to the public, particularly to more remote areas.

There is also a close relationship between use of communications technologies and the degree to which a person already uses the internet.

People who do use the internet

Communication technologies offer other options for governments in communicating with internet users. For example, nearly all (96%) of those who use the internet to contact the government during the previous twelve months use email at least monthly. Most (87%) of those who are internet users but used some other form of communication when contacting government over the previous twelve months, use email regularly.

Internet users are also heavy users of text messaging (80% of those who have used the internet to contact government; 68% of those who have not contacted government by internet) and to a lesser extent instant messaging (40% and 30% respectively).

Social networking sites continue to be an important form of communication with their use growing significantly amongst internet users. Just under half (47%) of those who use the internet and have used it to contact the government in the last twelve months use social networking sites at least monthly (up from 36% in 2008). A third (36%) of those who use the internet but have not used it to contact the government in the last twelve months have used social networking sites monthly (up from 21% in 2008).

Similarly the use of the web via mobile phone has increased. One in five (22%) internet users who have used the internet to contact government and one in seven (14%) who have not, use the web via a mobile phone at least monthly (in 2008 these figures were 15% and 7% respectively). This highlights a need for government websites to be compatible with mobile phone browser limitations in order to capitalise on the increase use of the web via mobile phones.

Just over a half (56%) of those who have contacted government by internet are also news feed readers (RSS). Use of RSS is lower among those who have not used the internet to contact government (38%).

A relatively large proportion of those already using the internet for contact with government also use blogs (34%), post to online forums (26%), or use wikis (27%) and podcasts (24%), all up slightly from 2008.

The use of communication technologies has increased amongst all internet users (those who use internet and have or have not contacted the government via this channel).

People who do not use the internet

Over three in five (63%) of those who do not use the internet do not use any of the communication technologies.

As the 2008 study observed, some of these technologies do offer a potential means of communicating with non internet users. For example, just over a quarter (28%) people who do not use the internet did report using text messaging at least once a month.

three Use of government services

three

three Use of government services

Overview

- The ways in which people contact government have stabilised.
- Two in five (38%) people used the internet for their most recent contact with government. Use of the telephone and in person contact was relatively static at three in ten (30% and 32% respectively). The use of mail has also stabilised at around one in ten (9%).
- While the internet continues to be the most frequently used channel for contacting government among those aged between 25 and 44, it is now also the most commonly used channel amongst those 55 to 64. Those aged between 18 and 24 most commonly use in person contact.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Respondents were asked a series of questions about their most recent contact with government in the previous twelve months:

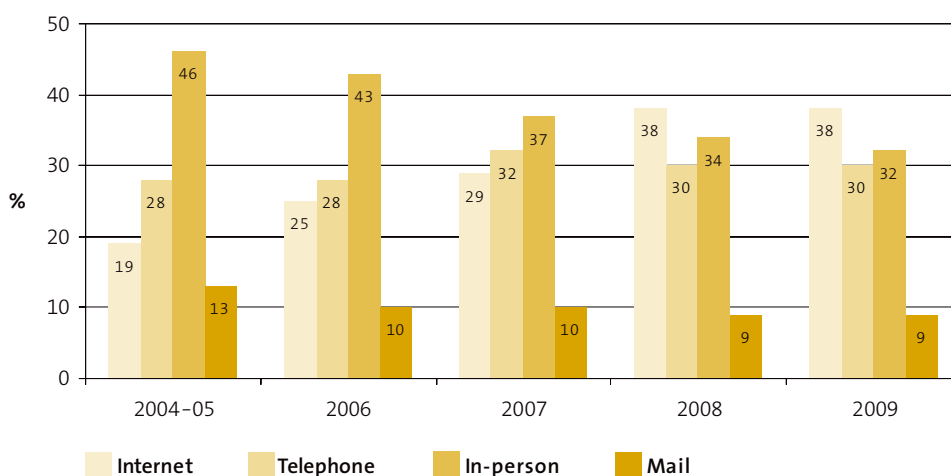
- **Service delivery channel**—method of contact: whether the most recent contact was by internet, telephone, in person, mail or some other channel.
- **Level of government**—whether their most recent contact was with the Australian, state or territory, or local government.
- **Transaction type**—the nature of the contact: seeking, exchanging or providing information with a government agency and if a payment to or from government was involved.
- **Service accessed**—the type of government service accessed.

3.1.1 Delivery channel used for the most recent contact with government

E government (internet and telephone) use saw sustained growth from 2004–05 to 2008, with a corresponding decline in contact in person over the same period.

This growth in e government from 2004–05 to 2008 had been driven by the internet to the point where internet use doubled in the four years to 2008 (rising from 19% in 2004–05 to 38% in 2008). Since 2008 all methods of contact have remained steady. Use of the internet to contact government (38%) has remained unchanged since the last study and is still slightly higher than contact in person (32% in 2009 compared with 34% in 2008).

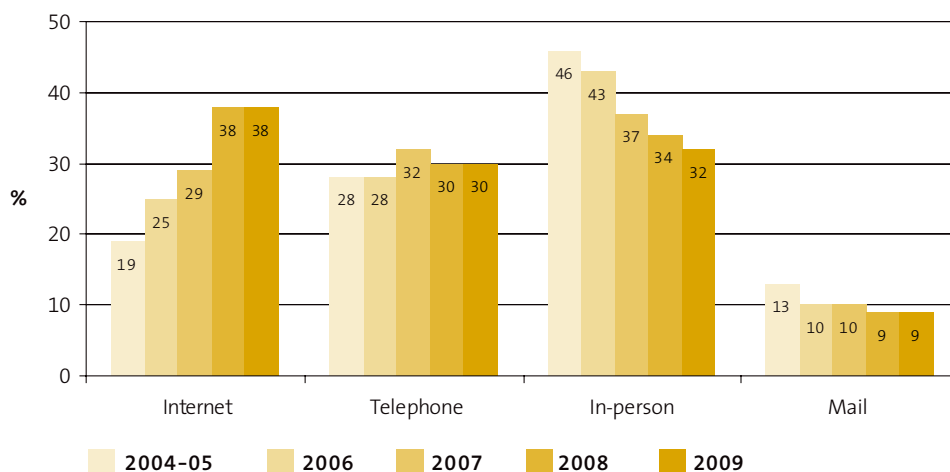
Figure 8 Changes in method of contacting government—by year



Q4. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this...?

Base: All respondents (n=3667)

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because some respondents reported that their last contact with government involved more than one service delivery channel.

Figure 9 Changes in method of contacting government—by service delivery channel

Q4. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this...?

Base: All respondents (n=3667)

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because some respondents reported that their last contact with government involved more than one service delivery channel.

Gender continues to affect the likelihood of using different service delivery channels to contact government. Differences between age groups are becoming less distinctive as use of the internet amongst older groups becomes more prevalent.

Internet

While the internet continues to be the most frequently used channel for contacting government among those aged 44 or younger, it is now also the most commonly used channel amongst those in the 55 to 64 years age group.

Males, except those in the 18 to 24 years age groups, are more likely to use the internet to contact government than females. As has been the case in past years, 18 to 24 year old males made slightly higher use of in person contact (34% used internet compared with 45% who made contact in person).

There is a marked drop in internet use among those 65 or older. Gender differences in levels of use continue to be evident. Nearly one in five (18%) males 65 or older used the internet for their most recent contact with government compared with a small group (8%) of females.

Telephone

The pattern of telephone use to contact government continues to show that use is higher among females in all age groups and lowest amongst the younger age groups. People aged 18 to 24 are least likely to use the telephone to contact government, with one in five (21%) males and one in four (26%) females using this channel. Use increases among the 25 to 34 age group (males 28%, females 32%) then generally stabilises at around one in four for older males and a just over a third for older females.

In person

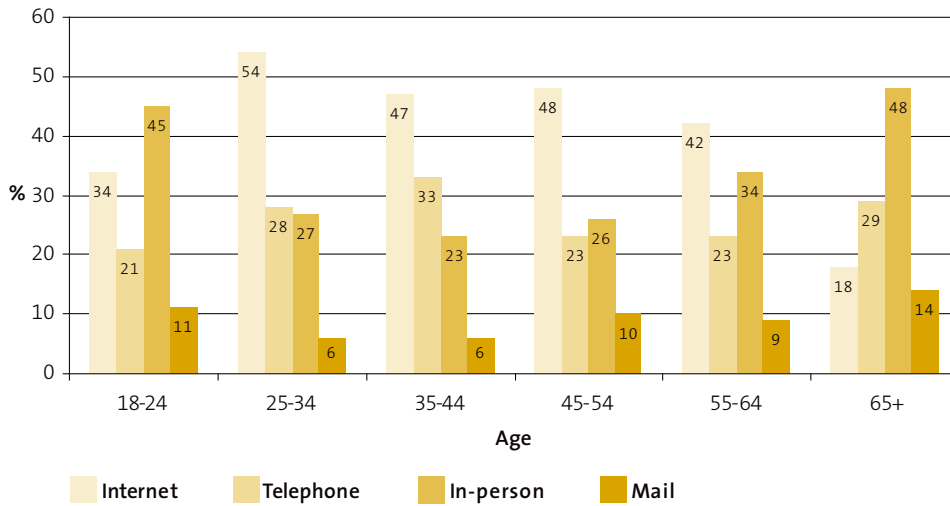
Contacting government in person is a relatively common way for both younger and older people to access government services. As noted previously it is the most common form of contact for males 18 to 24 (45%) and is the most common way people 65 or older contact government (males 48%, females 43%).

In the 18 to 24 age group, males are more likely to contact government in person than females (45% and 37% respectively). There is relatively little gender difference among those 25 or older.

Mail

Use of mail for contacting government is relatively low for all age and gender groups, although its use peaks among those 65 or older.

Figure 10 Method of contacting government—males by age

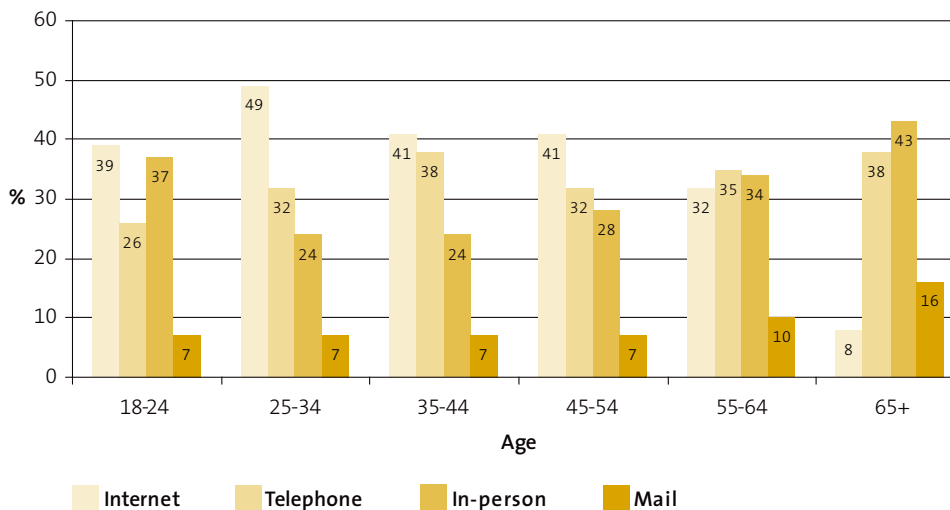


Q4. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this...?

Base: All males (n=1805)

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because some respondents reported their last contact with government involved more than one service delivery channel.

Figure 11 Method of contacting government—females by age



Q4. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this...?

Base: All females (n=1862)

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because some respondents reported their last contact with government involved more than one service delivery channel.

3.1.2 Use of multiple channels to contact government

This study collects data about an individual’s most recent contact with government in the previous twelve months. In some cases people have reported using more than one channel for this most recent contact, but the study was not designed to collect information about all contacts and the extent to which people use multiple ways of contacting government.

Some focus group participants used multiple channels because the complexity of dealing with government at times required them to try a number of different approaches to achieve the required outcome.

‘I think they’re just, you know, they are trying to be too much in many cases ... some governments they’re just, [offering] too much up front. They are trying to be too much, too often. The whole thing is you can’t find what you want in one go and so you try one thing and then something else when what you really should

have done is either gone and seen them or rang them up because they often don't give you the pieces of paper maybe you just needed to download it.'

3.1.3 Level of government contacted

The proportions of people who have contacted each level of government have been similar in each year of this study. The Australian Government remains the most frequently accessed (43%), with state and territory (26%) and local government (29%) having similar levels of contact.

3.1.4 Transaction type being undertaken

The reason for contacting government was assessed on the basis that the individual either:

- sought or obtained information from the agency without providing any details about themselves
- provided information to the agency but did not receive any information back at that time, or
- exchanged information¹⁰ with the agency.

There has been no significant change in the type of transaction people are undertaking. Two in five (39%) people exchanged information in their most recent contact with government, while slightly fewer individuals contacted government only to obtain information (35%). One in four (24%) were simply providing information to an agency.

3.1.5 Services being accessed

In 2009, the types of services accessed during the most recent contact with government continue to be consistent with trends identified in the previous studies. Just over a quarter (27%) of contacts involve 'community and social services'. This remains the most commonly accessed category of government service. There has been relatively little change in the level of access of other categories of service between previous years of this study. 'Transport' (14%) and 'business services, economics, finance and taxation' (11%) remain the next most common categories of services used. 'Land, property, planning and construction' has risen to the same level of access (11% from a slightly lower figure of 9% in 2008).

3.2 USE OF INTERMEDIARIES FOR CONTACT WITH GOVERNMENT

The extent to which people used someone else to make contact with government, or to assist them to do so, on at least one occasion in the previous twelve months remains consistent at around one in five (21%).

An increasing proportion of those using an intermediary did so because they did not understand what to do or the person helping them was more experienced (42%, up from 31% in 2008).

Several focus group participants used an intermediary with more experience or expertise to discuss issues with a government employee or to complete forms and documentation.

'My Dad is more experienced, he knows what he is doing. I just leave it to him to call on my behalf... for tax purposes. We have got like a trust set up [so] it is a lot more complicated. When I do my personal tax it is all easy... but the trust, I have tried to call myself, didn't understand all the details, my father, like he is an accountant so he would call'

'... even sometimes the forms you fill in, some of the questions they ask, you don't know what they're actually asking. So I have got him [my brother] to fill them in on my behalf but he also had to call for me just to clarify how to fill in the forms properly as well.'

The other major reasons for using this type of assistance were similar to the 2008 study, with one in ten (12%) again mentioning convenience or that they did not have time or were too busy to do it themselves (8%).

One in four (25%) of those who used an intermediary received assistance with a tax return - an increase from the one in five (19%) in 2008. There was also an increase in the use of intermediaries to find information (20% compared to 15% in 2008).

¹⁰ In the 2005 to 2007 studies the 'exchanged information' category specifically included a reference to making or receiving a payment. In 2008 a separate question was asked about payments. The 2008 and 2009 results for these questions are therefore not directly comparable with the outcomes for those years.

There was a marked decrease in the proportion of those who used an intermediary to help them use the internet to contact government from 2008 (5% down from 11%).

Age, gender, life stage or geographic location did not affect the likelihood of people using an intermediary.

four Use of e-government services
through the internet

four

four Use of e government services through the internet

Overview

- The number of people who contact government by internet, and the frequency in which they do so, has stabilised.
- Nearly two thirds of those who have contacted government in both 2008 (63%) and 2009 (65%) used the internet to do so on at least one occasion during the previous twelve months. This has increased from 39% in 2004–05, 48% in 2006 and 59% in 2007.
- In both 2008 and 2009 three in ten (31%) used the internet for the majority (all or most) of their contact with government.
- Younger people are no longer the only ones most likely to use the internet to contact government. More than seven in ten of those aged between 18 and 54 had used the internet to do so on at least one occasion as had just over half (56%) of those in the age group 55 to 64.

Finding government websites

- The majority (91%) of people used a search engine to locate a government organisation on the internet.
- Just over a quarter (28%) of people who used the internet to contact government already knew about a website because they had used it before. The similar proportion (25%) found it by searching for it.
- Broadband users and those in older age groups were more likely to already know about a website because they had used it before.

Attitudes towards government websites

- Government websites continue to be perceived as being up to date, with seven in ten people (72%) rating this factor as excellent and a further two in ten rating it as good.
- The trustworthiness of government web sites rated particularly well with the majority (85%) describing this aspect as ‘excellent’ or ‘good’. A relatively high score was received for the likelihood of recommending the website to someone else. Quality compared with non government business sites also rated well.
- While very few people rate any of the quality measures as poor or very poor there has been no improvement in the likelihood of government websites being rated as “excellent” for any of the attributes tracked in this study.

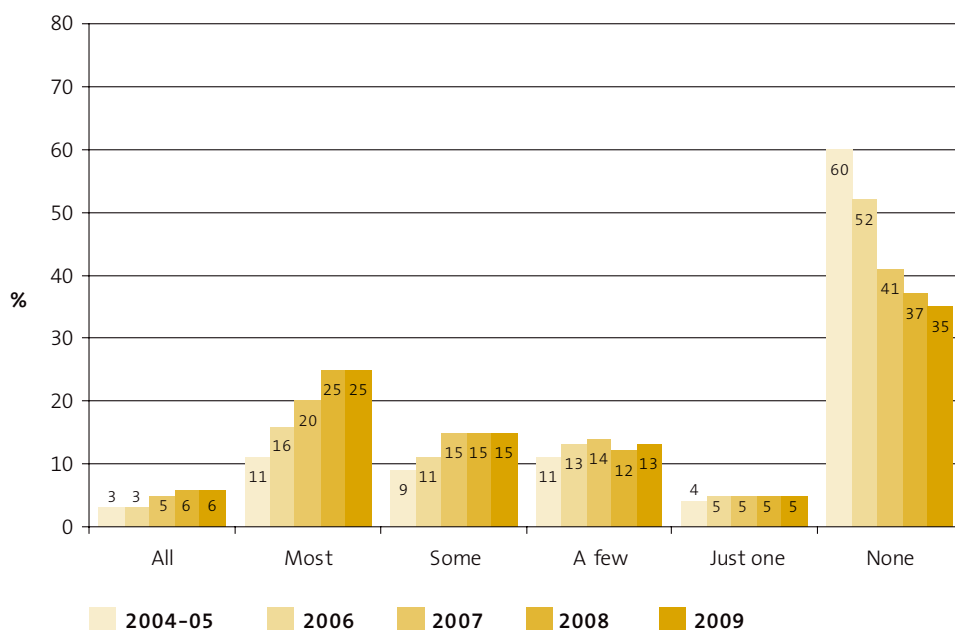
Awareness and knowledge of the Australian government portal

- Three in five people (59%) report that they have heard of australia.gov.au. There has been no change in awareness over the three years this has been tracked.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The proportion of people who access government services by internet is showing signs of stability with around two thirds of those who have contacted government in both 2008 (63%) and 2009 (65%) using the internet on at least one occasion in the previous twelve months. This has increased from 39% in 2004–05, 48% in 2006 and 59% in 2007.

The extent to which people use the internet to contact government is also showing signs of stability with three in ten (31%) now use the internet for the majority (all or most) of their contact with government. This is double the rate reported in 2004–05 (14%).

Figure 12 Use of the internet to contact government in the previous 12 months

Q12. Thinking of ALL the contacts that you had with government agencies and services over the past 12 months, about what proportion of these took place over the internet.

Base: All respondents (n=3667)

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.

Previous years of this study have identified that there are a number of factors that affect the likelihood of people having used the internet to contact government at least once in the previous twelve months. While these characteristics can still identify those groups in the community who are less likely to use the internet to contact government this has become less distinct in regard to age and personal income is also becoming less of a discriminate attribute.

- **Age**—Younger people are no longer the only ones most likely to use the internet to contact government. More than seven in ten of those aged between 18 and 54 had used the internet to do so as had just over half (56%) of those in the age group 55 to 64. More than a quarter (29%) of those 65 or older who have contacted government in the previous twelve months had also used the internet on at least one occasion.
- **Personal income**—Those with lower annual incomes continue to be less likely to have contacted government by internet, but the distinction between those earning \$50,000 or more is becoming less evident. At least three in four of those with a personal income above \$50,000 have used the internet to contact government compared with two in three among those earning between \$30,001 and \$50,000 and half of those with a lower income.
- **Employment**—Those in the workforce¹¹ continue to be more likely to have contacted government using the internet (75%) than people not in the workforce (45%) and those who are retired (29%).
- **Nature of employment**—People employed in office based occupations¹² are more likely to have used the internet to contact government (79%) than those engaged in non office occupations¹³ (68%).
- **Education**—Three quarters (79%) of those who have completed, attempted, or are currently completing some form of post secondary study used the internet to contact government. This compares with just over half (57%) who had completed high school, but no further studies, and a third (36%) who had not completed year 12 of high school (or its equivalent).
- **Household type**—Households with dependent children¹⁴ are more likely to have used the internet to contact government (76%) than other families¹⁵ without dependent children (60%) and single adults without dependent children (50%).
- **Location**—Those living in regional areas are less likely to have used the internet to contact government (56%) than those in metropolitan (69%) or rural/remote (59%) areas.

¹¹ "The workforce" includes those working full or part time or looking for work. "People not in the workforce" includes students, non workers and people undertaking home duties.

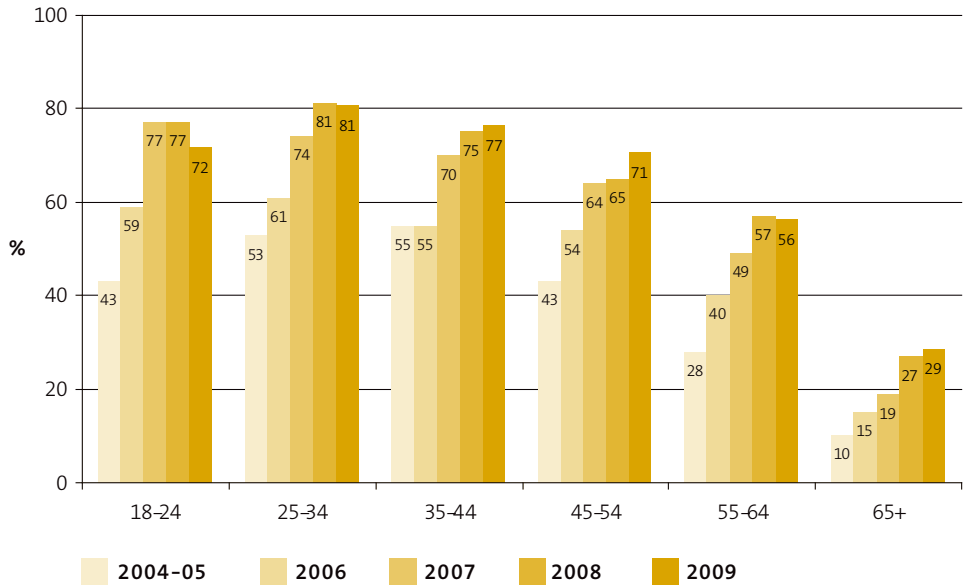
¹² Managers or administrators, professionals, community and personal service workers and clerical and administrative workers

¹³ Technicians or trade workers, sales workers, machinery operators or drivers, labourers

¹⁴ Includes couples and single parents with dependent children

¹⁵ Couple without dependent children or extended families

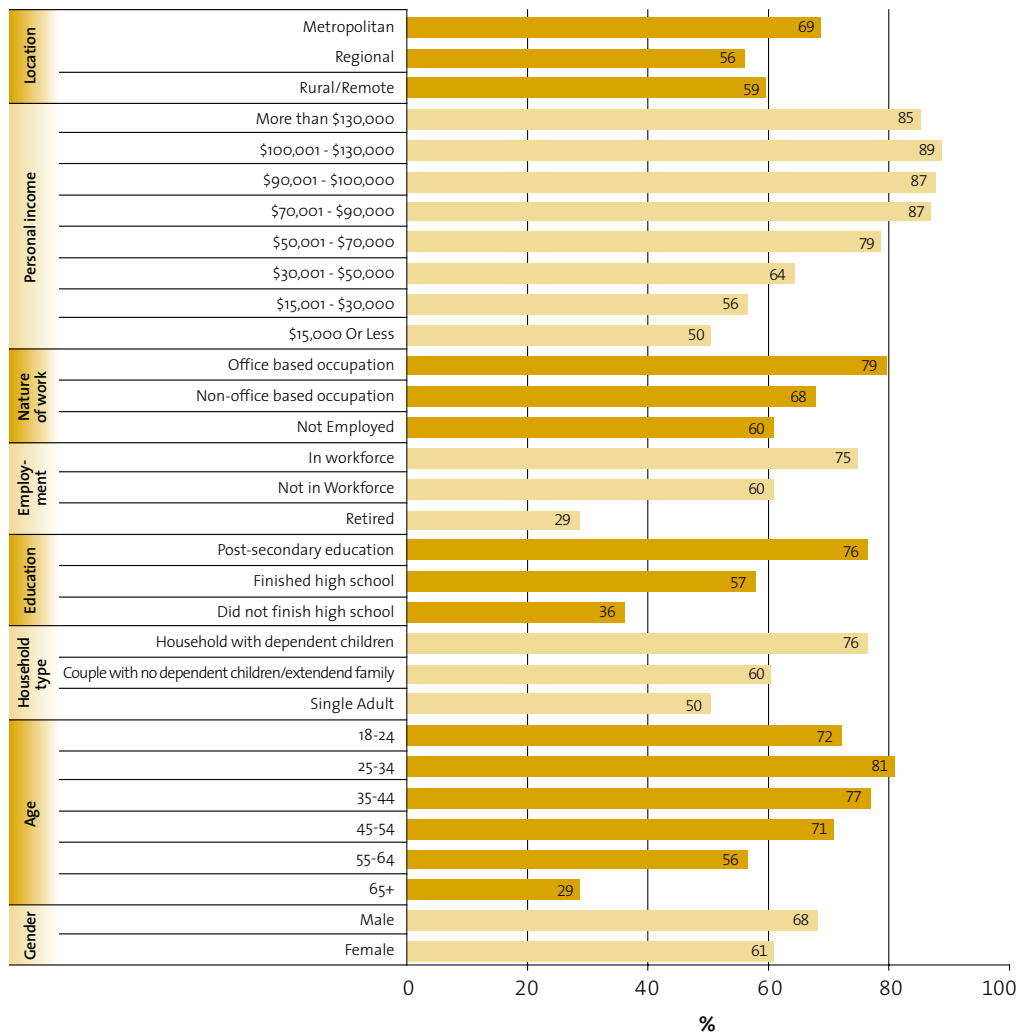
Figure 13 Contacting government by internet—age profile



Q12. Thinking of ALL the contacts that you had with government agencies and services over the past 12 months, about what proportion of these took place over the internet?

