

Disabled consumers' use of communications services - 2015 report

A Consumer Experience report

Briefing Sheet: consumers with learning disabilities

In 2015, Ofcom published the *Disabled consumers' use of communications services* report.¹ This Briefing Sheet provides key headlines from the section on consumers with learning disabilities, focusing on access to and use of communication devices and services. An Easy Read version of this Briefing Sheet is also available.²

1.1 Background

Ofcom has a specific duty to have regard to the interests of disabled consumers. Therefore, we worked with the British Population Survey (BPS) to produce a report providing a robust analysis of disabled consumers' household access to, and personal use of, communications services across Great Britain. The report provides detailed analysis among consumers with hearing, visual, mobility, multiple, or learning disabilities, comparing by type of disability and by demographic group, as well as with non-disabled consumers, where possible.

1.2 Key findings: focus on consumers with learning disabilities

- **Just over seven in ten (73%) consumers with a learning disability had access to the internet (anywhere), compared to less than nine in ten (88%) non-disabled consumers.** The lower level of access to connected devices, such as PCs/laptops and smartphones, explains some of the difference in levels of access to the internet, as does the stated impact of the disability on their use of the internet and these devices.
- **Access to a PC/laptop or smartphone was significantly lower for consumers with a learning disability than for non-disabled consumers.** Around seven in ten (68%) had access to a PC/laptop, versus eight in ten (79%) non-disabled consumers; 57% had access to a smartphone, compared to 66% of non-disabled consumers.
- **There were similar levels of access to a tablet between consumers with learning disabilities and non-disabled consumers.** Around two-fifths (41%) had access to a tablet, comparable to 42% of non-disabled consumers. Compared to all disabled consumers, those with a learning disability were more likely to personally use a tablet (31% vs. 23%), a reflection of their younger age profile.
- **Consumers with learning disabilities were significantly more likely than non-disabled consumers to use the internet for gaming.** Almost a third (31%) used the internet for gaming, compared to a fifth (21%) of non-disabled consumers. This group was also more likely than non-disabled consumers to have access to a games console (40% vs. 32%), reflecting their younger age profile.
- **Three in ten consumers with learning disabilities said their disability limited their use of communication services and devices.** These consumers were less likely to say that their disability limited their use of landlines, mobiles or the TV (9%-11%% stating this) compared to their use of other devices (13%-18%). The tablet was the device most limited by a consumers' learning disability; 11% said they did not use a tablet as factors including their disability prevented this.

¹ The full version of this report can be found at http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/media-literacy/1515282/Disabled_consumers_use_of_communications_services.pdf

² Easy Read version of this Briefing Sheet can be found at http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/media-literacy/1515282/Easy_Read.pdf

1.3 Fast Facts

Figure 1 illustrates current levels of access to communication devices and services, across each disability type, highlighting where access was significantly higher or lower among each group compared to non-disabled consumers, and where access levels had increased or decreased since 2012.

Figure 1 Access to devices and services among consumers

	Non-disabled	All disabled	Mobility impairment	Hearing impairment	Visually impaired	Multiple impairments	Learning disability
Landline	72% ↓	77% ↓	79%	83%	75%	82%	66%
Any mobile	89% ↑	85% ↑	80%	86%	83%	82%	87%
Smartphone	66% ↑	41% ↑	31% ↑	46% ↑	48% ↑	29% ↑	57%
PC/laptop	79%	64% ↑	59% ↑	71% ↑	66%	54%	68%
Internet	88% ↑	65% ↑	60% ↑	69%	75% ↑	49% ↑	73%
Tablet	42% ↑	30% ↑	27% ↑	32% ↑	33% ↑	23% ↑	41%
Games console	32%	21% ↑	13%	19%	27%	16% ↑	40%
Pay-TV	55%	48%	43%	48%	48%	46%	56%
Free-to-air TV	50% ↓	60% ↓	60%	61%	55%	65%	60%
DAB	26%	25% ↑	24% ↑	30%	24%	25% ↑	22%

Source: British Population Survey, 1 August - 20 November 2014

Base: non-disabled: 15,859, mobility impaired: 845, hearing impaired: 457, visually impaired: 319, multiple impairments: 698, learning disability: 199

○ = Notes whether each disability group in 2014 was statistically significantly higher or lower than non-disabled consumers (red=lower, green=higher)

↑↓ = Notes whether each disability group in 2014 was statistically significantly higher or lower than the same disability group in 2012 (consumers with a learning disability were not defined in the 2012 survey, therefore comparison cannot be made)

Figure 2 compares current access levels of communication devices and services with the proportion of each disability type who say they personally use that device/service.

Figure 2 Access and personal use comparison among disabled consumers³

	Mobility impairment		Hearing impairment		Visual impairment		Multiple impairments		Learning disability	
	Access	Personally use	Access	Personally use	Access	Personally use	Access	Personally use	Access	Personally use
Landline	79%	70%	83%	72%	75%	63%	82%	74%	66%	53%
Any mobile	80%	66%	86%	73%	83%	68%	82%	67%	87%	77%
Internet	60%	59%	69%	68%	75%	73%	49%	47%	73%	73%
Tablet	27%	21%	32%	22%	33%	24%	23%	18%	41%	31%
DAB radio	24%	21%	30%	24%	24%	18%	25%	19%	22%	15%
Satellite TV	31%	27%	33%	26%	34%	29%	33%	28%	37%	31%
Cable TV	13%	10%	18%	14%	18%	12%	15%	13%	22%	18%
Freeview TV	57%	50%	58%	51%	53%	42%	61%	54%	59%	50%
Freesat TV	5%	3%	7%	6%	6%	3%	6%	5%	6%	5%

Source: British Population Survey, 1 August - 20 November 2014

Base: mobility impaired: 845, hearing impaired: 457, visually impaired: 319, multiple impairments: 698, learning disability: 199

○ = Notes whether personal use levels of each device/service for each disability group were statistically significantly lower than access levels of each device/service for that group

³ Personal use of the internet is defined by those who access the internet at least once a month; other devices and services were specifically asked about if the respondent personally used them.

PC/laptops have not been included in this table as the survey splits these when asking about personal use, but groups them when asking about access.

Television has been split by service, as the survey does not include this as a 'device' within access, but includes each service when asking about either access or personal use.