Base: All respondents (n=3667)

Figure 14 Characteristics of those who used the internet to contact government in the previous 12 months



Q12. Thinking of ALL the contacts that you had with government agencies and services over the past 12 months, about what proportion of these took place over the internet?

Base: All respondents (n=3667)

4.2 LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT ACCESSED BY INTERNET

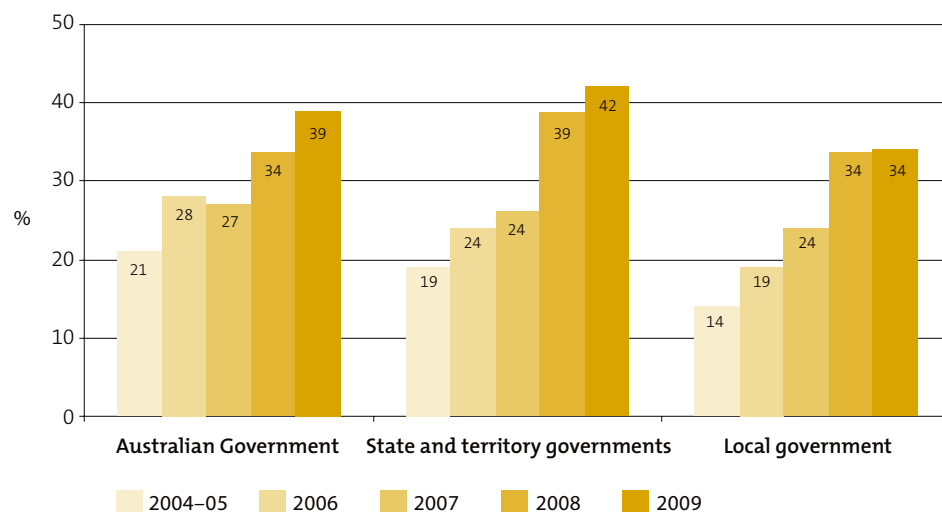
The proportion of people who use the internet to contact each level of government has started to stabilise. The ratio of internet use to contact the Australian Government however has continued to show signs of growth, increasing from a third (34%) in 2008 to two in five (39%) in 2009. Use of the internet to contact both state and territory government (39% in 2008 increasing slightly to 42% in 2009) and local government (34% in both years) has been more stable over this period.

Figure 15 Level of government accessed by internet

Q3C. What was the level of government for this contact?

Q4. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this...?

Base: Respondents who used the internet in their most recent contact with government (n=1336)



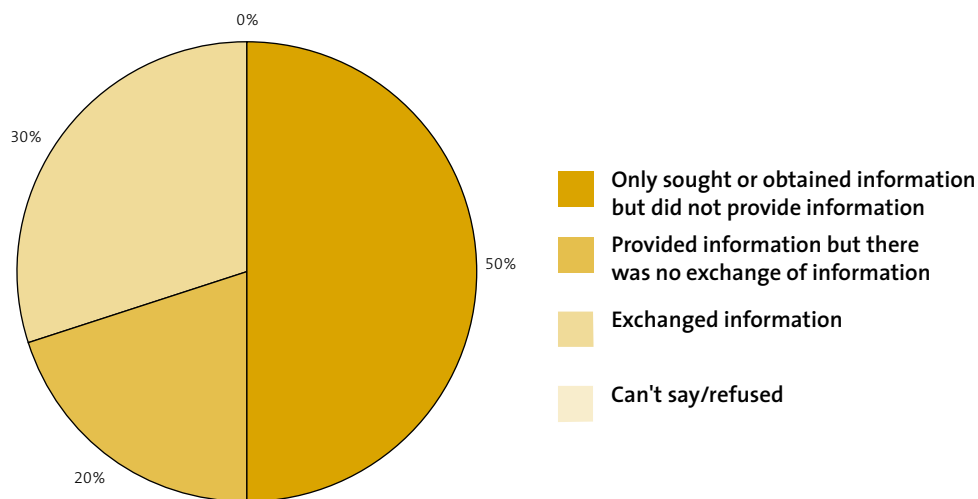
Note 1: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.

Note 2: Percentages may not add up to 100% because some respondents were unable to say what level of government they had dealt with.

4.3 TRANSACTION TYPE ACCESSED BY INTERNET

The type of transactions the internet is used for when contacting government have not changed. Those who use the internet to contact government are more likely to be seeking information than undertaking another type of transaction. Half (50%) of those contacting government by internet were seeking but not providing information, a third (30%) were exchanging information, and one in five (20%) used the internet to provide information but did not seek any.

Figure 16 Contacting government by internet—type of transaction



Q3B. What was the reason for this contact?

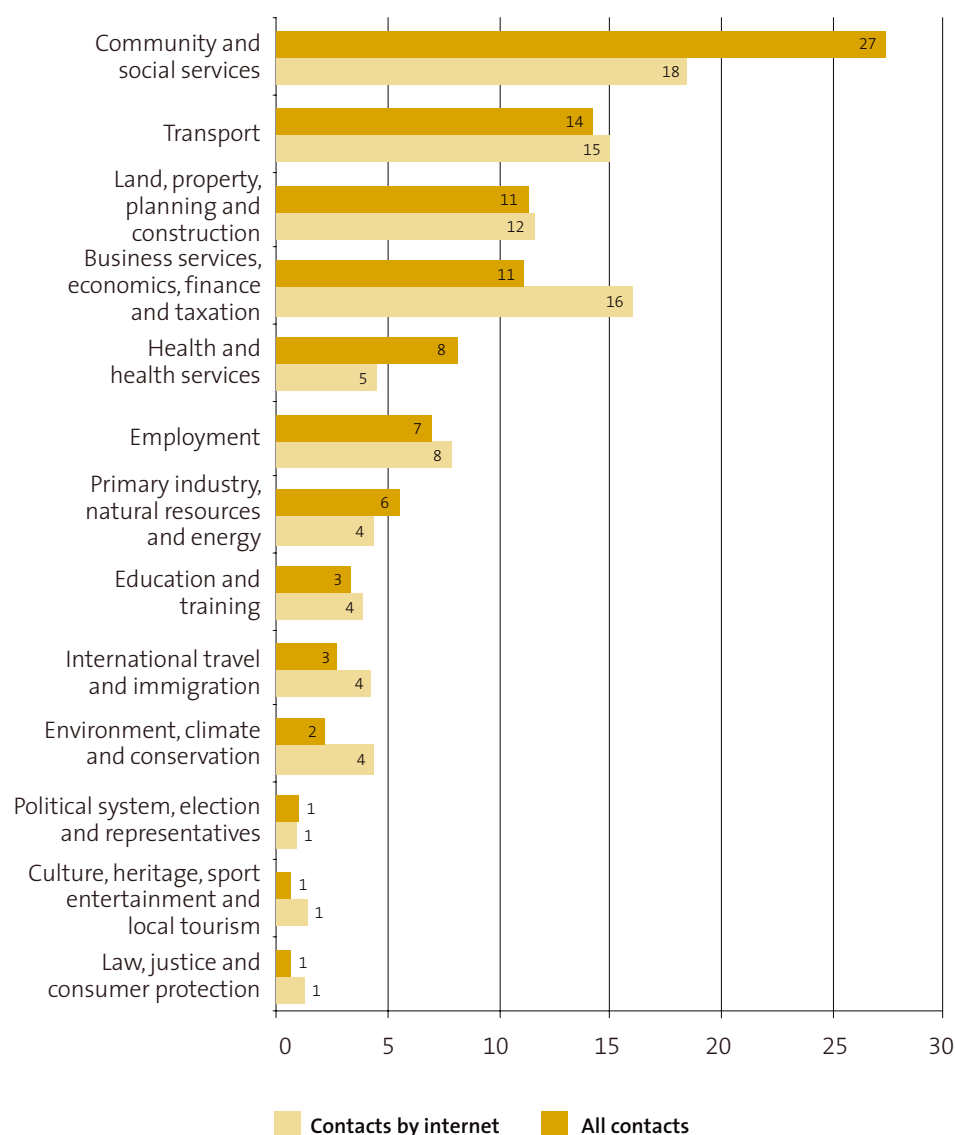
Base: Respondents who used the internet in their most recent contact with government (n=1336)

Note: Percentages may be shown as 0% due to rounding of decimals.

4.4 SERVICES ACCESSED BY INTERNET

The types of government services accessed have been consistent over the five years of the study.

There continues to be, however, some differences in the categories of service for which the internet is used to contact government. The internet is less likely to be used for accessing 'community and social services' (18% compared with 30% for all methods of contact) or 'health and health services' (5% compared with 8%). The internet is more likely to be used to contact government for 'business services, economics, finance and taxation' (16% compared with 11% for all methods of contact).

Figure 17 Government services accessed by internet

Q3A. I would like you to think of government services, of any type at all in Australia, including local councils, state governments and the Australian Government. I am interested in all contact you have had with ANY government services in the PAST 12 MONTHS. Contact can include applying for things, providing information about yourself, making payments, enquiries, or looking for information. What was the MOST RECENT contact you had with a government service? Please name the service you contacted and the reason for the contact.

Base: All respondents (n=3667); Respondents who used the internet in their most recent contact with government (n=1336)

Note 1: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.

Note 2: Only the most common reasons are summarised in the above figure.

4.5 ATTITUDES TOWARDS GOVERNMENT WEBSITES

Respondents whose most recent contact with government was by internet were asked how they found the website and their views about its content, design and ease of use.

Those who had used the internet to contact government sometime in the previous twelve months were asked about finding government websites and to rate government websites in terms of quality, trustworthiness and the extent to which they would recommend them to others.

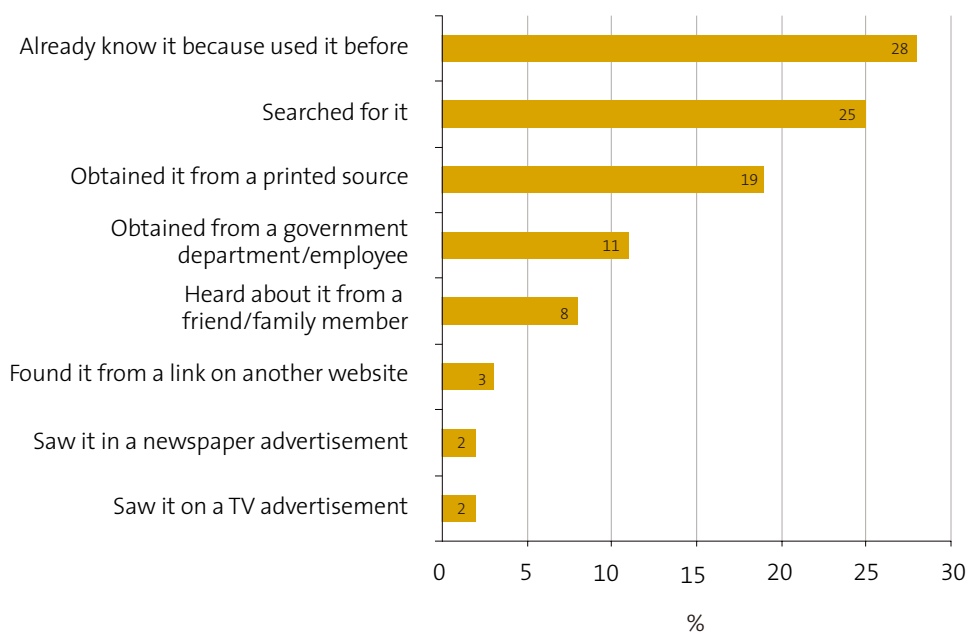
4.5.1 Recent use of the internet and government websites

Two in five (38%) people used the internet for their last contact with government, whereas three in five (62%) used a non internet channel. Of those who used the internet, the majority (89%) accessed a website and nine per cent used email.

Those whose last contact with government was through a website were asked how they had found it. Just over a quarter (28%) already knew about the website because they had previously used it. A similar proportion (25%) found out about the website by searching for it. One in five (19%) obtained its address from a printed source (such as a printed article or brochure), while one in ten (11%) obtained it from a government department or employee. Heard about it from a friend/family member. Found it from a link on another website. Saw it in a newspaper advertisement. Saw it on a TV advertisement.

As was the case in 2008, broadband users and those in older age groups were more likely to know about the website because they had used it before.

Figure 18 How the most recent government website visited was found



Q6C2. How did you find out about this website?

Base: Respondents whose most recent contact was visiting a website by internet or website by mobile phone (n=1187)

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.

4.5.2 Attitudes towards the most recent government website visited

Respondents were asked to rate the government website they had most recently visited in terms of it being:

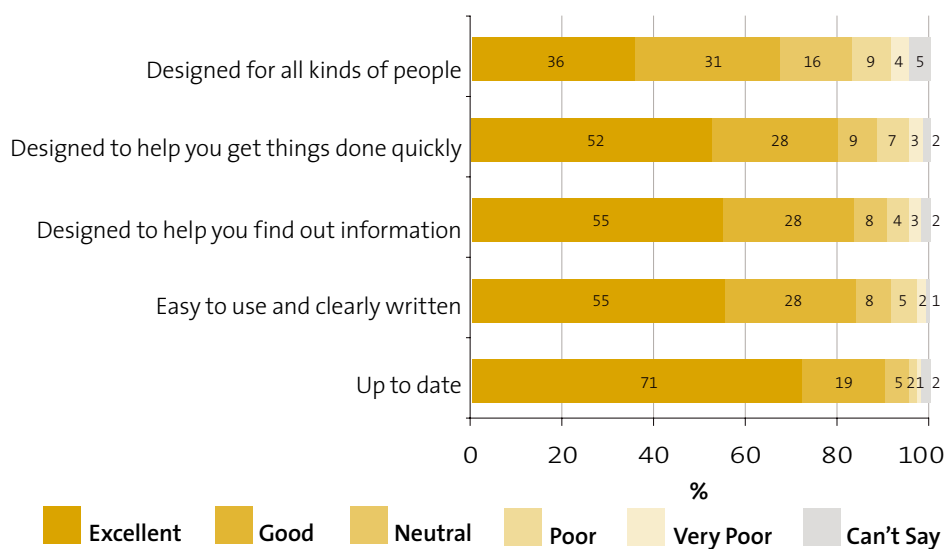
- up to date
- easy to use and clearly written
- designed:
 - o to help find information
 - o to get things done quickly
 - o for all kinds of people.

The strength of government websites continues to remain as being up to date, with seven in ten people (72%) rating this factor as excellent and a further two in ten rating it as good.

While very few people rate any of the quality measures as poor or very poor there has been no improvement in the likelihood of the websites being rated as “excellent” for the other attributes tracked in this study.

As was the case in 2008, slightly more than half rated the government web site they had most recently visited as excellent for ease of use (55%), being designed to help find information (55%) and being designed to help you get things done quickly (52%).

A more moderate proportion (36%) gave an “excellent” rating for the web site as being this designed for all kinds of people.

Figure 19 How the most recent government website visited was rated

Q6C3a-3e. Still thinking about your most recent contact with this Government website, I am going to ask you to rate various aspects of that website. On a scale of 10 to zero, where 10 is excellent and 0 is very poor, how would you rate [the website] on ... ?

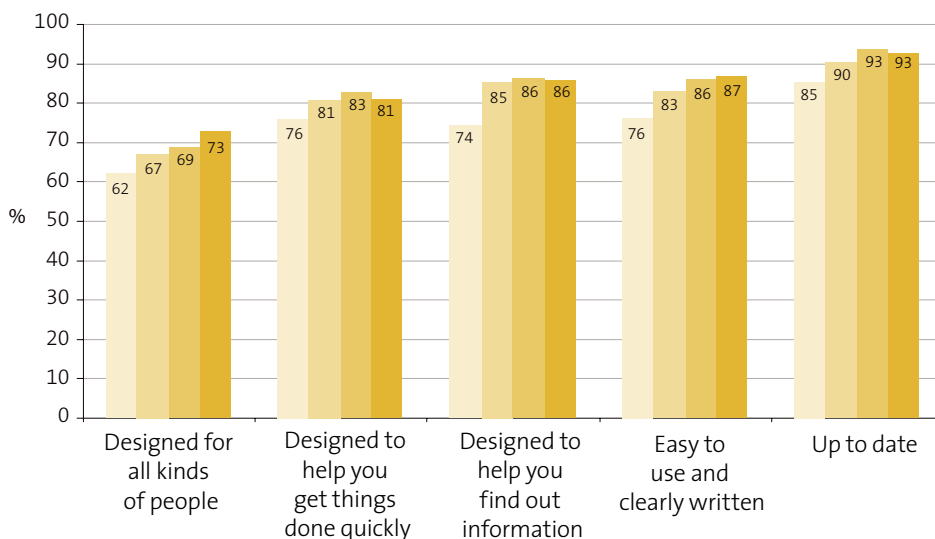
Base: Respondents whose most recent contact was visiting a website by internet or website by mobile phone (n=1187)

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.

Those who are more positive about their experience with contacting the government via a website were more likely to contact the government via this method. This was evident for each of the issues examined in the survey:

- **designed for all kinds of people**—seven in ten (70%) of those who made all or most of their contact with government by internet gave a positive score compared to three in five (62%) of those who had made contact by internet just once or only a few times.
- **designed to help you get things done quickly**—frequency of use had less influence with this rating. Four in five (82%) of those who made all or most of their contact with government by internet gave a positive score compared to three quarters (76%) of those who had made contact just once or only a few times.
- **designed to help you find out information and easy to use and clearly written**—those who made all or most of their contact with government by internet were much more likely to give a positive score than those who had made contact just once or only a few times (86% and 74% respectively).
- **up to date**—most people rated this positively. Over nine in ten (93%) of those who made all or most of their contact with government by internet gave a positive score as did the majority (85%) of those who had made contact by internet just once or only a few times.

Figure 20 Positive perceptions of government websites by proportion of contact by internet



Proportion of government contact over the internet



Q6C3a-3e. Still thinking about your most recent contact with this Government website, I am going to ask you to rate various aspects of that website. On a scale of 10 to zero, where 10 is excellent and 0 is very poor... how would you rate [the website] on...?

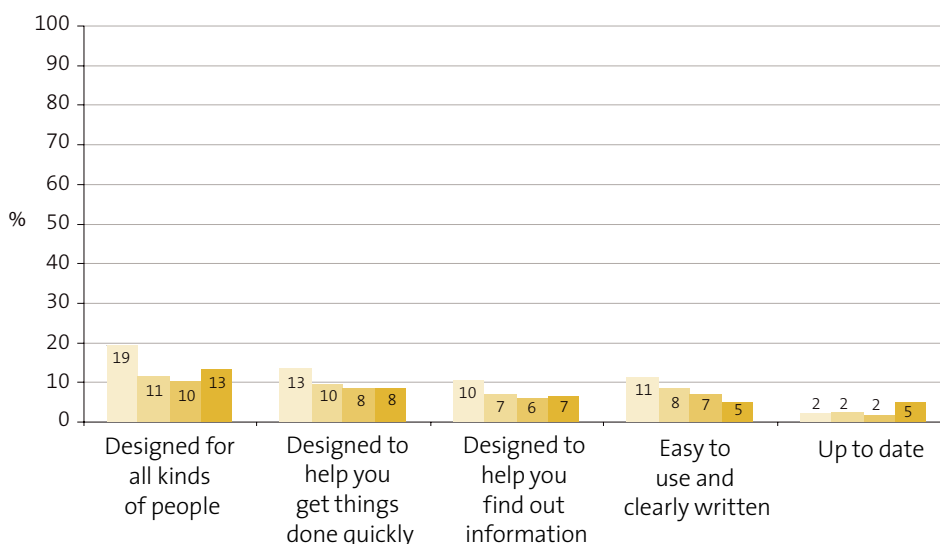
Q12. Thinking of ALL the contacts that you had with government agencies and services over the past 12 months, about what proportion of these took place over the internet.

Base: Respondents whose most recent contact was visiting a website by internet or website by mobile phone (n=1187)
 Note: A positive perception is defined as being a rating of 6-10.

The lower their use of government websites, the more likely people are to have a poorer opinion of them.

The category 'being designed for all kinds of people' received the highest proportion of poor ratings, followed by 'designed to help you get things done quickly'. These scores are still a relatively low level of dissatisfaction.

Figure 21 Negative perceptions of government websites by proportion of contact by internet



Q6C3a-3e. Still thinking about your most recent contact with this Government website, I am going to ask you to rate various aspects of that website. On a scale of 10 to zero, where 10 is excellent and 0 is very poor... how would you rate [the website] on...?

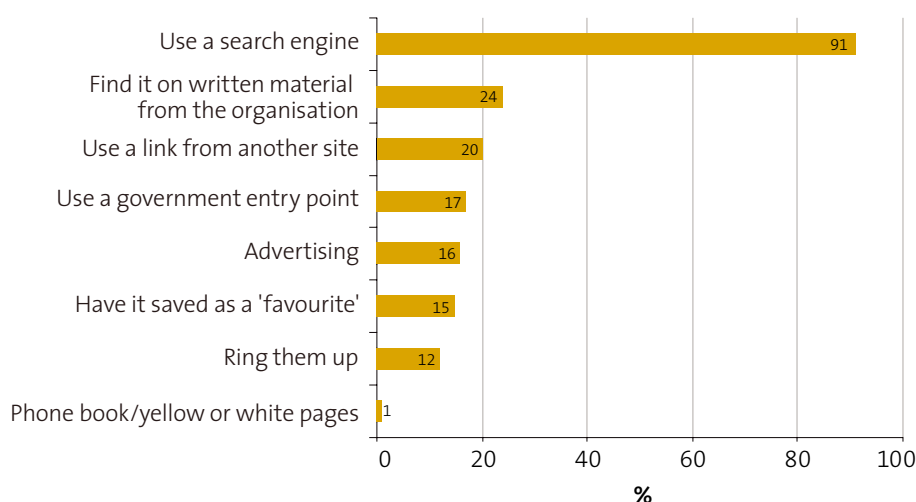
Q12. Thinking of ALL the contacts that you had with government agencies and services over the past 12 months, about what proportion of these took place over the internet.

Base: Respondents whose most recent contact was visiting a website by internet or website by mobile phone (n=1187)
 Note: A negative perception is defined as being a rating of 0-4.

4.5.3 Government websites used in the previous 12 months

There has been little change in the way people find a government website between 2008 and 2009. Most people (91%) use a search engine to find government websites while one in four (24%) reported using written material from the organisation. One in five (20%) had found the website by using a link from another site (20%) or from a government entry point (17%, up from 14% in 2008).

Figure 22 How government website and email addresses are found



Q16e. If you wanted to contact a government organisation using the internet, how would you go about finding their website or email address?

Base: Respondents who used the internet in last 12 months to contact government (n=2315)

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents were able to provide more than one response.

4.5.4 Attitudes towards government websites visited in the previous 12 months

Respondents who had used the internet to contact government in the previous twelve months were asked to rate¹⁶ the quality of government websites compared with non government business websites, their trustworthiness and the likelihood of recommending them to someone else. While there has been a positive result overall, there has again been no improvement in the overall image of the quality of government websites.

Ratings tended to be very positive on each of these issues. This was particularly the case in relation to their trustworthiness, with three in five (63%) rating government websites as excellent for this and a further one in five (22%) rating them as good.

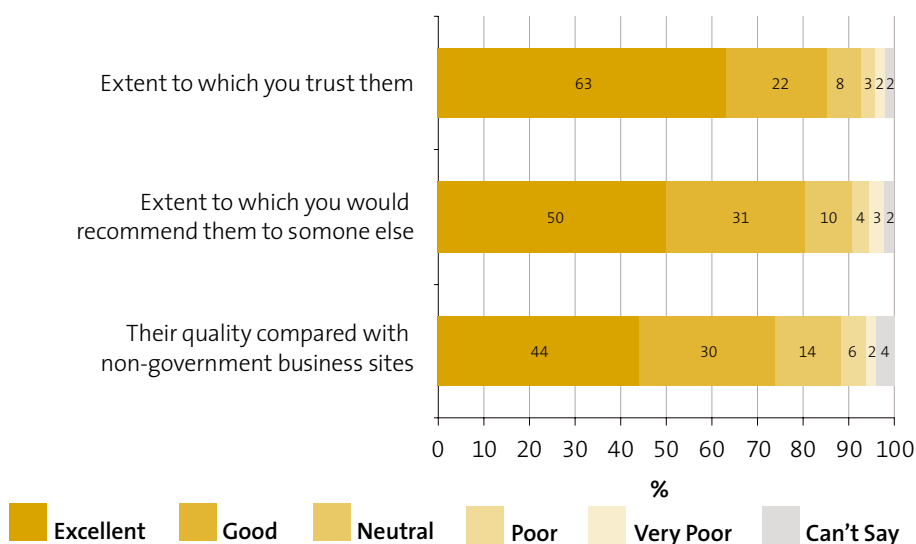
Ratings for the extent to which people would recommend them to someone else also rated well, with half (50%) rating them as excellent and nearly a third (31%) rating them as good.

The ratings for quality compared to non government business websites was still high, though slightly more moderate with 44% rating government websites as excellent and 30% as good.

¹⁶ These ratings were based on an 11 point scale where '0' was very poor and '10' was excellent. For reporting purposes, these have been summarised as follows:

0 to 2 are 'very poor'
 3 to 4 are 'poor'
 5 is 'neither poor nor good'
 6 to 7 are 'good'
 8 to 10 are 'excellent'.

Figure 23 How government websites visited in previous 12 months were rated



Q16a-c. Thinking about government websites you have used in the last 12 months, overall, how would you rate them on a scale of 10 to 0, where 10 is excellent and 0 is very poor in terms of...?

Base: Respondents who used the internet in last 12 months to contact government (n=2315)

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.

The ratings for government websites on each of these issues again vary with age. Those aged 18 to 24 have the highest ratings on each of these issues, and ratings decrease steadily as age increases:

- **extent to which you can trust the government website**—nine in ten (90%) per cent of those aged 18 to 24 provided a rating of either good or excellent; this declines steadily with age to three in four (73%) of those 65 and older.
- **extent to which you could recommend them to someone else**—most (85%) of those aged 18 to 24 gave this measure a rating of 'good' or 'excellent' compared to two thirds (68%) of those 65 or older
- **the quality of government websites compared to non government business sites**—four in five younger people gave a 'good' or 'excellent' rating compared to less than three in five (59%) of those 65 or older.

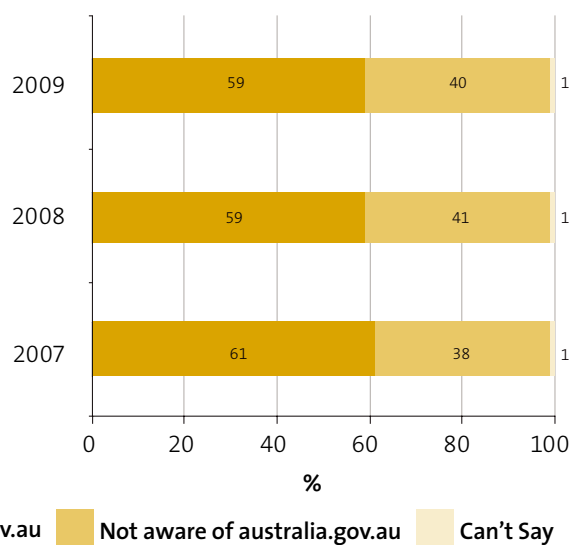
4.6 AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT PORTAL

Those who had used the internet to contact government sometime in the previous twelve months were also asked about their awareness of the Australian Government internet entry point (portal), australia.gov.au.

4.6.1 Awareness of australia.gov.au

Awareness of the Australian government portal is consistent with the last study (59% in both 2009 and 2008 compared with 61% in 2007).

Figure 24 Awareness of australia.gov.au



Q20A. Have you heard of www.australia.gov.au?

Base: Respondents who used the internet in last 12 months to contact government (n=2315)

five Use of e-government services
by telephone



five

five Use of e government services by telephone

Overview

- Three in ten (30%) people contacted government by telephone in 2009.
- This level of telephone use has been relatively stable throughout this series of studies.
- An automated system, where the caller punched in number options, was used by three in five (61%) of those whose most recent contact was by telephone.
- Those contacting government by telephone are more likely to be exchanging information (43% of telephone users compared with an average of 35%), which is a reflection of the nature of the channel.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Use of the telephone to contact government has been relatively stable throughout this series of studies, with three in ten people (30%) contacting government by telephone (28% in 2004–05 and 2006, 32% in 2007 and 30% in 2008).

5.2 TYPE OF TELEPHONE AND MOBILE PHONE CONTACT

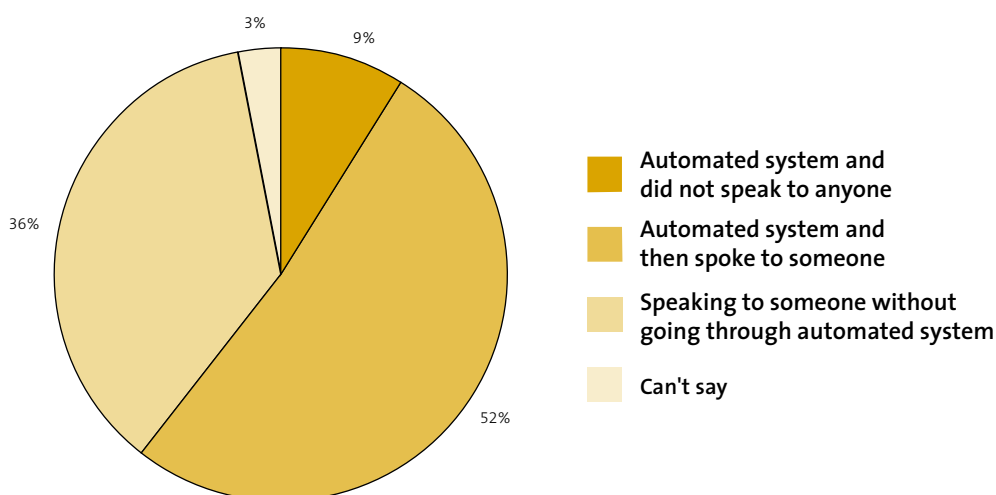
Those whose last contact with government was either by telephone¹⁷ or they spoke or left a message using a mobile phone¹⁸ were asked what sort of contact that call mainly involved.

Three in five (62%) used an automated system where they punched in number options. Of these:

- eighty two per cent then spoke to someone
- eighteen per cent did not speak to anyone.

A third (34%) spoke to someone and did not use an automated system.

Figure 25 Type of telephone contact



Q6B. Did your last phone contact mainly involve ... ?

Base: Respondents who used the landline telephone or spoke/left a message with a mobile phone for their most recent contact with government (n=1123)

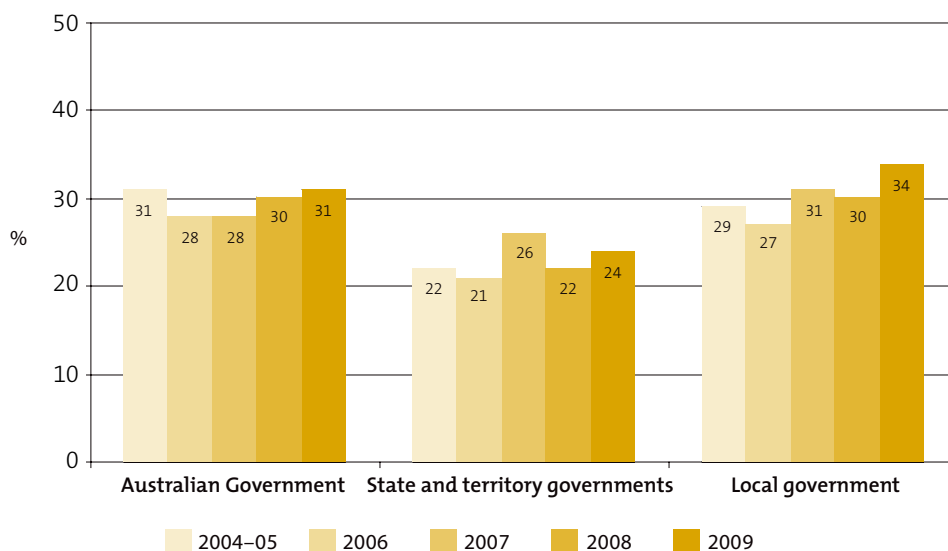
¹⁷ From 2006 respondents have had the option of nominating a mobile phone, SMS, or using a mobile phone to access the internet for their last contact with government. To date the numbers of responses in these categories have not been of sufficient size to allow extensive analysis. In studies since 2006 references to the telephone exclude these means of contacting government. Where possible, mobile phone results have been noted, but some caution should be taken due to the relatively small sample sizes.

¹⁸ By voice or automated telephone system.

5.3 LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT ACCESSED BY TELEPHONE

There has been relatively little change in the proportion of people who use the telephone to contact different levels of government throughout these studies. Overall one in three people contacting government used the telephone on their most recent occasion. In 2009, around three in ten people who contacted the Australian Government used the telephone as did a similar proportion of those contacting local government. The proportion of people contacting state and territory governments by telephone is lower, at one in four, and this has also been relatively constant throughout this series of studies.

Figure 26 Level of government accessed by telephone



Q3C. What was the level of government for this contact?

Base: Respondents who used the telephone for their most recent contact with government (n=1082)

Note 1: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.

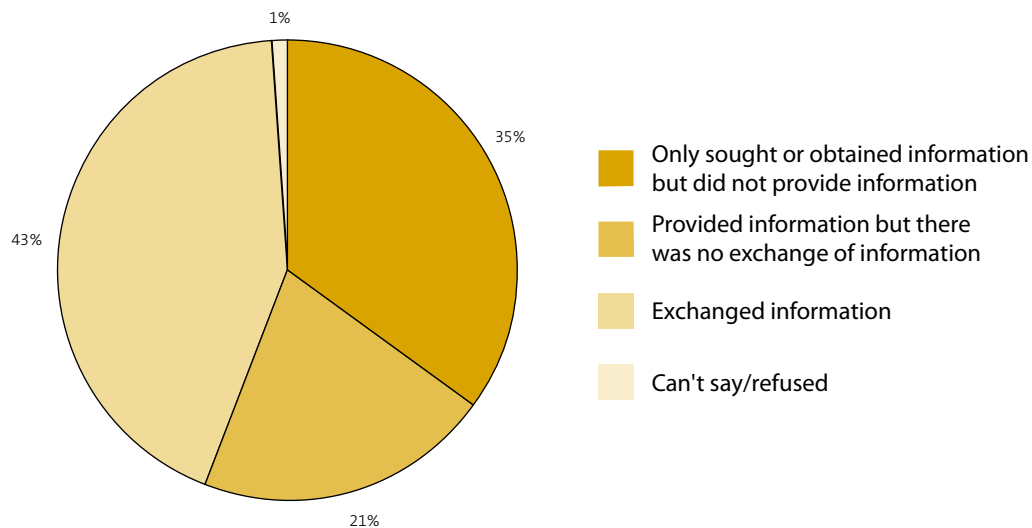
Note 2: Percentages may not add up to 100% because some respondents were unable to say what level of government they had dealt with.

5.4 TRANSACTION TYPE ACCESSED BY TELEPHONE

As has been the case in previous years, those using the telephone to contact government are more likely to be exchanging information (43% of telephone users compared with 35% of all people contacting government), which is largely a reflection of the nature of the channel.

The proportion of those who use the telephone to provide, but not obtain, information is similar to the overall population (21% compared with 24%) — a similar situation to those who are contacting government to obtain, but not provide, information (35% of telephone users; 39% for all people).

Figure 27 Contacting government by telephone—type of transaction



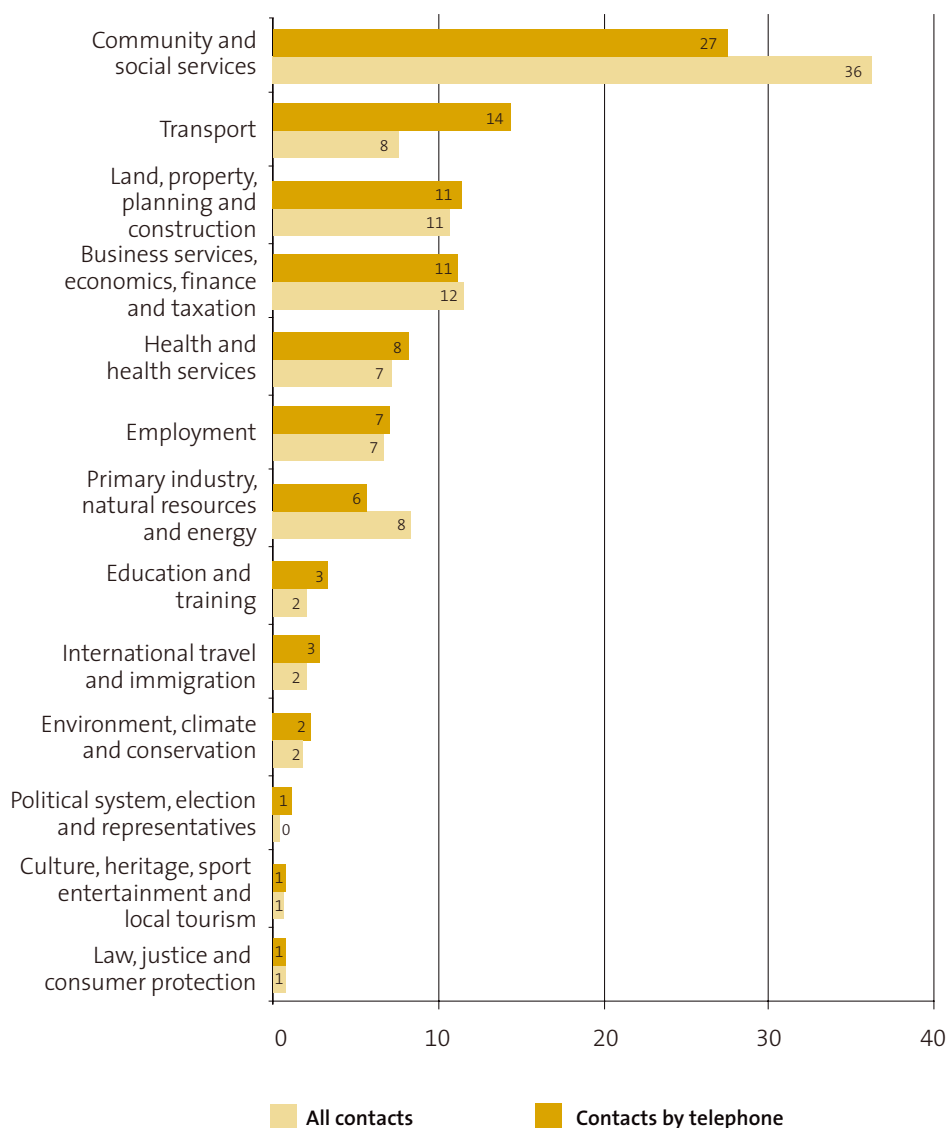
Q3B. What was the reason for this contact?

Base: Respondents who used the telephone for their most recent contact with government (n=1082)

5.5 SERVICES ACCESSED BY TELEPHONE

Those contacting government by telephone were more likely to be accessing a 'community and social service' than the average of all users. One in three (36%) of those contacting a government agency by telephone were accessing a 'community and social service' compared with an average of just over a quarter (27%). The likelihood of a telephone user contacting other government services is similar to the average with the exception of Transport. Those contacting government by telephone were half as likely to be accessing a 'transport' service than the average of all users (8% compared to 14%).

Figure 28 Government services accessed by telephone



Q3A. I would like you to think of government services, of any type at all in Australia, including local councils, state governments and the Australian Government. I am interested in all contact you have had with ANY government services in the PAST 12 MONTHS. Contact can include applying for things, providing information about yourself, making payments, enquiries, or looking for information. What was the MOST RECENT contact you had with a government service? Please name the service you contacted and the reason for the contact.

Base: All respondents (n=3667); Respondents who used the telephone in their most recent contact with government (n=1082)

Note: Only the most common responses are summarised in the above figure.

six Satisfaction with service delivery

six

SIX Satisfaction with service delivery

Satisfaction

- Overall satisfaction with an outcome of the service when dealing with government is high. The majority (87%) of people are satisfied, a rating consistent with previous studies.
- Similar ratings were achieved for ease of using the service (90%) and with the ease of finding the information sought (88%).
- As with previous studies, people are less satisfied with the amount of time it took to receive a reply to an enquiry (83%).
- The level of satisfaction with outcomes varies depending on the service delivery channel used:
 - Those who contacted government by internet have the highest level of satisfaction (91%), closely followed by those who did so in person (89%). Those who used mail had the lowest level of satisfaction (80%).

Dissatisfaction

- As in 2008, dissatisfaction with government contact is relatively low:
 - The most common causes of dissatisfaction are the length of time taken to receive a reply (11%), and dissatisfaction with the outcome of the service (11%). This mirrors previous results.
- The level of dissatisfaction varies depending on the service delivery channel used:
 - People who contacted government by internet or in person are less likely to be dissatisfied, whereas telephone or mail users are consistently the most likely to be dissatisfied.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Satisfaction levels have been measured in the same way since 2006. Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with their most recent contact with government on a five point scale ranging from 'extremely satisfied' to 'not satisfied at all'.

Satisfaction was rated in terms of:

- the outcome
- how long they had to wait for a reply to their enquiry
- the ease of finding the information or service they sought
- the ease of using the service.

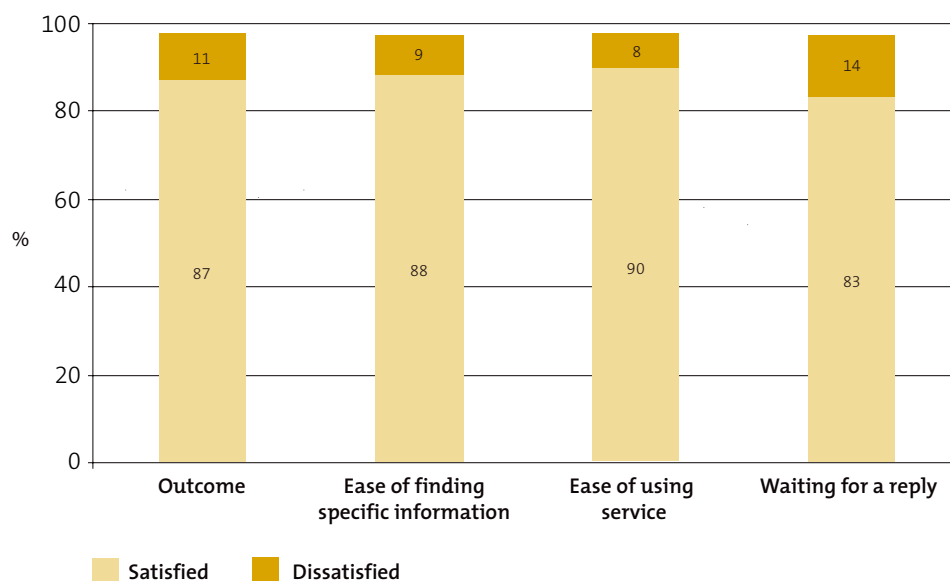
For the purpose of this report, a person is regarded as '**satisfied**' if they gave a score of either 'extremely satisfied', 'very satisfied' or 'somewhat satisfied'. Alternatively, a person is '**dissatisfied**' if they answered 'not very' or 'not at all' satisfied. Those who said they were not satisfied with at least one aspect of the service were asked why they were not satisfied.

Respondents were also asked to rate the extent to which they achieved what they intended. This rating was based on an 11 point scale where '0' meant that they did not achieve any of what they intended and '10' meant that they achieved exactly what they intended. In some cases respondents reported using more than one service delivery channel as part of their most recent contact with government. Where this occurred, satisfaction ratings are based on the channel the respondent nominated as their 'main method of contact'.

6.2 SATISFACTION

As in previous years, the majority are satisfied with the level of service they receive:

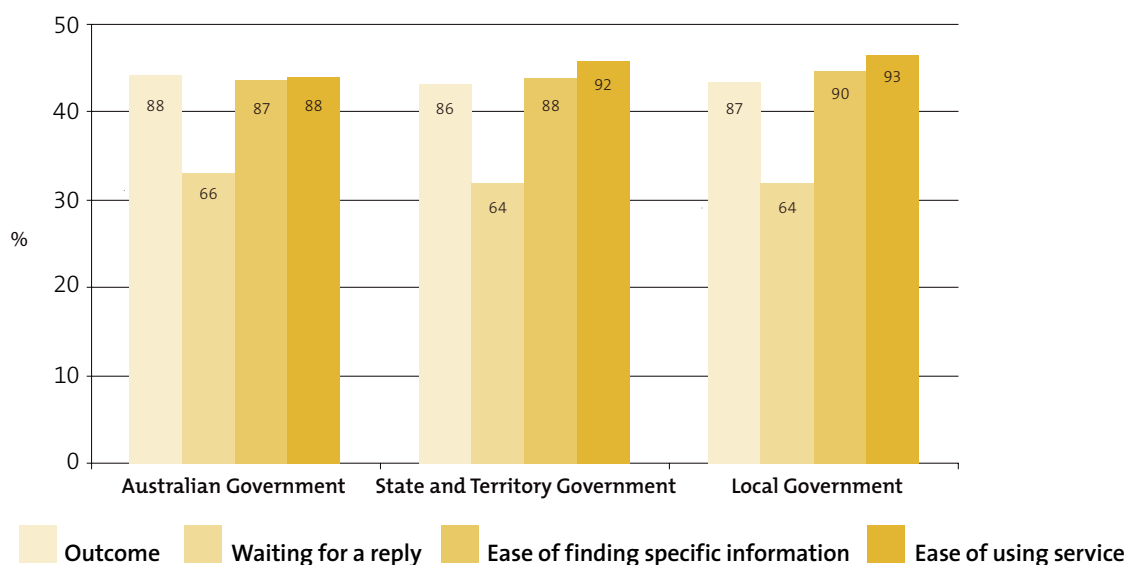
- Eighty seven per cent of people are satisfied with the outcome of the service.
- Eighty eight per cent of people are satisfied with the ease of finding information.
- Ninety per cent of people are satisfied with the ease of using the service.
- The lowest level of satisfaction was reported with the length of time it takes to receive a reply, with satisfaction levels falling to 83%.

Figure 29 Satisfaction with services received

Q9B-9E. How satisfied were you with ...?

Base: Respondents who were able to nominate how they most recently contacted government (n=3667); excludes those who refused or could not nominate their method (or main method if there was more than one) of contacting government (n=17)

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% because some respondents were not able to say if they were satisfied or dissatisfied.

Figure 30 Satisfaction with services received by level of government

Q9B-9E. How satisfied were you with ...?

Base: Respondents who were able to nominate how they most recently contacted government (n=3667); excludes those who refused or could not nominate their method (or main method if there was more than one) of contacting government (n=17)

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% because some respondents were not able to say if they were satisfied or dissatisfied.

Satisfaction with services received does not vary greatly depending on the level of government contacted. More people were satisfied with the ease of using services provided by state and territory government (92%) and local government (93%) than those provided by the Australian government (88%). Nine in ten (90%) who had contact with the local government were satisfied with the ease of finding specific information compared to only 87% of those who contacted the Australian government.

These differences are not reflected in the type of channel used to contact each level of government. Focus group participants explained that they felt a greater connection with local government offices. Participants were more likely to feel a sense of community with the local government.

'Well I'm happy to work with the Local Regional Council as I say over the counter. They are people we meet in the shop; they probably live 300 metres down the road; we're all part of the community together. It's different when you're dealing with some of the State or particularly with the Federal departments.'

6.2.1 Achieving an outcome

The overall rating for achieving the intended outcome is very high, with an average rating of 8.5. This mirrors results in previous year and is consistent with the high level of overall satisfaction.

There are marginal differences in satisfaction ratings depending on the service delivery channel used. Respondents who had contact in person had the highest average rating (8.8), while those who used the telephone had the lowest average rating (8.0), those who used mail also rated relatively low (8.4), consistent with findings in 2008.

There is little difference in the average ratings for achieving intended outcome compared with previous studies between different service delivery channels, or types of transactions. There was no impact on satisfaction depending on the level of government contacted.

Nine in ten people (87%) were satisfied with the outcome when last contacting government. Those contacting government by telephone or mail are the most likely to be not at all satisfied with achieving their intended outcome, with one in ten (10%) for both telephone and mail reporting this of their most recent experience.

Participant in the focus groups generally had a high level of satisfaction with the outcome of their dealings with government. In discussions participants revealed elements of the service which were important to them and areas where they did or did not feel outcomes were satisfactory.

'And truth be told, yes, speed and efficiency of getting to where you want to is a key thing.'

'...the help that I got on the other end of the phone seems to have actually changed over the years. I've noticed that recently it's more direct, they're more helpful, they're friendlier and the people on the other end of the phone are actually going a bit more out of their way to give me the right information... it was really easy'

Many participants also suggested improvements, such as governments sharing information to minimise the volume of information which a person has to provide to access services.

'Part of the reason I think we get a lot of frustration is because we look at a lot of the government branches and say, okay, you should know this, because I've talked to the other branch over here and the other branch over here says, well, we really don't, because we can't get any of that information...I'd be an advocate for an Australian card that's bulging with every new certification of things that you do'

6.2.2 Waiting for a reply

As in 2008, overall satisfaction with the length of time taken for a reply was the lowest at 83%. These results exclude where no reply was required. The level of satisfaction with the time taken for a reply across channel used is also similar to findings in 2008. Respondents who used the internet or contacted government in person are more satisfied (88% and 86% respectively) than those who used the telephone (77%) or mail (75%).

The type of transaction has no impact on satisfaction with the length of time waiting for a reply and there was little difference between the levels of government.

In focus groups, participants noted that they would alter their method of contact depending on the nature of their query and the speed with which they needed a response.

'I think it comes down to... what the matter is, when I rang up about the garbage bin I don't think I would have done it in an e mail because I needed to know then and there what I had to do. That way it was done immediately, so it was something I needed to take care of straightaway so I did it by phone but it depends I think on the urgency of it'

'They won't talk to you unless you write a letter'

'Some people do, some people will endeavour to get back to you within 48 hours, but it would be good to have that as a blanket across government departments so that if you did contact them, you know that somebody's received it, you know they're looking at it and you know within what timeframe it will be for them to get back to you.'

6.2.3 Finding specific information

Nine in ten (88%) of those who used government services were satisfied with the ease of finding specific information, a similar result to 2008 (88%).

The type of channel used to contact government reveals differences in the levels of satisfaction with ease of finding specific information, though satisfaction is high for all channels. Respondents who used the internet to contact government are the most likely to be satisfied (91%), followed by in person (88%) and telephone (87%). Those who used mail continue to be the least likely to be satisfied (78%).

The type of transaction has minimal impact on the satisfaction level with ease of finding specific information, with similar findings in 2009 as reported in 2008. There was also no difference in satisfaction scores when considering the level of government contacted.

Focus group participants noted that when they needed specific information they would often make contact in person or by phone as locating specific information on the internet was often difficult. They also said that it was sometimes difficult to know where to look.

'We'd Google first and we went and put the [key words]... got nowhere near it. It was really surprising. It was just a very interesting experience to find something like that so difficult just to Google.'

'I just find (using the website) a little bit of a waste of time when I can, you know, I can just get all that information in a quick phone call.'

'Basically just because I get the information that I need and I can ask the questions that I need as opposed to searching for information, finding out what heading it's under and stuff like that.'

6.2.4 Ease of using the service

Nine in ten (90%) people who contacted government are satisfied with the ease of using the service. This is a similar level of satisfaction to 2008 (91%).

The channel used to contact government does have an impact on satisfaction with ease of using the service. As in 2008, nearly all of those using the internet to contact government (94%) were satisfied. This is closely followed by satisfaction levels for those contacting government in person (91%) and those using the telephone (88%). The satisfaction levels for those contacting government by mail remains lower with over four in five (83%) satisfied.

While the level of satisfaction with the ease of using the service is very high, focus group participants raised a range of concerns, particularly with ease of use for particular groups and individuals.

'Assistance with ... the elderly or people that are visually impaired are not going to have a good time on the internet that's just a given...'

'It wasn't very user friendly. I work in IT and I found it quite difficult to navigate through a page.'

'Too many usernames and too many passwords it's just so difficult.'

6.3 DISSATISFACTION

Dissatisfaction levels for contact with government have not changed from 2008 and are relatively low with one in ten people indicating dissatisfaction with:

- the outcome (11%)
- the ease of using the service (8%)
- the ease of finding information (9%).

As in 2008, the largest cause of dissatisfaction (11%) is the length of time taken to receive a reply. This was particularly the case for those contacting the government by telephone (21%), and those using mail (19%).

The level of dissatisfaction varies depending on the service delivery channel used. In 2009, those who used the internet or contacted government in person are, overall, least likely to be dissatisfied. Those who used the telephone or mail are consistently the most likely to be dissatisfied.

The most problematic issue for those using the telephone or mail to contact government is the time spent waiting for a reply (21% for telephone, and 18% for mail) and to a lesser extent, the outcome of their contact (15%, and 14% respectively).

Figure 31 Dissatisfaction by service delivery channel used to contact government 2008- 2009

Reason for dissatisfaction	Internet		Telephone		In-person		Mail	
	2008	2009	2008	2009	2008	2009	2008	2009
	%							
Outcome	7	7	15	15	8	9	15	14
Wait for reply*	8	8	19	21	12	13	20	18
Ease of finding specific information	8	8	10	11	8	7	10	10
Ease of using service	5	5	12	11	7	8	13	12

Q9B-E. How satisfied were you with.....

Q4. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this....?

Q5. Which was the MAIN method of contact?

Base 2009: Respondents' most recent contact using the internet (n=1211); telephone (n=965); in person (n=1178); mail (n=241);

*except for 'wait for reply', which excludes where no reply was required: internet (n=791); telephone (n=874); in person (n=967); mail (n=193)

6.3.1 Overall reasons for dissatisfaction

The main reasons for overall dissatisfaction with contact with government have not changed from 2008. The key reasons again are customer service and usability related. Access was also a reason cited for dissatisfaction.

Customer service—Over three in five (63%) of those who were dissatisfied with their most recent contact with government mentioned at least one customer service issue as a reason for their dissatisfaction. Specifically:

- One in three (32%) of those who were dissatisfied felt they had to wait too long to be served.
- One in ten (9%) felt the person they dealt with did not understand the issue, or that their issue was not resolved.
- A small group (8%) believed they were given incorrect advice.
- Eight per cent felt that they did not receive the desired response.

Usability—One in four (25%) mentioned at least one usability issue as a reason for their dissatisfaction.

Depending on the channel used to contact government, the reasons reported were either 'telephone usability' (11%) or 'website usability' (14%).

Access—One in ten (10%) mentioned an access issue as a reason for being dissatisfied. For 8%, a reason for their dissatisfaction was that they could not complete their enquiry by telephone.

Focus group comments about the areas of frustration and dissatisfaction when contacting government by internet or telephone included:

Accessing services

'The assumption is that everyone has quick and easy access to the internet when that's really not a reality. With a telephone if you're desperate you can go to a payphone and ring up and ring the [the government agency] from a payphone. There's no equivalent in the digital realm. You can't just log on; if I had to log on right now somewhere I wouldn't know where to go, I'd have to get home and deal with issues that apply there.'

Accessing information

'That can be a bit of a problem with some of the government things like just trying to download it, open it and being able to read it, or it might only be a read only and you can't print it or send anything with it.'

Customer service

'They should have a focus on customer service and they should also understand, [the government agency] is such a huge organisation, so many people access it, they need to staff it accordingly. They need to have enough staff to answer the phones.'

'I think that exacerbates the problem because by the time you've waited on the phone for however long, and it can be a long, long time, you're uptight the minute you get on the phone aren't you?'

6.3.2 Dissatisfaction with the internet

The main reasons for dissatisfaction for those who used the internet to contact government are customer service, website usability, and website content.

Customer service—Two in five (39%) mentioned at least one customer service issue as a reason for their dissatisfaction. Specifically, one in five (18%) felt they had waited too long to receive a reply.

Website usability—A quarter (25%) of those dissatisfied with contact by internet mentioned at least one website usability issue as a reason for their dissatisfaction. Specifically, one in seven (14%) experienced website navigation difficulties.

Website content—One in seven (13%) mentioned at least one website content issue as a reason for their dissatisfaction.

Focus group participants described a range of experiences in dealing with difficult websites. In particular they raised the issue of having difficulty finding information which they are looking for and of understanding the language used by some government websites.

'I just go, I just type and type and keep looking until I find something relevant and if I don't I just get annoyed.'

'if you don't know exactly where to look you are kind of lost'

'I would have been beating around the bush had I tried to work it on the net.'

6.3.3 Dissatisfaction with the telephone

The main reasons for dissatisfaction for those who used the telephone to contact government are customer service, access and telephone usability.

Customer service—Three in four (73%) mentioned at least one customer service issue as a reason for their dissatisfaction. Specifically:

- Thirty eight per cent felt they had to wait too long for an answer. Thirteen per cent felt that the person did not understand the issue and one in ten (11%) felt they were transferred too many times.

Access—One in six (16%) mentioned at least one access issue as a reason for their dissatisfaction.

Telephone usability—One in five (20%) mentioned at least one usability issue as a reason for their dissatisfaction. Specifically, 9% found the automated menu too complicated, and 8% were dissatisfied that they couldn't talk to a real person, or had to do use automated answering.

Focus group participants talked extensively about issues with the telephone. They frequently raised concerns about being transferred numerous times, navigating automated systems, and not knowing where the person they were talking to was based.

'You ring up somebody, just a minute please, what do you want? Press so and so, press so and so. Half an hour later, you're still pressing numbers to try and get to talk. All I want to do is talk to somebody.'

'You ring half a dozen times and each time you get, we are experiencing long delays perhaps you would be better to ring later. So you ring later and they still, the delays are still the same and that's frustrating.'

'On the phone, because we're on the menu system; transferred from one department to another, put you on hold, wait, wait, wait. If I am coming in to town I prefer to do things on the spot here.'

6.3.4 Dissatisfaction with in person contact

The main reasons for dissatisfaction for those who contacted government in person relate to customer service and access.

Customer service—Seven in ten (72%) mentioned at least one customer service issue as a reason for their dissatisfaction. Specifically, two in five (39%) felt they had to wait too long to be served and a further 12% did not think the person understood the issue.

Access—A small group (8%) mentioned at least one access issue as a reason for their dissatisfaction.

6.3.5 Dissatisfaction with mail contact

The number of people expressing dissatisfaction with contact by mail was too small for meaningful statistical analysis of the reasons.

seven Why people choose a particular service delivery channel to contact government

seven

seven Why people choose a particular service delivery channel to contact government

Overview

The three key factors of convenience, channel features and availability influence the decision to choose a particular service delivery channel to contact government. The relative importance of these factors varies by channel:

- **Internet**—convenience is the dominant motivator to use the internet for four in five (82%) internet users with specific important features including that it requires shorter time (21%) and being able to use it at a time that suits (19%).
- **Telephone**—channel features are the main driver for half (55%) of those who use a telephone to contact government. Convenience is important for two in five users (44%) as is a preference to speak to a 'real person' (19%).
- **In person**—availability is important for two in five (43%). Eighteen per cent had to make contact this way or needed to show or sign documents.
- **Mail**—availability was a prime motivator for three in five (61%); particularly for a quarter (27%) who were responding to being sent a form or had no other way of making contact (18%).

Encouraging greater use of the internet

Three in five (63%) people indicated they could be encouraged to use the internet more often for contact with government. The main factors that would encourage increased internet use are:

- Website usability (24%)—improving layout, navigation and search tools, making government websites easier to find, and having better search facilities within them.
- Website content (11%)—including more basic and concise information as well as more highly detailed information.

Half (50%) of those who do not use the internet could be encouraged to use it more often for contact with government by improving:

- Access (21%)—particularly improved availability of the internet through better access at home, school, libraries and work.
- Their skill level (17%)—improved familiarity with using the internet or computers in general would encourage their use of the internet to contact government.

Security remains an underlying concern for those who contact government by internet.

- Over half (56%) of those who had used the internet to contact government would prefer to re enter their personal information each time they use a website rather than have their details stored by the agency. The same proportion (58%) prefers complete anonymity to a personalised interface when contacting government.
- Despite preference towards anonymity, two thirds (69%) would still prefer the convenience of only updating information with the government once (such as change of address), and have government advise other agencies of these changes.

The majority (83%) of people contacting government by internet would prefer a high level of security and a longer transaction time to a faster but less secure transaction.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

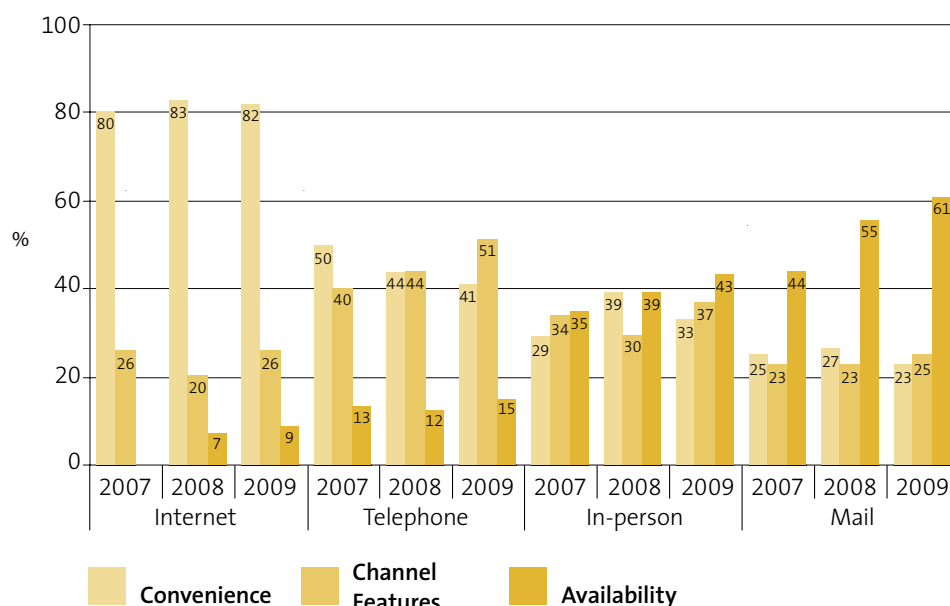
The key factors influencing the decision about how to contact government can be broadly classified under the following themes:

- convenience
- channel features (characteristics and qualities associated with this means of communication)
- availability (another channel is not possible or available).

The relative importance of these factors varies by channel and in 2009 is similar to those in 2008 and 2007.

- **Internet**—The prime motivator for contacting government by internet continues to be convenience (82%). The belief that the internet required a shorter time (21%) and that it could be used at a time convenient to the person (19%) were the main reasons given for using the internet.
- **Telephone**—Convenience also remains an important motivator for selecting the telephone. Over two in five (41%) telephone users mentioned aspects of convenience as reasons for selecting this means of contacting government, a slight decrease from 2008 (44%). The specific reasons for choosing telephone contact included a preference for speaking to a person (18%), it requires shorter time (16%) as well as the speed and convenience of using an automated telephone system (14 and the opportunity it provides to speak to a person (14%).
- **In person**—All three themes have relatively similar levels of influence in the decision to contact government in person. Convenience (33%), as a factor influencing the choice to make contact in person, has however decreased in relative importance from 2008 (39%). Availability continues to be the leading motivator for using this channel having increased each year (35% in 2007, 39% in 2008, and 43% in 2009).
- **Mail**—Availability of other channels continues to be the dominant motivator for selecting mail as the means of contacting government. Three in five (61%) of those who did use mail in 2009 did so because it was the only possible form of contact. One in four nominated convenience (25%) and features of the channel (23%) as a factor in their choice.

Figure 32 Most common factors influencing choice of channel



Q6. Still thinking of this most recent contact, why did you do it by.....? Why else? Anything else?

Base: Respondents who made contact by internet (n=1336); landline telephone, SMS or spoke/left a message with a mobile phone (n=1082); in person (n=1254); mail (n=316)

Note 1: Responses may add up to more than 100% because respondents were able to give more than one reason within more than one theme as to why they chose a particular channel.

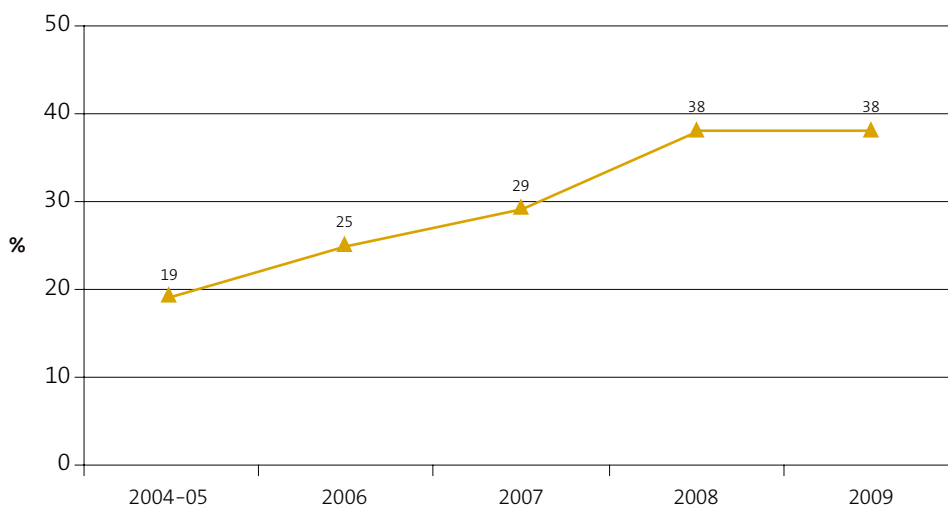
Note 2: Only the most common themes are summarised in the above figure.

7.2 THE INTERNET

Use of the internet to contact government has doubled over the time these studies have been conducted, growing from 19% in 2004–05, to 25% in 2006, 29% in 2007 and 38% in both 2008 and 2009

The opportunities for using the internet to contact government are expanding, particularly with the increasing availability of mobile phones that allow people to send and receive emails and access websites as well as make phone calls.

Figure 33 Use of the internet to contact government services



Q4. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this ...?

Base: All respondents (n=3667)

Convenience continues to be the dominant motivator in the decision to contact a government agency by internet.¹⁹

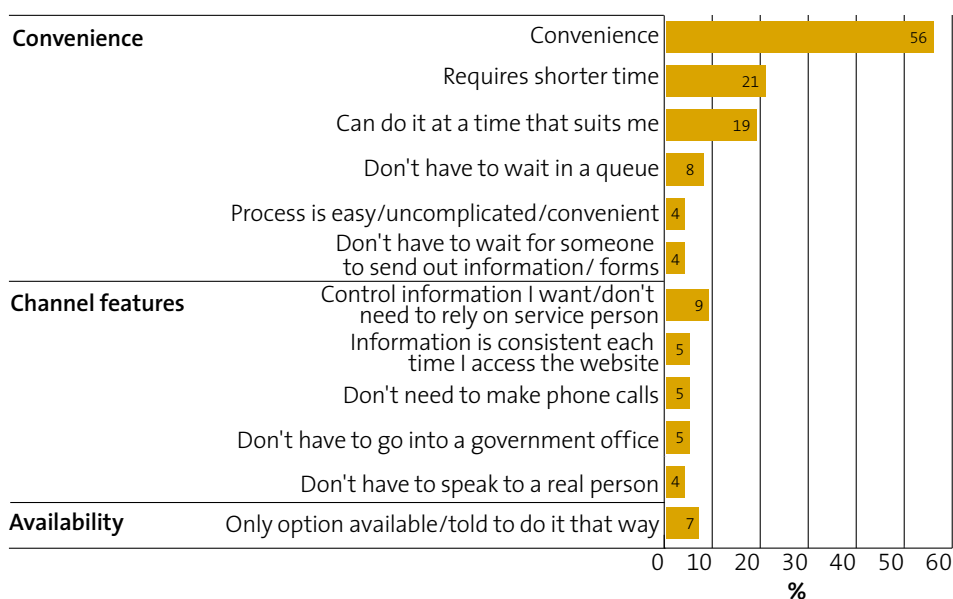
Convenience—Over four in five (82%) of those who had used the internet for their most recent contact with government mentioned at least one aspect of convenience as a reason for doing so:

- Just over half (56%) chose to use the internet because of its overall convenience.
- One in five (21%) mentioned using the internet because it required a shorter time compared with in person or mail contact.
- One in five (19%) reported using the internet because they can do it at a time that suits.
- Eight per cent used the internet to avoid waiting in queues.

Features of the internet—Twenty six per cent mentioned at least one feature of the channel as a reason for contacting government by internet:

- For one in ten (9%) the ability to control the type and amount of information and not having to rely on a service person is a motivator for using the internet.
- Consistency of the information at each visit to a website (5%) is also an attractive feature.

Figure 34 Most common reasons for making contact by internet



Q6C. Still thinking of this most recent contact, why did you do it by (internet/email on your mobile phone/visit a website on your mobile phone)?

Base: Respondents who used the internet in their most recent contact with government (n=1336)

Note 1: Respondents were able to give more than one reason for using the internet.

Note 2: Only the most common reasons are summarised in the above figure.

¹⁹ The wording of the question about why people chose the internet to contact government (Q6c) was changed in 2008 to reflect changes in technology, and includes contact by 'email on your mobile phone' and 'visit a website on your mobile phone'. Results for 2008 and 2009 are therefore not directly comparable to previous results for this question.

Focus group participants gave a number of examples that illustrated by the convenience of using the internet to contact government:

'I thought it was really convenient to lodge my notice of disposal on the RTA on the internet when I sold my car. It just meant I didn't have to try and get to the RTA rushing about and things like that. So that was good.'

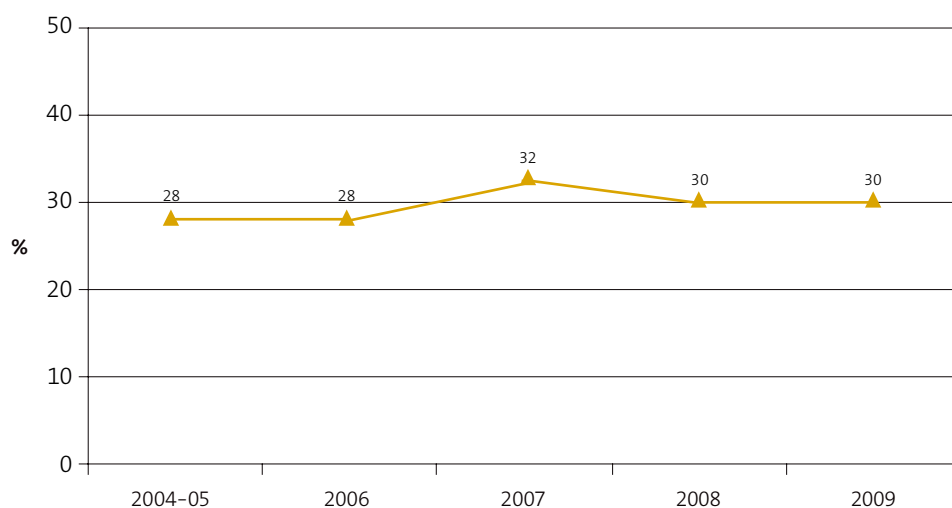
Others also saw the efficiency of the process as an advantage of the internet, especially in comparison to in person contact.

'I am old enough to know when you had to go to the [government] office ...you had to be there [for hours]. That was a real nuisance and it's so much simpler now. If you're savvy with the web and not everyone is; it is so much simpler now.'

7.3 THE TELEPHONE

There has been little shift in the proportion of people who have used the telephone to contact government since the start of this series of studies. Telephone use has been consistently around three in ten.

Figure 35 Use of the telephone to contact government services



Q4. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this ...?

Base: All respondents (n=3667)

Convenience and features of the channel continue to be the most important drivers for using the telephone to contact government, although there have been shifts over time in the relative importance of specific reasons for doing so.

The motivators influencing selection of the telephone and the most important specific reasons within them are:

Convenience—Over two in five (44%) of those who used the telephone to access government mentioned at least one convenience issue as a reason for doing so. The principal reasons were:

- a convenient access time, for one in five (16%)
- that it required a shorter time, for one in seven (14%).

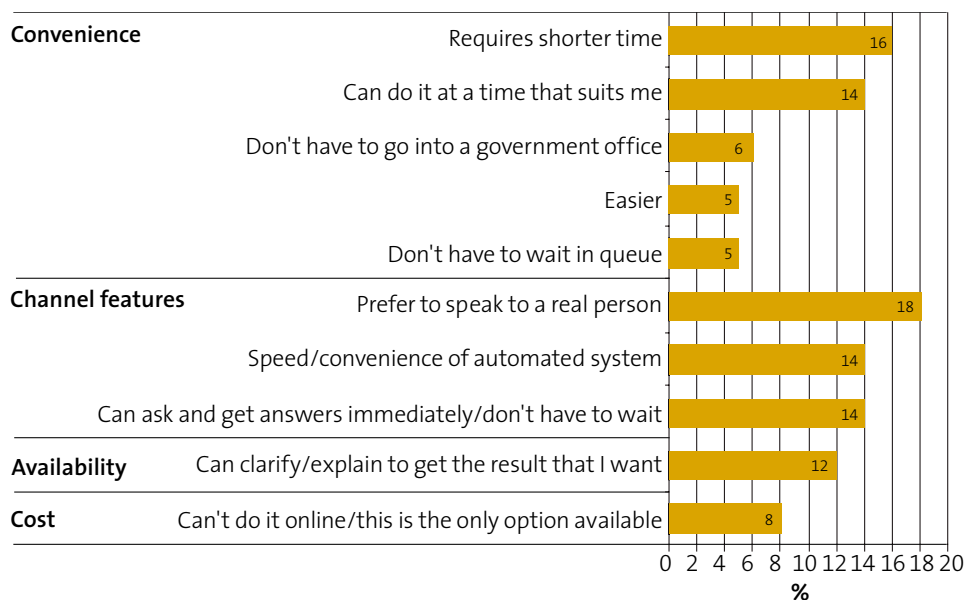
Channel features—This has increased in importance. Over half (55%) of those using the telephone to contact government mentioned at least one feature of the channel as a reason for doing so compared to 44% in 2008.

- The importance of the telephone enabling them to talk to a 'real person' has increased from one in ten (12%) in 2008 to one in five (18%) in 2009.
- The proportion of people nominating the speed and convenience of the automated telephone system (14%) has dropped back to a similar level as in 2007 (11%) from a high of one in five (21%) in 2008.
- For one in seven (14%) the telephone provided an opportunity to ask questions and get immediate answers.

- A further one in ten (12%) found the ability to clarify and explain things to get the results required was a motivator for using the telephone.

Availability—Fifteen per cent contacted government by telephone because another channel was not possible or available. Specifically, eight per cent used the telephone because their issue could not be dealt with over the internet.

Figure 36 Most common reasons for making contact by telephone



Q6A. Still thinking of this most recent contact, why did you do it by fixed telephone (landline)?

Base: Respondents who made contact by landline telephone, SMS or spoke to someone or left a message using a mobile phone (n=1082)

Note 1: Respondents were able to give more than one reason for using the telephone.

Note 2: Only the most common reasons are summarised in the above figure.

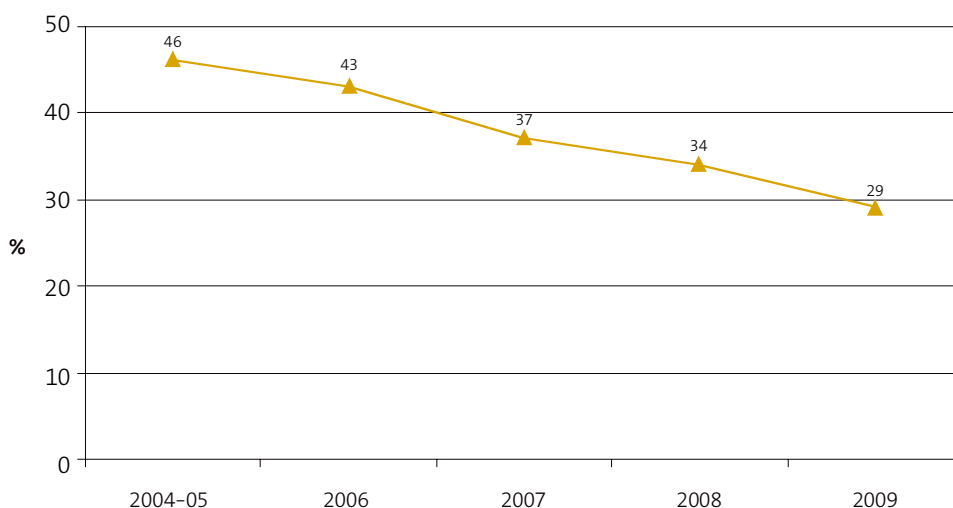
The attitudes towards the advantages of using the telephone to contact government were summarised by a focus group participant.

'I prefer to phone because it is a lot faster. I just find [using the website] a little bit of a waste of time when I can, you know, I can just get all that information in a quick phone call. Basically ... I get the information that I need and I can ask the questions that I need as opposed to searching for information, finding out what heading it's under and stuff like that.'

7.4 IN PERSON CONTACT

The proportion of people who contact government in person has declined each year of this study from 46% in 2004–05 to 29% in 2009.

At the same time the proportion making contact in person because they lacked an alternative is increasing, (from 15% in 2006 to 43% in 2009) and the proportion of people making contact by choice declining. Where a choice to make contact in person is made, convenience remains as an important motivator for doing so, rising from 29% in 2007 to peak at 39% in 2008 and dropping slightly to 33% in 2009.

Figure 37 In person contact with government

Q4. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this ...?

Base: All respondents (n=3667)

The most frequently reported reasons for contact in person are:

Availability—Over two in five (43%) mentioned at least one issue associated with lack of choice as a reason for contacting government in person. Specifically:

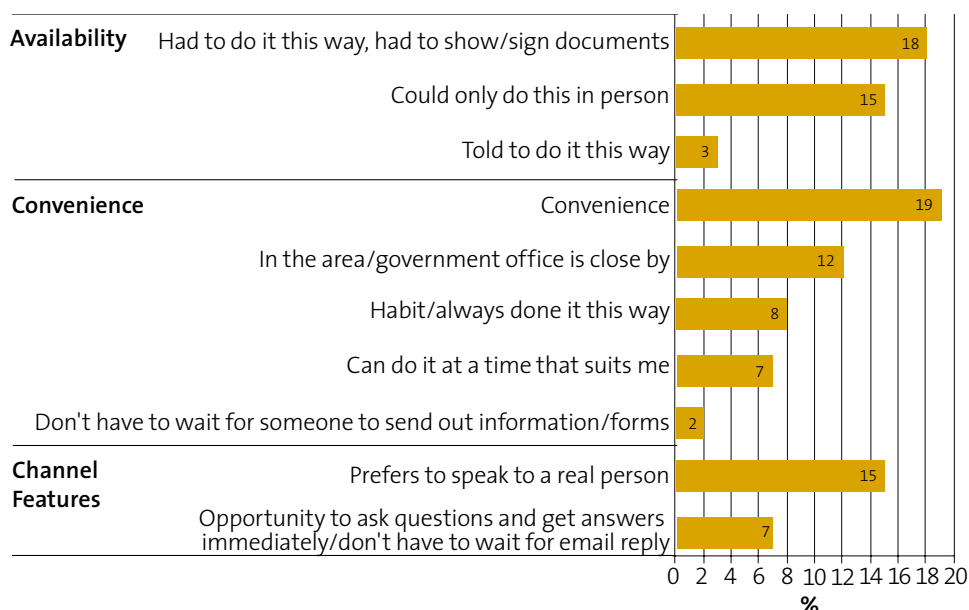
- Eighteen per cent mentioned having to make contact a particular way or need to show or sign documents.
- Fifteen per cent could only make contact in person.

Convenience—A third (33%) mentioned at least one convenience issue as a reason for doing so. Specifically:

- One in ten (12%) used in person contact because the government office was close by, or they were in the area.
- A small group (7%) did so because it enabled contact at a time that suited.

Features of the channel—Just over a third (37%) mentioned at least one feature of the channel as a reason for contacting government in person. Specifically:

- Fifteen per cent had chosen to do so because of a preference to speak to a ‘real person’.
- In person contact provided the opportunity to ask questions and get answers for seven per cent.

Figure 38 Most common reasons for making contact in person

Q6E. Still thinking of this most recent contact, why did you do it IN PERSON? Why else? Anything else?

Base: Respondents who made contact in person (n=1254)

Note 1: Responses may add up to more than 100% because respondents were able to give more than one reason within more than one theme as to why they chose a particular channel.

Note 2: Only the most common reasons are summarised in the above figure.

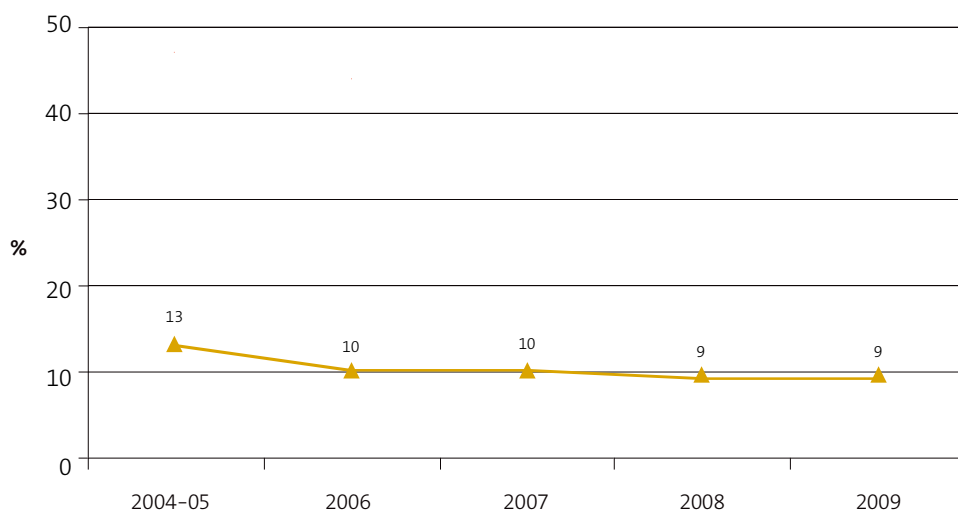
Some group emphasised that the personal contact offered advantages not available with other channels.

'When you're talking face to face, often you'll get that confirmation of well, I think these are the right forms, and the person will look at you and go, politely I'm going to tell you that you don't need those three, but you do need these two here. Those sorts of things, you just get face to face that you don't get online, unless you're familiar with the jargon, familiar with the parameters of what the form might be covering.'

7.5 MAIL

One in ten (9%) people used mail in their most recent contact. This level of use has been fairly consistent throughout these studies.

Figure 39 Use of mail to contact government services



Q4. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this ...?

Base: All respondents (n=3667)

The factors motivating the use of mail were relatively stable from 2004–05 to 2007. Since 2008, however, availability issues have gained importance to the point that three in five (61%) of those using mail now report they used mail as a necessity rather than by choice.

Where a person has a choice, convenience is the dominant motivating factor for using mail with 23% of all mail users nominating a convenience factor – a result similar to 2008 (27%). In 2008 the importance of features of the channel as an influence on choice declined markedly to seven per cent but has again risen in 2009 to a quarter (25%), a level similar to 2007 (23%).

The main factors influencing choice of mail are:

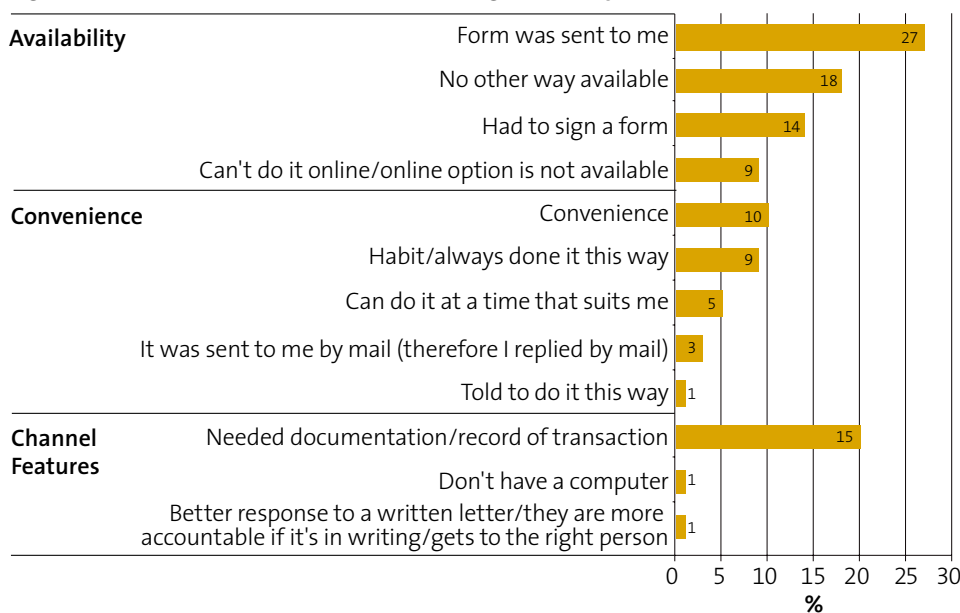
Availability—Three in five (61%) mentioned at least one aspect of this theme. Specifically:

- Just over a quarter (27%) reported a form had been sent to them (up from 15% in 2007).
- One in six (18%) reported using mail because it was the only option available.
- A further fourteen per cent mentioned that they had to sign a form.
- The transaction could not be done online for one in ten (9%).

Convenience—A quarter (23%) mentioned at least one aspect of convenience. Specifically:

- One in ten (10%) did so because it allowed contact at their convenience.
- Five per cent used mail because they could do it at a time that suited them.

Features of the channel—A quarter (25%) mentioned a characteristic or quality associated with this form of communication, such as needing documentation (20%).

Figure 40 Most common reasons for making contact by mail

Q6D. Still thinking of this most recent contact, why did you do it BY MAIL? Why else? Anything else?

Base: Respondents who used mail (n=316)

Note 1: Respondents were able to give more than one reason for making contact by mail.

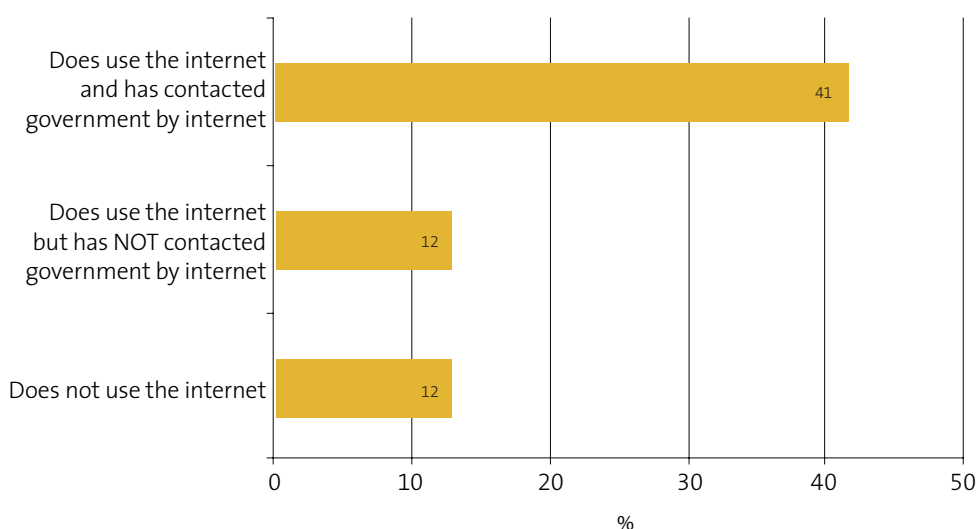
Note 2: Only the most common reasons are summarised in the above figure.

7.6 ENCOURAGING GREATER USE OF THE INTERNET TO CONTACT GOVERNMENT

Three in five (63%) people could be encouraged to increase their use of the internet to contact government. This is similar to the 2008 result (62%) which fell from three quarters (73%) in 2007.

This group comprises:

- People who already use the internet and have previously contacted government by internet (41% of all people—this includes 20% who reported that all or most and 21% who reported that some of their communication with government is by internet).
- People who already use the internet but have not used it to contact government (12% of all people).
- People who are not current users of the internet (12% of all people).

Figure 41 Those who can be encouraged to increase their use of the internet to contact government

Q13. What, if anything, would encourage you to use the internet more often for accessing or communicating with government services?

What else? Anything else?

Q1. Do you use the internet?

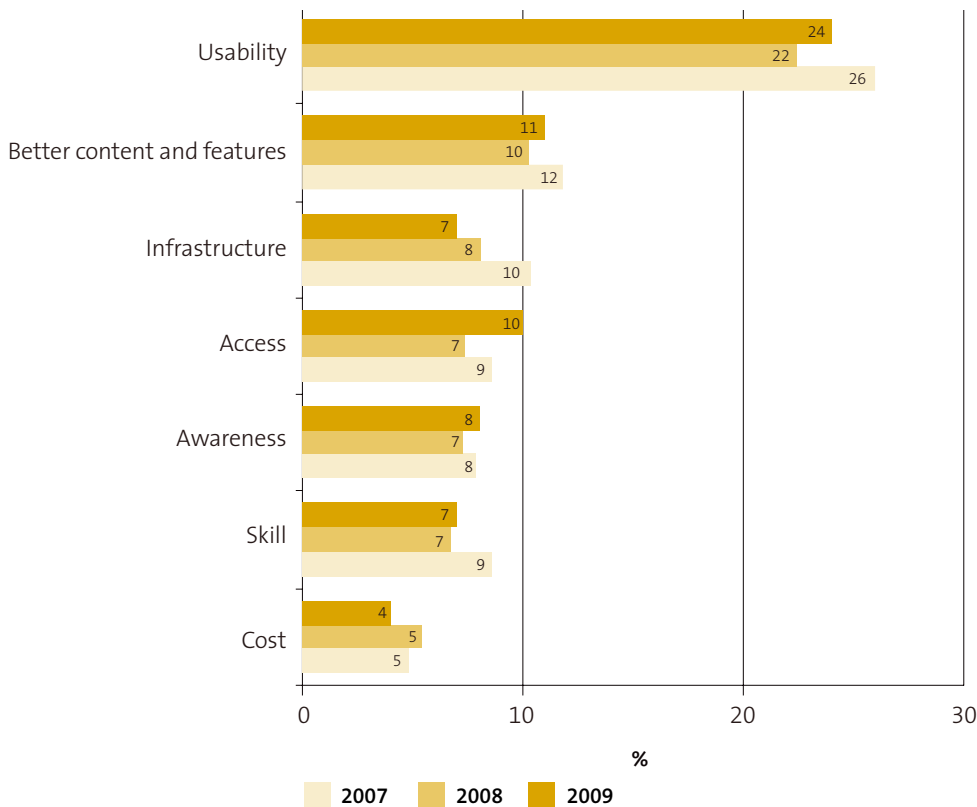
Base: All respondents (n=3667)

The frequency with which particular factors are mentioned as likely to encourage increased use of the internet has not changed. Improvements to website layout, navigation and search tools and the ease of finding a site are still the most likely factors to encourage increased use of government websites.

The main factors that would encourage people to increase their use of the internet to contact government are:

- **Website usability** improvements were mentioned by one in four (24%). Specifically, this covers improving layout, navigation and search tools; making government websites easier to find, and having better search facilities within them.
- **Website content** improvements would encourage greater use by one in ten (11%) people. This includes those who asked for basic and concise information and those who asked for highly detailed information.
- **Infrastructure** improvements such as faster loading websites would encourage greater use for seven per cent.
- **Better access** would encourage greater use by one in ten (10%), particularly improved availability of the internet through better access at home, school, libraries and work.
- **Increased awareness** about what can be done online would encourage increased use for eight per cent.
- **Skill level** is an issue for seven per cent of people who reported improved familiarity with using the internet or computers in general would encourage greater use.
- **Cost** of an internet connection is an issue for a small group of people (4%) who report that they would be encouraged to use the internet to contact government if these costs were lower.

Figure 42 Most common factors that would encourage increased use of the internet to contact government



Q13. What, if anything, would encourage you to use the internet more often for accessing or communicating with government services? What else? Anything else?

Base: All respondents (n=3667)

Note 1: Percentages may add up to more than 100% because respondents were able to provide more than one factor which would encourage increased use of the internet to contact government.

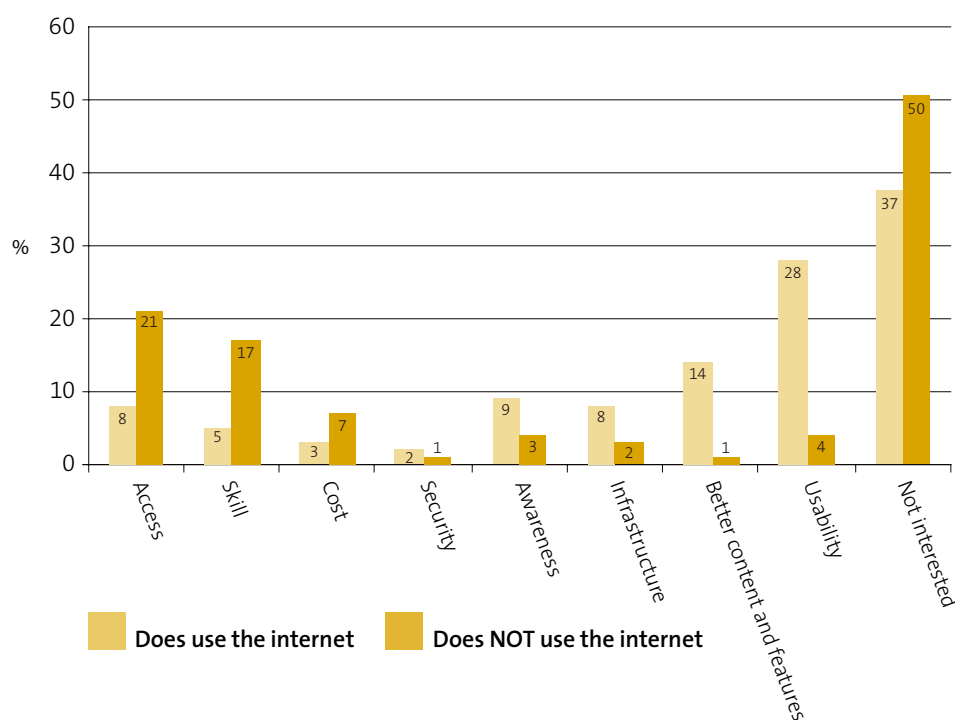
Note 2: Only the most common factors are summarised in the above figure.

There are differences in attitude between internet users and non users, although the relative importance of the various issues to each group is unchanged:

- Those with at least some experience with the internet would be most encouraged by improvements in the usability of government websites (28%) and their content (14%). Improvements in the infrastructure (8%) and their awareness of what they can do online (9%) will also increase use.

- There are three main factors that would encourage those with no experience of the internet to contact government this way. Their main issue is improved access (21%) to the internet and an increase in their skill level (17%). There was also an indication that cost reductions (7%) would encourage this group to start using the internet to contact government.
- Half (50%) of those who do not use the internet and a third (37%) of those who are already using it indicated there was nothing that would encourage them to increase their level of contact with government by internet.

Figure 43 Factors that would encourage increased use of the internet to contact government



Q13. What, if anything, would encourage you to use the internet more often for accessing or communicating with government services? What else? Anything else?

Base: All respondents (n=3667)

Note 1: Percentages may add up to more than 100% as respondents were able to provide more than one factor that would encourage increased use of internet to contact government.

Note 2: Only the most common factors are summarised in the above figure.

Note 3: The category 'Customer service' was labelled as 'Convenience' in previous studies and contained an additional code that was dropped for the 2008 study.

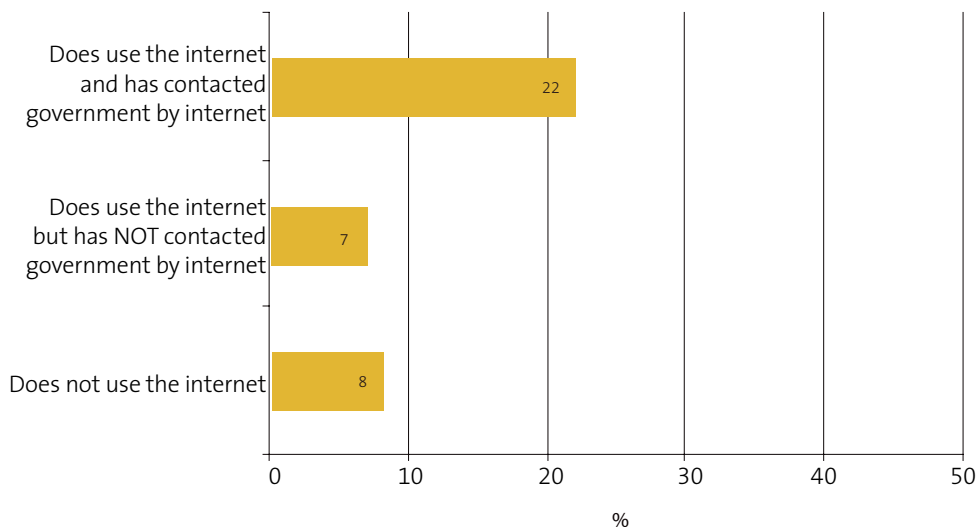
7.7 PEOPLE WHO CANNOT BE ENCOURAGED TO INCREASE THEIR USE OF THE INTERNET TO CONTACT GOVERNMENT

Just over a third (37%) people indicated there was nothing that would encourage them to increase their use of the internet for contact with government.

This group comprises:

- Internet users who have previously contacted government by internet (22% of people—this includes 13% who reported that all or most of their communication with government is by internet and 9% who reported that some of their communication with government is by internet).
- People who already use the internet but have not used it to contact government (7% of all people).
- People who are not current users of the internet (8% of all people).

Figure 44 Those who can NOT be encouraged to increase their use of the internet to contact government—by current internet use



Q13. What, if anything, would encourage you to use the internet more often for accessing or communicating with government services? What else? Anything else?

Q1. Do you use the internet?

Base: All respondents (n=3667)

There is no direct relationship between any identifiable socio economic group and those who said that nothing would encourage them to increase their use of the internet to contact government. Rather, this opinion is more closely related to people's current level of internet use and in particular the extent to which they already use the internet to contact government.

Those who have used the internet for all their contact with government in the previous twelve months and those who have not used the internet at all to contact government in the last twelve months are the most likely to claim that they cannot be encouraged to increase their use. On the other hand those who have had some contact with government by internet are the most likely to be encouraged to increase their use.

There are differences in what would encourage increased use of the internet for government contact, based on people's preferred means of contacting government. Improved usability of government websites is, however, the most important area to be addressed for those who would prefer to use the internet, telephone or in person. Improved access is most likely to increase use amongst those who prefer mail.

Internet—for people who prefer to contact government by internet:

- Factors that would encourage this group to increase their use of the internet to contact government include improvements in usability (30%), better content and features (16%), awareness (9%) and infrastructure (7%).
- Just over a third (37%) of those who prefer to use the internet to contact government could not be encouraged to increase their use.

Telephone—for people who prefer to contact government by telephone:

- Factors that would encourage this group to increase their use of the internet to contact government include improvements in usability (21%), access (13%) and in their skills (11%).
- Two in five (38%) of those who prefer to use the telephone to contact government could not be encouraged to increase their use of the internet to do so.

In person—for people who prefer to contact government in person:

- Factors that would encourage this group to increase their use of the internet to contact government include improvements in usability (15%), their skills (13%) and access (11%).
- Over two in five (44%) of those who prefer to contact government in person could not be encouraged to increase their use of the internet to do so.

Mail—for people who prefer to contact government by mail:

- Factors that would encourage this group to increase their use of the internet to contact government include improvements in access (15%), their skills (12%) and usability (9%).
- Half (51%) of those who prefer to contact government by mail could not be encouraged to increase their use of the internet to do so.

Figure 45 Preferred means of contacting government—what would encourage increased internet use

	Preferred channel of contact with government			
	Internet	Telephone	In person	Mail
	%	%	%	%
Proportion of people who prefer this channel	45	32	17	2
	Areas to be addressed for each group			
Usability	30	21	15	9
Better content and features	16	9	5	5
Infrastructure	7	6	6	6
Awareness	9	7	7	3
Cost	2	4	6	1
Security	1	3	3	0
Access	8	13	11	15
Customer service	3	3	2	3
Skill	2	11	13	12
Not interested	38	38	44	53

Q13. What, if anything, would encourage you to use the internet more often for accessing or communicating with government services? What else? Anything else?

Q11. If you could access government services by landline telephone, over the internet, by mail, in person, by mobile phone, or some other method, what would be your preferred way of doing it?

Base: Respondents who nominated a preference for contacting government by internet (n=1615); telephone (n=1257); in-person (n=663); mail (n=81)

Note 1: Care should be taken in interpreting results for those who would prefer to contact government by mail as the base is small (n=86). Results should be regarded as indicative only.

Note 2: The definitions of some of the themes described were changed slightly in 2008. Care should be taken in comparing 2008 and 2009 results with results from previous years.

Note 3: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents were able to provide more than one factor that would encourage increased use of the internet to contact government.

7.8 SECURITY AND PRIVACY ISSUES

People who had used the internet to contact government in the previous twelve months were asked general questions about their willingness to provide personal information to government using the internet. Questions asked in previous years about willingness to provide credit card and bank account details were not asked in 2008 or 2009.

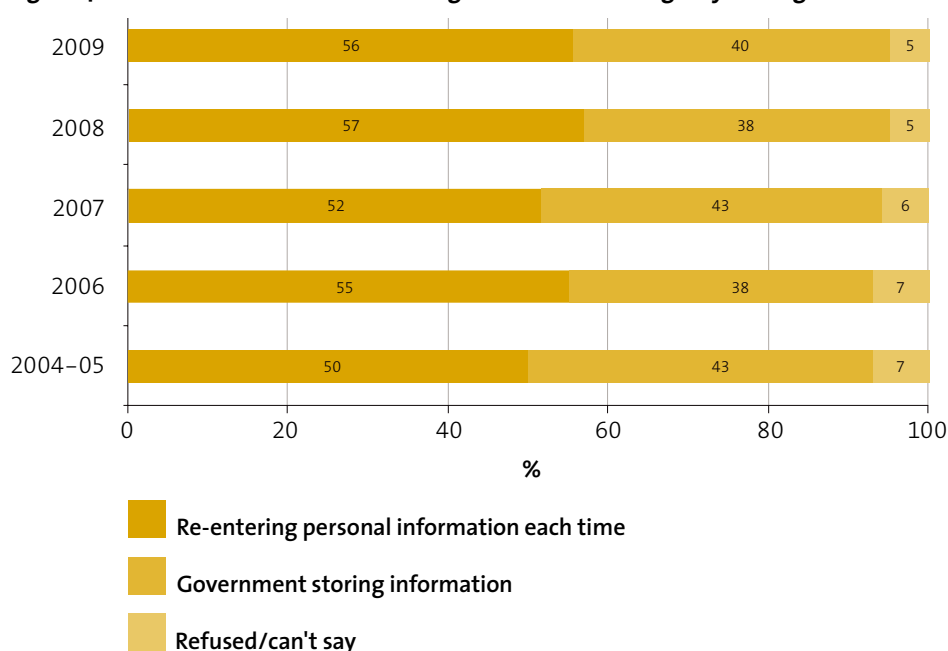
7.8.1 Anonymity and convenience

There is a slight preference for anonymity over convenience. Just over a half (56%) of those who had contacted government using the internet at least once in the previous twelve months, would prefer the anonymity of re entering their personal information each time they use a website rather than have it stored by a government agency for use on their next contact. Two in five (40%) would prefer the agency to store their personal information for use next time.

These attitudes have fluctuated slightly over the five studies, with preference for anonymity ranging from half (50%) of all people in 2004–05 to 55% in 2006 to 52% in 2007, 57% in 2008 and then remaining fairly steady with 56% in 2009.

Of those who had contacted government using the internet at least once in the previous twelve months, those aged 18 to 24 were the most likely to prefer to have their information stored (48%), compared with an average across all ages of 40%.

Figure 46 Preference between re entering information and agency storing the details



Q18A: When accessing government services over the internet, would you generally prefer: having to re enter your personal information each time you go back to a website; or the agency storing your information for next time you go to that website?

Base: Respondents who used the internet in last 12 months to contact government (n=2315)

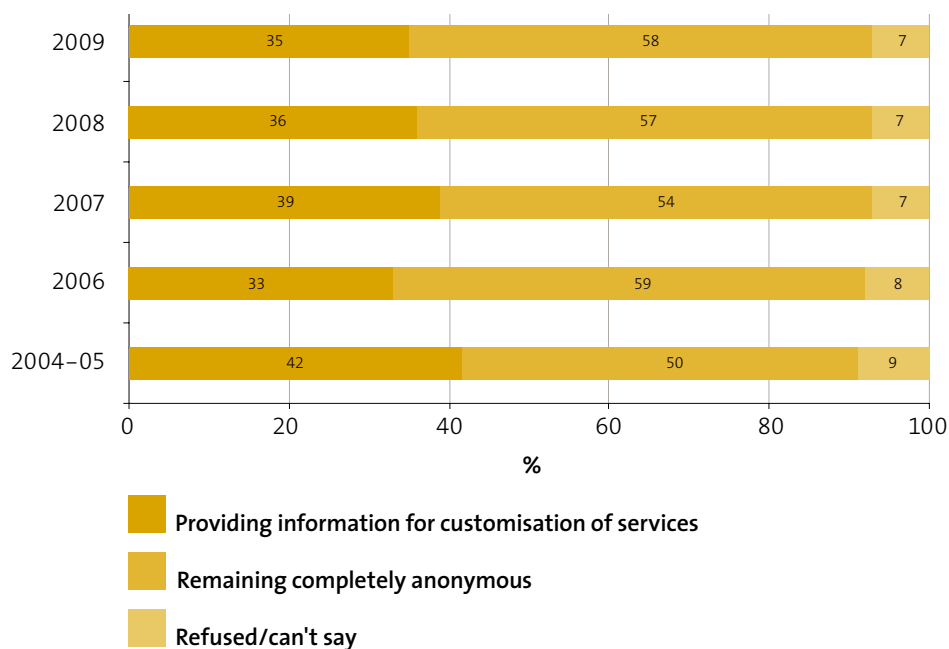
Note 1: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.

Note 2: Question wording varied slightly in 2004–05, 2006 and 2007, then remained unchanged in 2008 and 2009.

7.8.2 Anonymity and tailored services

There is also a slight preference for anonymity over a personalised interface among those who had contacted government by internet in the previous twelve months. Three in five (58%) people would prefer to remain anonymous, while a third (35%) would be willing to provide information to enable the interface with the government agency to be customised for them.

These attitudes have fluctuated slightly since 2004–05. Preference for anonymity has ranged from half (50%) of all people in 2004–05 to 59% in 2006 to 54% in 2007, 57% in 2008 and then remaining fairly steady on 58% in 2009.

Figure 47 Preference between personalised services and anonymity

Q18B When dealing with government services over the internet, would you generally prefer: providing information which could be used to help customise or personalise what you are able to see or do, or remaining completely anonymous?

Base: Respondents who used the internet in last 12 months to contact government (n=2315)

Note 1: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.

Note 2: Question wording varied slightly in 2004-05, 2006 and 2007, then remained unchanged in 2008 and 2009.

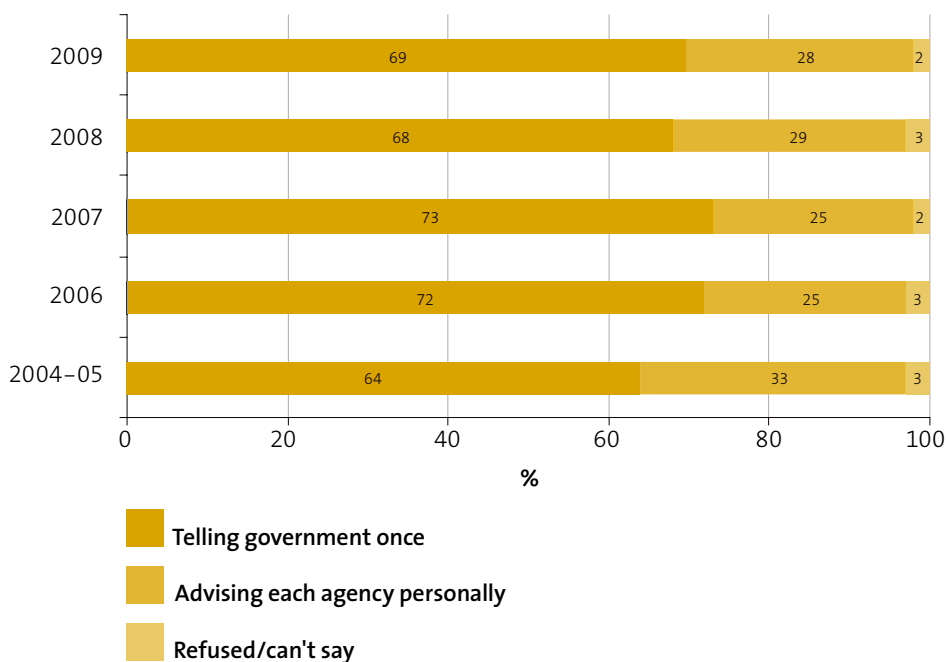
7.8.3 Updating information

Although remaining anonymous is important, the convenience of only having to update personal information, such as change of address, on a website once rather than having to notify multiple agencies of the change is preferred. Just over two thirds (69%) of those who contacted government by internet in the previous twelve months indicated they would prefer updating details once compared with just over a quarter (28%) preferring to notify each agency personally.

The proportion of people who contacted government by internet in the previous twelve months who indicated they would prefer to update their details only once was fairly steady (69%) compared with 2008 (68%), 2007 (73%) and 2006 (72%).

Of those who have contacted the government by internet in the previous twelve months, those who have a broadband connection are more likely to prefer to tell the government only once (70%) compared with those who do not have a broadband connection (60%).

Figure 48 Preference between telling government once and advising agencies separately



Q18D When updating personal information such as a change of address on government websites, would you generally prefer: telling the government only once; or you advising each agency yourself?

Base: Respondents who used the internet in last 12 months to contact government (n=2315)

Note 1: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.

Note 2: Question wording varied slightly in 2004-05, 2006 and 2007, then remained unchanged in 2008 and 2009.

7.8.4 Security and ease and speed of access

There is an overwhelming preference for a high level of security, albeit with a slower transaction time, than for faster and easier transactions with less security. Over four in five (83%) of those who used the internet to contact government expressed this view, an attitude consistent with 2008 (85%), 2007 (84%) and 2006 (82%) and slightly higher than in 2004-05 (77%).

As was noted in 2008, age has become a factor in preferences for level of security and ease and speed of access. More than four in five (84%) of those aged between 18 and 64 prioritise security over ease and speed compared with three in four (75%) of those over 65. Age was not a factor in 2007.

Figure 49 Preference for security over ease of use

Q18E When accessing government services over the internet, would you generally prefer: a higher level of security that adds time to transactions; or a lower level of security that is faster and easier to complete?

Base: Respondents who used the internet in last 12 months to contact government (n=2315)

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.

eight Why people do not use
e-government services

eight

eight Why people do not use e-government services

Overview

More people are using the internet and have broadband connections, but the take up rate of using the internet or telephone to contact government has flattened out.

Convenience is still the overwhelming reason why internet users choose the internet over the telephone for contact with government. Features of the internet make it more appealing than the telephone for these users.

The internet

Just over a half (54%) of those who use the internet did not access a website in their last contact with government. This is a similar rate to 2008 (52%). The most common reasons for not doing so are that:

- they preferred contact with a 'real person' (18%)
- the process could only be done in person (14%)
- an online option was not available (13%).

A quarter (26%) of internet users tried unsuccessfully to find government information or services online in the previous twelve months. The main reasons for this were:

- the website did not have the information they wanted (42%)
- the website was too hard to use or understand (28%)
- they did not know which department/agency/service to contact (16%)
- they did not know where to find the website they wanted (15%).

The telephone

Just over two thirds of people (70%) do not use the telephone to contact government. The main reasons for contacting government in person rather than using the telephone or internet are:

- contact was only possible in person (27%)
- there was no telephone option available (10%)
- the convenience of a government office being close by or because it was easier to do things over the counter (10%)
- the need to sign documents or forms (10%)
- the issue being too complex for the phone (8%).

8.1 INTRODUCTION

To understand why people do not use e government services to contact government, respondents whose last type of contact with government was not by internet or telephone were asked about their reasons for not choosing either of these channels. Those who chose internet over telephone were also asked their reasons for that preference.

Respondents who had tried but were unable to contact government by internet were asked why their attempts had been unsuccessful.

8.2 WHY PEOPLE WHO ARE INTERNET USERS DID NOT USE IT TO CONTACT GOVERNMENT

Just over a half (54%) of those who use the internet did not access a website in their last contact with government. The main reasons why internet users did not use the internet to contact government can be summarised under the following broad themes:

Online option was not available or possible—Just over a quarter (27%) said their contact with government was only possible in person (14%) or that an online option was not available (13%).

Features of other service delivery channels—One in five (21%) mentioned at least one feature related to other service delivery channels as a reason for not using the internet. The main issue mentioned was the preference for speaking to or meeting a ‘real’ person (18%).

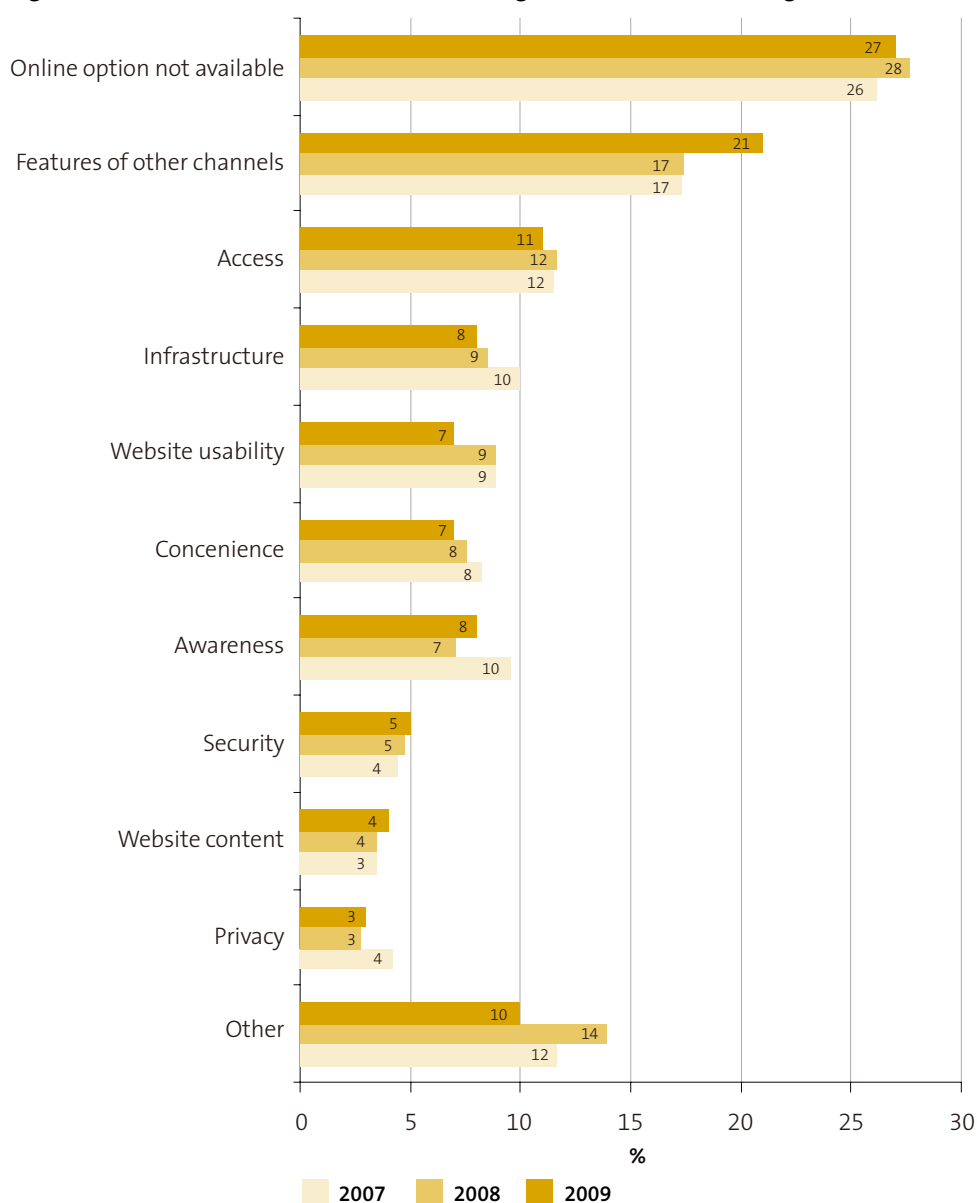
Access—One in ten (11%) mentioned access issues such as lack of familiarity with using the internet (7%).

Awareness—A further eight per cent mentioned awareness issues, the most significant of which was being unaware whether the task could be done online (7%).

Infrastructure—A small group (8%) mentioned website usability issues, with five per cent specifically mentioning website navigation difficulties. There has been virtually no change since 2007 for these responses.

There has been little change since 2004–05 in the main reasons why internet users did not use the internet to contact government, although it must be noted that the definitions of some of the themes described changed slightly from 2008 onwards.

Figure 50 Most common reasons for not using the internet to contact government



Q7A. Still thinking of this most recent contact (apart from reasons you just mentioned) why didn't you do it on the internet? Why else? Anything else?

Base: Internet users who did not use the internet or website by mobile phone to contact government (n=1665)

Note 1: Category definitions changed from 2008 onwards.

Note 2: Respondents were able to give more than one reason for not using the internet to contact government.

Note 3: Only the most common reasons are summarised in the above figure.

Some focus group participants were wary of using the internet if they were unsure of some aspect of their query, particularly of being sure they had the right form:

'Something with ambiguity would be difficult to do it over the internet...if you need to clarify something in particular.'

'If you're not quite sure which forms you need to fill out. There can be a lot of overlap and it can be very confusing.'

Understanding which agencies deal with which issues is confusing for many people.

'It's probably understanding the difference in what the branches really do handle and at a Federal level sometimes they're fairly well removed from what you might be thinking you are looking for.'

Another common reason for not contacting government by internet that was raised in many of the focus groups was that in person contact provided confidence that they had dealt with their query correctly rather than being left to their own devices online.

'I think sometimes you get confirmation, essentially, from a face to face visit. With a search on the internet, you've got to feel like you've actually gone to the right place, plucked out the right form and are filling out the right details.'

8.2.1 Disability as a barrier to internet use

Six per cent of people who were not internet users indicated they had a disability that made it difficult to use the internet. The main types of disabilities identified were:

• Physical restriction	31%
• Sensory and speech (including sight problems)	28%
• Head injury, stroke or brain damage	9%
• Intellectual	7%
• Psychological	1%
• Other type of disability	28%

The pattern of these results is consistent with results from 2006, 2007 and 2008. The results should be regarded as indicative estimates only because the number of respondents to this question is very small (n=39).

8.3 REASONS FOR UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS TO FIND GOVERNMENT INFORMATION OR SERVICES ONLINE

A quarter (26%) of internet users report that they tried unsuccessfully to find government information or services online in the previous twelve months. Two per cent of those who claim not to be internet users also tried unsuccessfully to seek these services online.

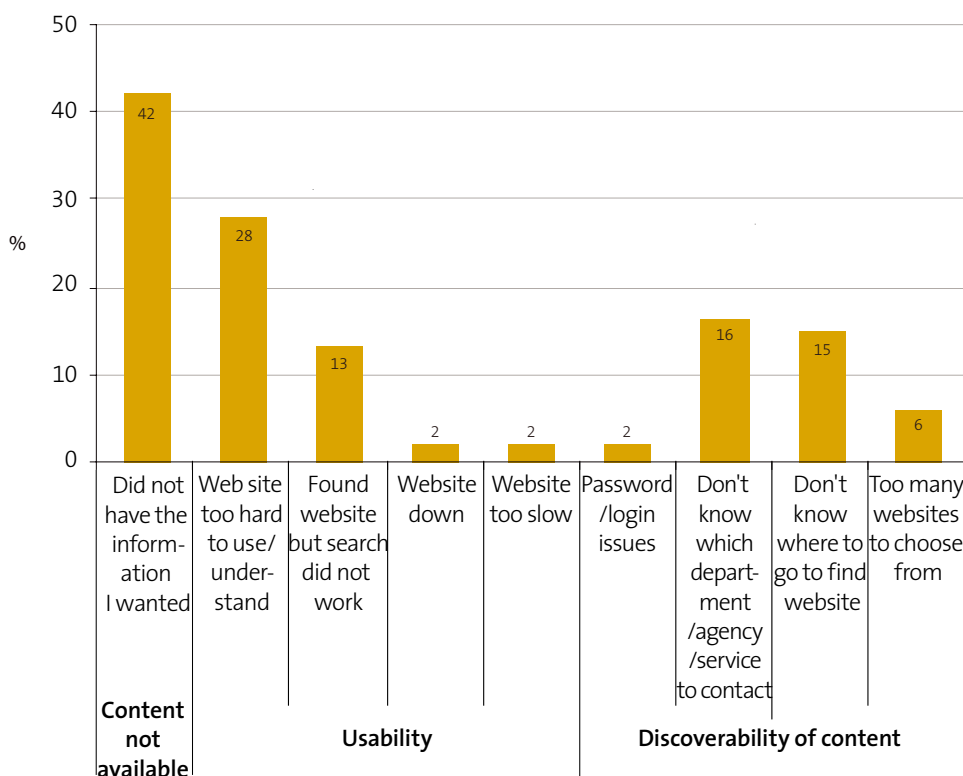
The main reasons cited were that the website did not have the information that they wanted (42%) and that the website was too hard to use or understand (28%). Sixteen per cent did not know which department/agency/service to contact and 15% did not know where to find the website they wanted. A further 13% found the website they needed, but search did not work for them.

The reasons why people were unsuccessful in using the internet to contact government are influenced by their location and age:

- Those in metropolitan areas are more likely to say they do not know which department/agency/service to contact online (18% compared with 11% in regional areas and 7% in rural or remote areas). This is a reverse of the finding last year, where those in rural or remote areas (17%) were more likely to be unsure who to contact than those in regional (7%) or metropolitan areas (6%).
- Those 55 and older are more likely to find the website too hard to use or understand (40%) than those aged 18 to 54 (25%); whereas those 18 to 54 are more likely to report that the website did not have the information they wanted (45%) than those 55 and older (32%).

Broadband users are more likely to say their reason for an unsuccessful attempt was the website was too hard to use or understand (29% compared with 17% of those not using broadband).

Figure 51 Most common reasons why attempts to find government information or services online were unsuccessful



Q12B. Why were your attempts to find government information or services online in the last twelve months unsuccessful?

Base: Respondents who have had an attempt to find government information or services online in the last 12 months but have been unsuccessful (n=792)

Note 1: Respondents were able to give more than one reason within more than one theme for being unsuccessful.

Note 2: Only the most common reasons are summarised in the above figure.

A view that government websites can be difficult to use was again a common theme in focus group discussions and seen as a factor in discouraging their use.

'I just find it much easier to go and see them face to face. Like I'm ... I'm one that tends to go and search the internet for things, rather than seeing face to face and if I've got an enquiry. I usually leave an email because I know that if somebody's out that they'll get back to their emails and then they'll reply. But I have just found [one government site] is so hard to use that it just frustrates me. Generally it's quicker to go and drive the 10 minutes to go and see them in person.'

The terminology and 'government jargon' used on websites was a key source of frustration for many in the focus groups, with many suggesting that the language be kept simpler or that there was assistance available to help interpret the jargon to assist people to find what they need.

'We need to have a 'Government for Dummies', a sort of big book that just says if you want to look for this, this is the terminology you need to use.'

8.4 POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH IN INTERNET USE

As noted earlier in this report, the uptake of using the internet to contact government has flattened out, with rates nearly identical to last year. Six in ten (62%) people did not use the internet for their most recent contact government in 2009, which is the same rate as in 2008. This compares with seven in ten (71%) in 2007.

A large proportion of this group use the internet for other purposes, as can be seen from the following proportions of those who did not use the internet for their last contact with government but do use the internet for other purposes:

- Eight in ten (79%) who used the telephone to contact government are internet users (compared with 73% in 2008)
- Seven in ten (70%) who made in person contact are internet users (compared with 67% in 2008)
- Just over two thirds (70%) of those whose last contact was by mail are internet users, no change from 2008 (72%).

The main reason for the slight increase in these rates is that general use of the internet has increased from 79% in 2008 to 82% in 2009.

While not all contact with government can be conducted through the internet, this suggests that considerable potential still remains for growth in use of the internet to contact government.

Two aspects that need to be investigated further are:

- how to encourage those who use the internet for other purposes, but not to contact government to do so; and
- that a third (32%) of internet users (up from 28% in 2008) said that their contact with government was only possible in person or that an online option was not available.

8.5 THE TELEPHONE

8.5.1 *Reasons why contact made in person and not by telephone*

Just over two thirds (70%) of people do not use the telephone to contact government. The main reasons why internet users who contacted government in person did not use the telephone to do so can be summarised under four themes:

Telephone option was not available or possible—Thirty seven per cent of people advised that a telephone option was not available or not possible: either their contact was only possible in person (27%, down from 37% in 2008) or no telephone option was available (10%, compared with 8% in 2008).

Process requirement—One in six (17%) cited a process requirement as a reason for not using the telephone to contact government.

- The most common reasons why a process requirement prevented contact with government by telephone were the need to sign documents or forms (10%) or the issues were too complex for the telephone (8%).

Convenience—One in six (15%) cited a convenience related reason for not using the telephone to contact government.

- One in ten (10%) made contact in person because a government office was close by or because it was easier to do things over the counter.

Usability of telephone—One in seven (14%) mentioned at least one usability issue as a reason for not using the telephone to contact government.

- One in ten (12%) chose not to use the telephone because they had difficulty or disliked using an automated telephone system (6%), had difficulty in navigating a telephone menu (3%), or got bounced from person to person (3%).

Focus group participants explained some barriers to using the telephone to contact government.

'You ring half a dozen times and each time you get, "We are experiencing long delays perhaps you would be better to ring later." So you ring later and the delays are still the same and that's frustrating.'

Being put on hold for too long was mentioned by several people in the focus group discussions:

'I much prefer to do it either on the internet, or face to face if need be, otherwise you end up being on hold forever.'

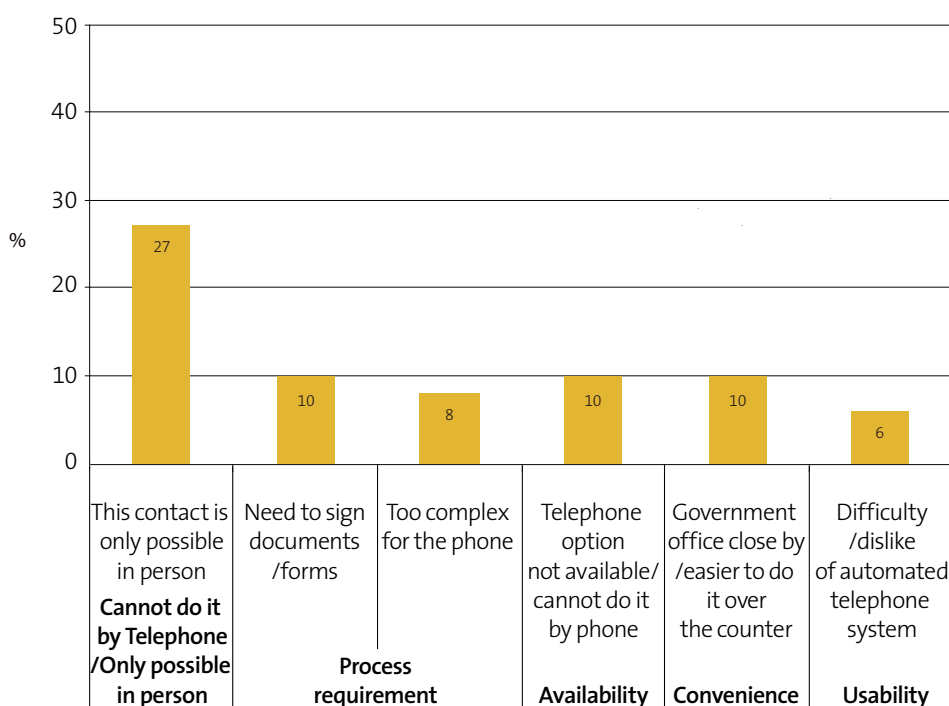
The frustration with automated telephone systems and voice recognition was also raised by many participants as a reason to avoid contacting government by telephone.

'You ring somebody, just a minute please, what do you want? Press so and so, press so and so. Half an hour later, you're still pressing numbers to try and get to talk. All I want to do is talk to somebody.'

Many people were so frustrated by automated telephone systems that they shared methods of circumventing the system in order to be put through to a real person.

'That's what so annoying, when they say press 1 if it's this, press 2 if it's that, but it's none of those things. I just do whatever will throw the voice automation out, so they have to pass you straight through.'

Figure 52 Most common reasons why internet users contacted government in person rather than by internet or telephone—individual reasons by category



Q7B. Still thinking of this most recent contact (apart from reasons you just mentioned) why didn't you do it by phone? Why else? Anything else?

Base: Internet users who contacted government in person rather than using the internet or telephone (n=1151)

Note 1: Respondents were able to give more than one reason within more than one theme for not making contact by telephone.

Note 2: Only the most common reasons are summarised in the above figure.

8.5.2 Reasons contact made by internet and not by telephone

To better understand people's choice of e government channels, those who had used the internet to contact government were asked their reasons for not using the telephone.

Taking into account the changes that were made to the categories in 2008, there has been little change in the themes or the individual reasons mentioned since the 2007 study. Convenience related issues remain the central factors in the decision to choose the internet over the telephone to contact government. The features of the internet compared with the telephone also remain important motivations for choosing the internet over the telephone to contact government.

Convenience—Convenience issues are mentioned by two thirds (67%) of those who used the internet rather than the telephone for their most recent contact with government.

- A key benefit to using the internet rather than the telephone is seen to be that the online option requires a shorter time (32% in 2009, 25% in 2008 and 33% in 2007).
- Just over a quarter mentioned that the ability to conduct their business with government at a time that suits them is a key advantage (28% in 2009 and 2008, compared with 36% in 2007).

- Not having to wait in a queue (17%) is also a common reason to favour the internet compared with the telephone.
- The simplicity and ease of using the internet (7%) was also mentioned.

Features of the internet compared with the telephone—These are mentioned by two in five (39%) of those who used the internet rather than the telephone to contact government.

- Ability to control the type and amount of information and not having to rely on the service person is important for one in seven people (14%).
- For one in ten (12%) people an advantage of the internet over the telephone is that they do not need to make a telephone call.
- Seven per cent of people mentioned the consistency of information each time they access the website as a reason for preferring the internet over the telephone.

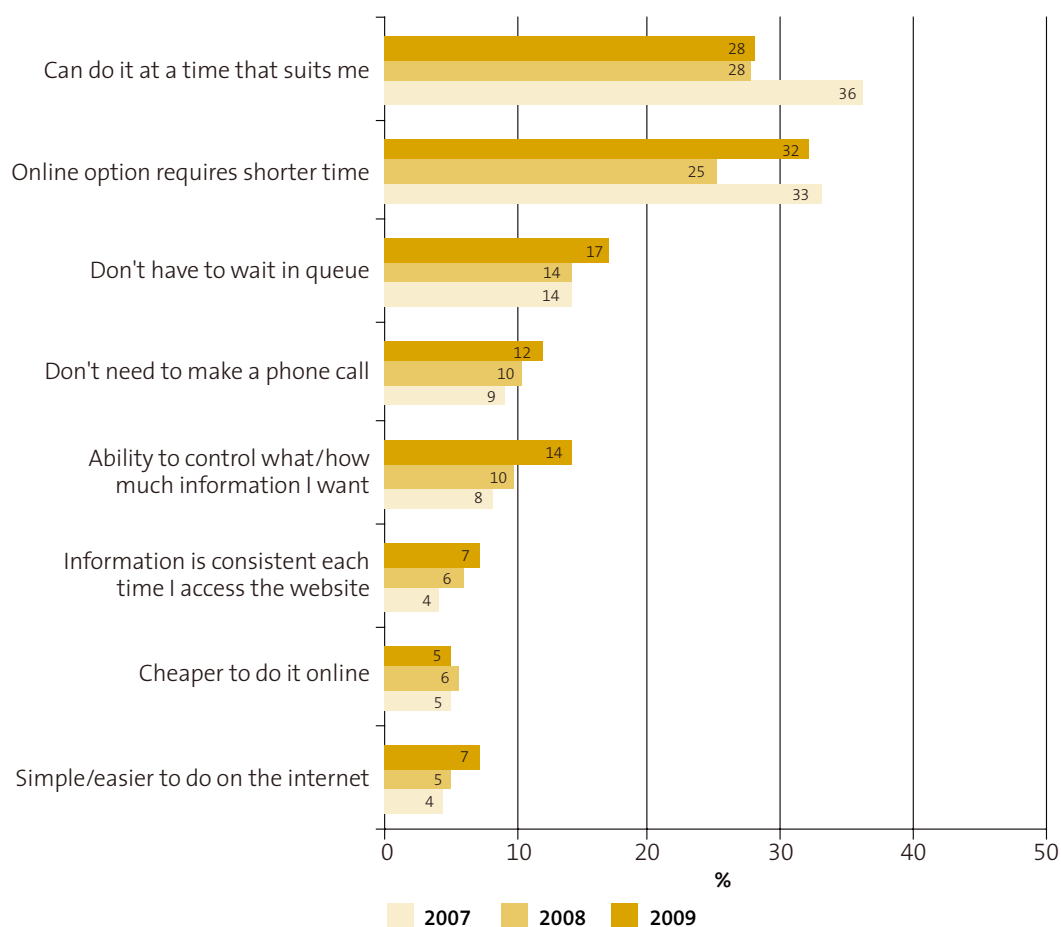
As was noted in the focus group discussions, the ‘after hours’ convenience of the internet is a key reason for using that method to contact government, particularly when people have busy lives or young children.

‘I [tend only to] remember at 8 o’clock at night in the end and that’s when I can do it [online] and know it’s done and don’t have to try to remember the next day. I find having those options really convenient at the moment.’

The visual aspect of internet compared with the telephone was also noted in the focus groups as being a key feature that makes it easier for people to contact government that way and gives them confidence that they are not making errors. The ability to check information while it’s on the screen is important for some people.

‘I find the internet easier and more secure myself because I am very visual. I am able to look at the information that I’ve put in and then submit it and I’ve stored all the information on the internet so I don’t have to input numbers every time. I can click on the Council website or whatever and it all comes up and I can look at it. I have overpaid my husband’s phone bill by about \$1,000 over the phone only because I was just doing it so quickly and I didn’t listen. We were in credit for about six months but I wouldn’t have done that on the internet because I would have looked at it.’

Figure 53 Most common reasons for using the internet to contact government instead of the telephone 2007-2009



2009 and 2008 Q8. Still thinking of this most recent contact, why did you do it over the internet instead of using the phone? Why else? Anything else?

2007 Q8. Still thinking of this most recent contact, why did you do it over the internet rather than by the phone or some other way? Why else? Anything else?

Base: Respondents who chose the internet over the telephone (n=1179)

Note 1: The wording of the question has changed slightly over the past four studies. In 2008 the scope of the question was changed to a comparison of the internet with the telephone rather than a comparison of all other channels. This change should be noted when comparing previous studies with the 2008 and 2009 studies.

Note 2: Respondents were able to give more than one reason for making contact by internet instead of by the telephone.

Note 3: Only the most common reasons are included in the figure above.

nine Future service delivery preferences

nine

nine Future service delivery preferences

Overview

The position of the internet as the preferred means of accessing government services is well established.

- Preference for the internet when contacting government has increased each year since 2004–05. Over two in five (45%) people now prefer to contact government this way.
- Preference for contacting government in person has steadily declined to the point where only half as many people (17%) now nominate this as their preference compared with 2004–05 (33%).
- The proportion of people who prefer the telephone has consistently been around a third throughout the study's history.

Given a choice, most people would prefer to use an e government channel to access a government service.

- Overall, four in five (78%) people would prefer to use the internet, telephone or mobile phone to contact government.
- Those who make contact in person are the least likely to prefer to use an e government channel.

A person's preference for a particular service delivery channel is influenced by the reason for the contact, location, and whether they have a broadband connection.

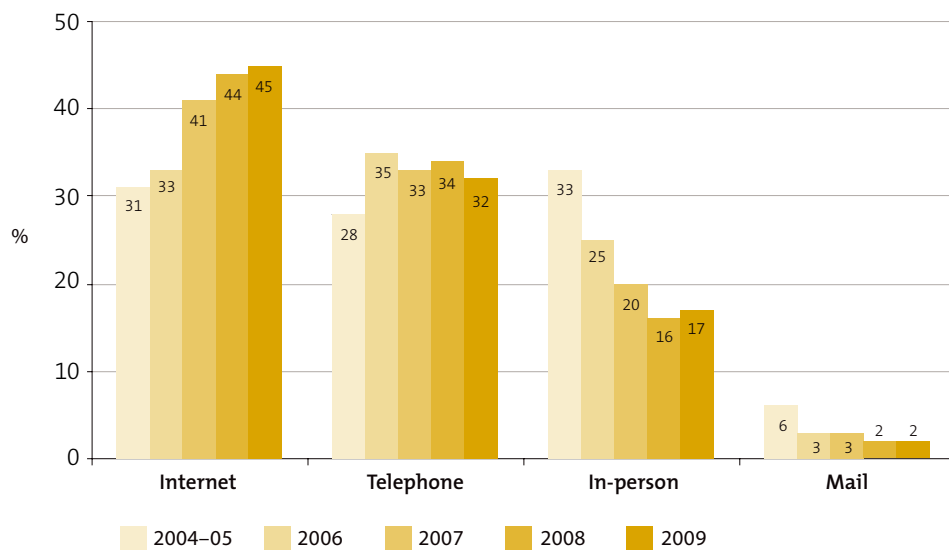
- Those who only sought information were much more likely to prefer internet communication (53% compared to 30% who prefer phone contact). Over two in five (43%) of those who provided information prefer the internet while three in ten (31%) prefer the telephone.
- Whether or not an internet user has a broadband connection has a strong influence on their preferred service delivery channel.
- Those living in metropolitan and rural/remote areas are more likely to prefer to use the internet to contact government (49% and 40% respectively) than residents of regional areas (37%).

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Four in five (78%) people would prefer to use an e government service delivery channel to contact government: the internet (45%), telephone (32%), or mobile phone (1%).

Preference for the internet for contact with government remains at similar levels to 2008, which has increased from previous studies (from 31% in 2004–05 to 45% in 2009). Preference for contact in person with government was also similar to 2008, a decrease from previous studies (from 33% in 2004–05 to 17% in 2009). Preference for the telephone remains stable at one in three (32%).

Figure 54 Preferred method of contacting government



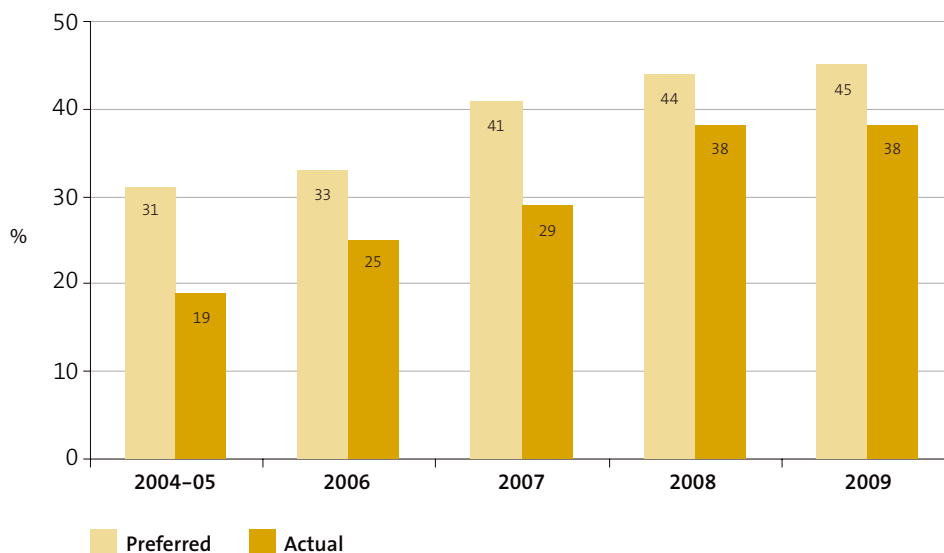
Q11. If you could access government services by landline telephone, over the internet, by mail, in person, by mobile phone, or by some other method, what would be your preferred way of doing it?

Base: All respondents (n=3667)

Note: Percentages do not add up to exactly 100% because of other responses given by respondents including fax, mobile phone, SMS, using the mobile to access the internet (3G third generation wireless networks), 'it depends on the situation', 'direct debit', 'some other method', and 'refused/can't say'. The proportions of responses covered by these responses are approximately 2% in 2004-05, 4% in 2006, 3% in 2007, 3% in 2008 and 4% in 2009. 1% of responses in 2009 were a preference for mobile phone.

Each study has shown that more people would prefer to contact government by internet than actually do so. In 2009 the gap between preference and actual use was seven percentage points, consistent with 2008 findings which were half those of 2007 (six percentage points compared to 12 percentage points).

Figure 55 Internet—preferred use compared with actual use



Q4. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this...?

Q11. If you could access government services by landline telephone, over the internet, by mail, in person, by mobile phone or by some other method, what would be your preferred way of doing it?

Base: All respondents (n=3667)

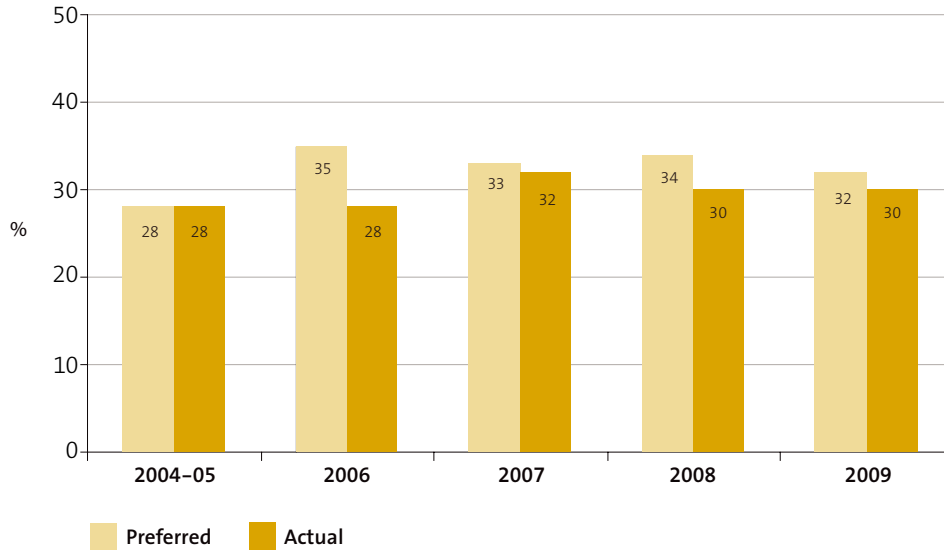
The main reasons internet users who would have preferred to use the internet to contact government used some other channel were similar to those in 2008, however the order of frequency has changed. The main reasons were:

- a preference for speaking to a 'real' person (18%)
- contact had to be with a person (14%)

- the option was not available or it was not possible to undertake the transaction by internet (13%)
- a lack of awareness that it was an option (7%).

The gap between preference for using a telephone to access government and actual use is minimal, at two percentage points in 2009. This is consistent with previous years.

Figure 56 Telephone—preferred use compared with actual use



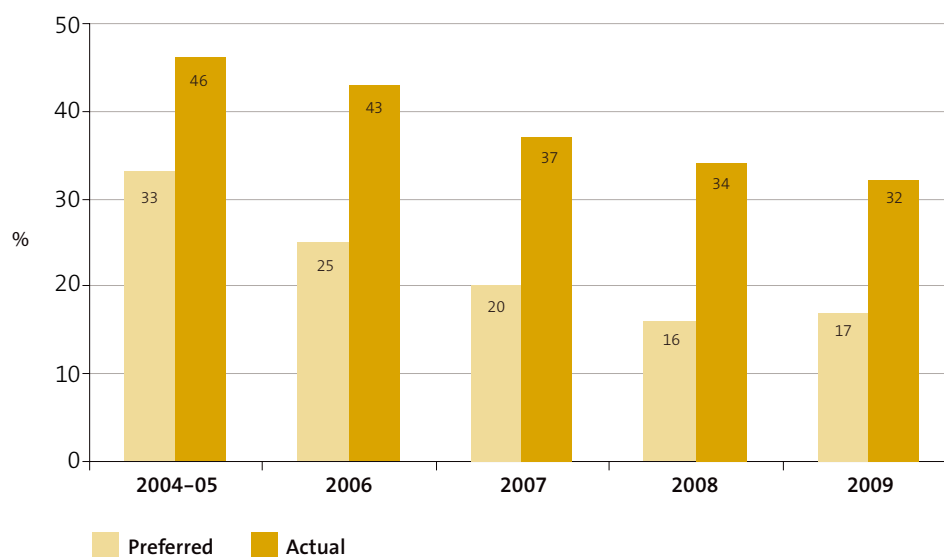
Q4. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this...?

Q11. If you could access government services by landline telephone, over the internet, by mail, in person, by mobile phone or by some other method, what would be your preferred way of doing it?

Base: All respondents (n=3667)

Unlike the trend observed with the internet, where both preference for and use are increasing, preference for and use of in person contact are both decreasing. Consistent with 2008 findings, in 2009 the gap between preference for contact in person and actual in person contact is 15 percentage points. This difference has been consistent since 2006.

Figure 57 In person contact—preferred use compared with actual use



Q4. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this...?

Q11. If you could access government services by landline telephone, over the internet, by mail, in person, by mobile phone or by some other method, what would be your preferred way of doing it?

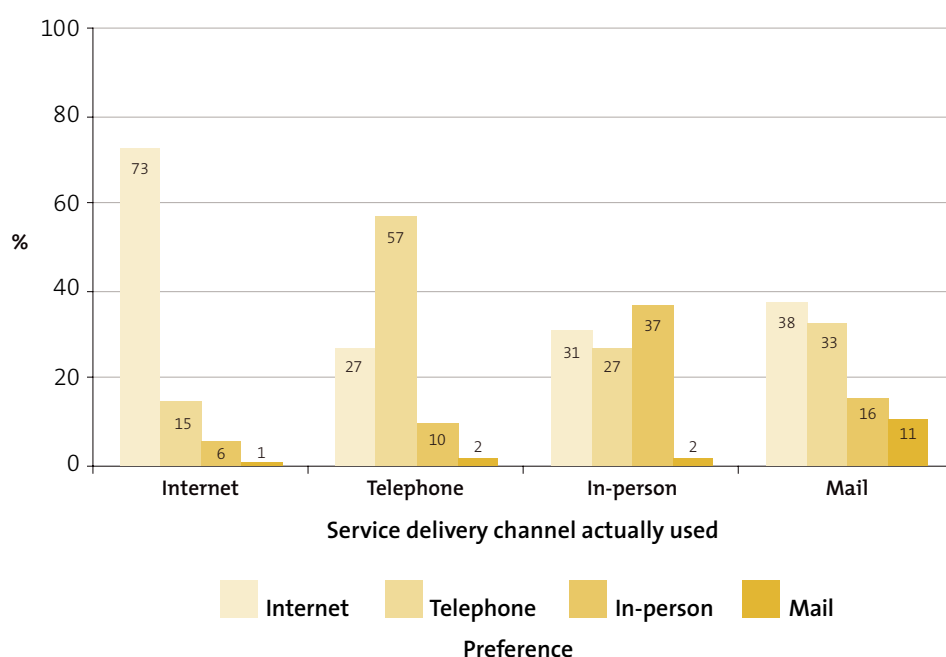
Base: All respondents (n=3667)

9.2 PREFERENCE FOR E-GOVERNMENT SERVICE DELIVERY CHANNELS

Given a choice, a strong preference for e government (internet and telephone) services among the users of each of the main service delivery channels is again evident in 2009:

- **Internet users**—Nine in ten (88%) would prefer to use an e government service: internet (73%), telephone (15%).
- **Telephone users**—Most (84%) would prefer to use an e government service: internet (27%), telephone (57%).
- **In person users**—Three in five (58%) would prefer to use an e government service: internet (31%), telephone (27%).
- **Mail users**—Three quarters (71%) would prefer to use an e government service: internet (38%), telephone (33%).

Figure 58 Preferred way of contacting government compared with method actually used



Q4. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this...?

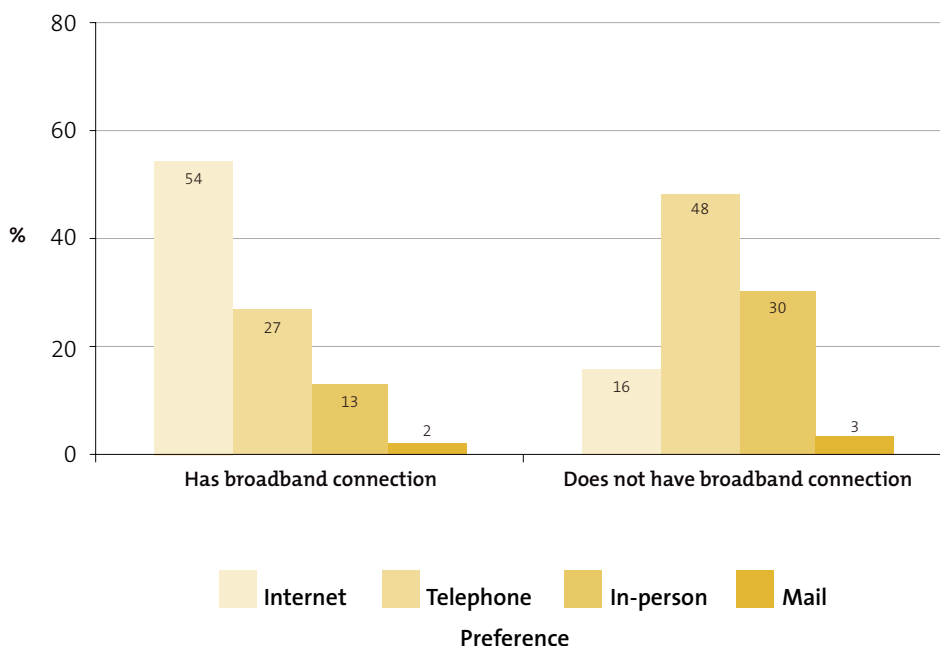
Q11. If you could access government services by landline telephone, over the internet, by mail, in person, by mobile phone or by some other method, what would be your preferred way of doing it?

Base: Respondents whose last contact with government was by internet (n=1336); telephone (n=1082); in person (n=1254); mail (n=316)

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because respondents were able to nominate a preferred method of contact other than those summarised above.

Whether an internet user has a broadband connection has a strong influence on the preferred service delivery channel. Those who have a broadband connection are three times more likely to prefer to contact government by internet (54% compared with 16%). While just over a quarter (27%) of those who have a broadband connection would prefer contact by telephone, this rises to half (48%) among those without broadband. Those without a broadband connection are also more likely to prefer in person contact (30%) than those with broadband (13%).

Figure 59 Preferred service delivery channel and broadband connection



Q2A. Do you have a broadband connection?

Q11. If you could access government services by landline telephone, over the internet, by mail, in person, by mobile phone or by some other method, what would be your preferred way of doing it?

Base: All respondents (n=3667)

9.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS WHEN CONTACTING GOVERNMENT ONLINE

Just half (49%) of those who have used the internet in the previous twelve months did not have a suggestion for what else they would like to be able to do or find out when contacting government online (response was either ‘can’t say’ or ‘nothing else’). This is down from just over two thirds (70%) of respondents with these traits in 2008. This would appear to be consistent with the high satisfaction ratings provided by those who contact government by internet (91%).

Of the suggestions provided, one in six (17%) suggested they would like to have more functionality, including addressing problems with website design, usability or the difficulty with finding things.

Focus groups revealed that a large barrier to contacting the government online was the difficulty associated with finding the necessary information. Participants noted that improving search engines and quick links would improve government website usability and encourage them to use online resources. Many participants also agreed that it would be good to have real time interactive help online, for example forums monitored by customer service agents. They also felt that getting more feedback from online queries and updating content more frequently would be beneficial.

‘Maybe if they set it out in the way they do with the phone calls where it goes press one for this, press two for this, if they did in that style maybe, I think maybe it would be a bit easier, quite easier to work through, instead of having all those...’

‘...something they could learn from the private sector is that constant monitoring of their own website, having someone to help out and to navigate the website with you’

‘Some people do, some people will endeavour to get back to you within forty eight hours, but it would be good to have that as a blanket across government departments so that if you did contact them, you know that somebody’s received it, you know they’re looking at it and you know within what timeframe it will be for them to get back to you.’

9.4 FUTURE OPTIONS FOR RECEIVING COMMUNICATIONS FROM GOVERNMENT

Internet users were asked if they would be happy to receive communications from government by email or SMS. Seven in ten (71%) would like to receive email from government, but one in five (21%) would like to receive an SMS (up from 14% in 2008).

A quarter (23%) did not want to be or were undecided about either option, with the main reasons the same as those cited in 2008, being:

- they were not interested in or did not want this form of communication from government (21%)
- they already receive enough emails and did not want to overload their systems (19%)
- they would prefer to receive communications from government by mail in order to have a written copy (18%)
- they don't want to receive junk email or spam (10%).

Other reasons were that they don't check their messages that often (9%) or that they prefer to seek information themselves rather than have government send it to them in these ways (9%).

Focus group participants had mixed views about using newer technologies such as SMS to communicate with government. There was an overwhelming feeling from the focus groups that receiving SMS from government would not be appreciated except for in some circumstances, for example in emergencies.

'My mobile number would be very private and to receive SMSs I would find that really intrusive.'

'I got one for the fire. Which I don't mind, that is a question of safety.'

It was recognised that receiving email from government might also be quite intrusive but to a lesser extent than SMS. Again, there were also situations when participants would like to receive an email, such as to confirm that their inquiries are being considered.

'I just filled in a form... I had to choose what form of contact and SMS was there and I didn't tick it. I ticked email because I think... it is more personal, [SMS] you're getting it on your phone rather email you just check it, delete it, keep it, do whatever you want.'

Participants noted that they would not like to receive spam mail and so information sent to them would need to be specific to their needs and interests.

'...because I'd get flooded with e-mails with things I don't need'

Overall it was felt that direct communication via email or SMS was invading the participant's personal space. The general feeling was that the government should not be intruding unless there was a specific reason to do so.

'It flashed into my mind years ago during one of the state elections here there was an elderly woman walking along High Street in Northcote and I mean not she was elderly but she was one of the old school, couple of shopping bags going home with a feed for the family sort of thing and TV crew asked her question, I won't actually say what it was and all that sort of stuff, but she just turned around and said "Now look, the Government just needs to get out of our daily lives" and I think they should bear that in mind...Also incidentally I would like to remind you all that SMSs are not guaranteed to arrive.'

ten Conclusions

ten

TEN CONCLUSIONS

ten Conclusions

Results have stabilised.

- There has been relatively little change over the last twelve months on how or why people interact with government.
- Similarly there have been only marginal changes in experience in dealings with government in terms of awareness of options, including knowledge and use of government portals.

The proportion of people who use each channel to contact government has stabilised.

- Usage levels of the internet, telephone and mail to contact government have stabilised. Conversely, the portion of people who don't use the internet to contact government continues to show some decline.
- In person contact continues to show a steady decline with around two in five of those who used in person contact doing so because they either had no other option or they were required to show or sign documents. This reflects the gap between those who would prefer making in person contact (17%) and those who actually do (32%).

The relationship between age and internet use has continued.

- Most people aged 18 to 54 use the internet. Those in older age groups however are slightly more likely to use the internet than in previous years. Consequently the proportion of the population using internet continues to expand, albeit at a slower rate.

Use of broadband continues to grow.

- The number of people with broadband connections has continued to grow quickly. This has resulted in a convergence between the number of people with a broadband connection and the number of people who access the internet. Despite the growth in broadband connections nationally, there is still a disparity between those living in metropolitan Australia and elsewhere.

There has been no change in image of government websites or awareness of them.

- Government websites have a very positive image in terms of trust, advocacy and comparability with non government sites however there has been no increase in the proportion of users who would rate government sites as 'excellent'.
- There has been no increase in awareness of australia.gov.au over the three years it has been measured. Two in five of those who use the internet to contact the government remain unaware of the site.

There is a strong preference for e government channels.

- Those who have not used an e government channel show a strong preference for using either the internet or telephone rather than in person contact or mail. This suggests that use of e government channels may grow further.
- To encourage use of e government channels and maintain high levels of satisfaction, online government service providers should:
 - o recognise that convenience is the dominant factor in determining how a person will interact with government
 - o consider to what extent business processes unnecessarily require people to access government services in person
 - o appreciate that the older population is increasingly inclined to use an e government option
 - o recognise that government is expected to meet or exceed the service standards of the private sector.

e11even Appendix 1—
Background and Methodology

e11even

eleven Appendix 1 - Background and methodology

11.1 TERMS OF REFERENCE

This project tracks Australians' use and satisfaction with government services delivered by the four service delivery channels of internet, telephone, in person and mail contact. The principal focus is to monitor the use of e government services (internet and telephone) in terms of the adoption of, and satisfaction with, e government across all tiers of government, compared with the more traditional methods of service delivery. This enables government to plan for the future delivery and prioritisation of e government services and refine the quality and level of service delivery strategies.

Project objectives

The overall objectives were to:

- provide an overview of the uptake of e government services
- identify drivers of satisfaction for e government services
- profile users and non users of e government
- identify impediments and barriers to e government use
- measure user satisfaction with e government services and identify possible future service delivery expectations
- compare findings with 2004–05, 2006, 2007 and 2008 to track any changes in the attitudes, satisfaction and experience of e government users.

In 2008 the issues explored in the telephone survey were broadened to include the use of intermediaries to contact government.

Research team

The study was developed, conducted, and the results analysed and reported by Roy Morgan Research in close consultation with the Department of Finance and Deregulation, Australian Government Information Management Office.

11.2 METHODOLOGY

The 2009 study reflected the basic design developed for the original 2004–05 study and continued in 2006, 2007, and 2008. The 2009 approach consisted of the following stages:

- a review of the telephone questionnaire to ensure its continued relevance for government service delivery policy development and design and to address technology changes²⁰
- a telephone survey of a representative sample of the Australian population aged 18 or more. Interviewing was conducted in June and July 2009 with 3,669 interviews obtained. All interviews were with people who had had contact with a government agency in the previous twelve months
- qualitative focus group research in June and July 2009 involving forty four participants in five locations in metropolitan Victoria and South Australia, and in regional New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania.

Sample design

In conducting studies designed to track results over time, it is essential to ensure that any changes in the consistency of outcomes with previous studies, or identification of trends and directions are attributable to real world changes as opposed to either sample or non sampling error. Consequently, any refinement or change to the methodology implemented for the current and previous studies needs to be noted and considered as part of the interpretation of the results.

Methodological amendments were introduced in 2008 to the size of the sample and the number of focus groups, and the same overall design was used in 2009.

²⁰ As a result some questions and some code frames were reworded slightly. Specific questions retain the same number throughout the time series, irrespective of these changes.

Sample size

The sample design for the 2004–05 study was a two stage design, with a randomly drawn sample (n=3,839) drawn from the electronic WhitePages® supplemented by 2,007 interviews among known e government users drawn from the Roy Morgan Research Single Source data base.

In the 2006 study a large sample (n=5,040) was again drawn from the electronic WhitePages® and stratified by area and quoted for gender and age.

The 2007 sample design recognised that with the substantial growth in household internet ownership and use of e government services, a smaller sample (n=4,016) could be used without having any statistically significant implications for the reliability of study estimates. Random digit dialling was used as the survey sample frame in 2007, replacing the electronic WhitePages® telephone directory used in the previous two studies.

The 2008 sample frame replicated the random digit dialling methodology adopted for the 2007 study. The sample design again took into account the growth in use of the internet for contact with government and was reduced to n=3,650.

The 2009 sample frame again replicated the random digit dialling methodology adopted for the 2007 and 2008 studies. The sample design remained consistent with the sample design adopted in 2008 to achieve n=3,650 with slight adjustment for quotas (final n=3,669).

The 2009 survey sample

Gender and age quotas were applied to ensure that a representative sample of the Australian population, aged 18 and over, was contacted in the 2009 telephone survey. The survey sample was also stratified by area, with over sampling in the smaller regions to ensure that there were sufficient interviews to allow for statistically valid regional analysis of results if required. The final distribution of interviews for the 2009 study is shown in the Figure below.

Figure 6o Sample distribution

	Location	Number of Interviews	
NSW	Sydney	542	1,083
	Other NSW	541	
VIC	Melbourne	364	725
	Other Vic	361	
QLD	Brisbane	250	500
	Other QLD	250	
SA	Adelaide	151	303
	Other SA	152	
WA	Perth	154	305
	Other WA	151	
NT	Darwin	150	301
	Other NT	151	
TAS	Hobart	150	302
	Other Tas	152	
ACT	ACT	150	150
Total		3,669	

Weighting

The data in this report has been weighted in accordance with the current Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates for population distribution in each state and territory, and by gender and age. The unweighted number

of respondents (n) has been reported below each Figure to indicate how many respondents answered the question in the 2009 study.

Rounded numbers

All numbers are rounded to the nearest whole number.

- Percentages may not add up to 100% in some Figures due to this rounding of decimals.
- In other cases numbers in the text, that are cumulated totals, may differ from the total of individual numbers shown in a Figure because of rounding of decimals.
- Similarly, the largest single rounded numbers in pie charts may be adjusted to add to a total of 100% - in such cases the number reported in the text may differ from the number in the pie chart because of this adjustment.

Focus groups

Focus groups are designed to explore specific topics and issues in greater depth than is practical in a quantitative telephone survey. They provide the opportunity to examine and explore issues in detail and gain insight into how and why some of the attitudes and trends quantified in the main study have arisen. Findings are qualitative in nature and are reported as quotations and conclusions to help understand the results from the study.

Focus groups were conducted to explore:

- how e government channels and intermediaries were used for contacting government
- the advantages of each channel
- how delivery of e government services could be improved
- how people located government information and services on the internet
- future service delivery preferences.

The 2009 groups were conducted in Melbourne, Adelaide, Newcastle, Mackay, and Devonport. Participants were recruited for each group using random digit dialling according to the following criteria:

- internet use (all were internet home users)
- gender (a representative coverage of males and females were recruited for each group)
- age (participants were proportionally recruited in the following age groups: 18–34, 35–54, 55–64 and 65–75)
- group participants were asked if they had used the internet to contact government in the past twelve months, with a minimum of three attendees in this category per group
- group participants were asked if they worked in particular industries, with a maximum of two attendees who worked in the public service per group.

twelve Appendix 2—Definitions

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twelve Appendix 2 - Definitions

This section includes definitions of terms and explanations for procedures used in this report.

Attitude scales: Respondents were asked a series of attitude questions in which they rated various aspects of government websites based on an 11 point scale where '0' was very poor and '10' was excellent. For reporting purposes, these have been summarised as follows:

- 0 to 2 are 'very poor'
- 3 to 4 are 'poor'
- 5 is 'neither poor nor good'
- 6 to 7 are 'good'
- 8 to 10 are 'excellent'.

Average ratings: Where respondents were asked to rate a government website or their experience in dealing with government, their responses have been summarised as an 'average'. This is calculated by:

- multiplying the number of weighted responses to each category by the value of that category
- calculating the total of all these multiplied categories
- dividing the total by the weighted population answering the question.

A commonly used alternative terminology for these 'average scores' is the 'mean score'.

Blog: Weblog. A website which provides a list of text articles, videos or opinion pieces and allows people visiting the website to post their own comments on the articles.

Channel (Service Delivery Channel): The access mechanisms used by government to provide information and services and used by people to interact with government. These channels include the internet, telephone, mail or a visit in person to a government office.

E government users: This refers to people who have accessed a government service using the internet or telephone.

Instant messaging: Programs which can instantly send messages from one computer to another as a form of 'instant email'.

Internet users: This term represents all Australians over the age of 18 who identified themselves as using the internet.

Metropolitan, regional and rural/remote locations: The definitions used in analysis of the location of the population are based on population density:

- *metropolitan:* over 100,000 residents
- *regional:* 1,000 to 100,000 residents
- *remote/rural:* under 1,000 residents.

Respondents, people and population: Those interviewed as part of the study are referred to in this report as 'respondents'. Results have been weighted to provide estimates of the total Australian population over the age of 18 who have had contact with a government service in the twelve months prior to these interviews. The weights are calculated from data provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) based on three sampling parameters: age, gender and location.

The terms 'population' and 'people' refer to these weighted estimates.

RSS: Really Simple Syndication. An online file format used to let people know when a certain website or part of a website has been updated with new content (e.g. news bulletins).

SMS: Short Messaging Service. Technology which allows people to send text messages by telephone, usually mobile phone services.

Social networking websites: Websites where people can create profiles about themselves and then communicate with others and form online networks. Examples include MySpace, Facebook, Bebo, Friendster and LinkedIn.

Telephone: In this report 'telephone' refers to the use of a landline. In 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009 respondents have also had the option of nominating a mobile phone, SMS, or using a mobile phone to access the internet as a way by which they last made contact with government. To date, the numbers of responses in these categories have not been of sufficient size to allow extensive analysis. Where possible, mobile phone results have been noted, but some caution should be taken due to the relatively small sample sizes. Where sample sizes were too small to allow meaningful analysis, mobile phone results are included in the 'Other' category (where relevant). References to the telephone in the 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009 reports exclude these means of contact.

Twitter: A Web based service that lets users send short text messages to a group of people.

Wiki: A website which allows multiple users to create, modify and organise web page content in a collaborative manner. Examples include Wikipedia.

thirteen Statistical Reliability

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thirteen Appendix 13 - Statistical reliability

Statistical reliability of the results

The estimates derived for this study are based on information obtained from a sample survey and are therefore subject to sampling variability. That is, they may differ from results that would be obtained if all people in Australia who have contacted government were interviewed (i.e. a Census), or if the survey was repeated with a different sample of respondents. One measure of the likelihood of any difference is the standard error (SE) which shows the extent to which an estimate might vary by chance because only a sample of people were interviewed. An alternative way of showing this is the relative standard error (RSE) which is the SE as a percentage of the estimate.

The table below shows the SE for various sample sizes and response levels. The interpretation of this table is shown in the example below.

This table can be used to assess if there are true statistically significant differences between results with in the 2009 study, or when comparing results from 2009 and previous studies.

For example:

If the sample size was 3,669, a response set of 50% for example, has a standard error of +/- 1.6 at a 95% confidence level (i.e. there are 95 chances in 100 that a repeat survey would produce a response set of between 51.6% and 48.4%).

If there were 500 respondents (i.e. $n=500$) to a question and 50% gave a particular response, then the standard error for that response is +/- 4.1%.

Where the relative standard error is between 30% and 49% results should be regarded as moderately reliable and where the relative standard error is 50% or higher results should be regarded as indicative estimates only.

Total sample & sub-sets														
Survey estimate	3669	3250	3000	2750	2500	2250	2000	1750	1500	1250	1000	750	500	250
	Sample variance (+/-) 95% confidence intervals													
10%	1.0%	1.0%	1.1%	1.1%	1.2%	1.2%	1.3%	1.4%	1.5%	1.7%	1.9%	2.1%	2.6%	3.7%
20%	1.3%	1.4%	1.4%	1.5%	1.6%	1.7%	1.8%	1.9%	2.0%	2.2%	2.5%	2.9%	3.5%	5.0%
30%	1.5%	1.6%	1.6%	1.7%	1.8%	1.9%	2.0%	2.1%	2.3%	2.5%	2.8%	3.3%	4.0%	5.7%
40%	1.6%	1.7%	1.8%	1.8%	1.9%	2.0%	2.1%	2.3%	2.5%	2.7%	3.0%	3.5%	4.3%	6.1%
50%	1.6%	1.7%	1.8%	1.9%	2.0%	2.1%	2.2%	2.3%	2.5%	2.8%	3.1%	3.6%	4.4%	6.2%
60%	1.6%	1.7%	1.8%	1.8%	1.9%	2.0%	2.1%	2.3%	2.5%	2.7%	3.0%	3.5%	4.3%	6.1%
70%	1.5%	1.6%	1.6%	1.7%	1.8%	1.9%	2.0%	2.1%	2.3%	2.5%	2.8%	3.3%	4.0%	5.7%
80%	1.3%	1.4%	1.4%	1.5%	1.6%	1.7%	1.8%	1.9%	2.0%	2.2%	2.5%	2.9%	3.5%	5.0%
90%	1.0%	1.0%	1.1%	1.1%	1.2%	1.2%	1.3%	1.4%	1.5%	1.7%	1.9%	2.1%	2.6%	3.7%

