

Disabled consumers' use of communications services - 2015 report

A Consumer Experience report

Briefing Sheet: consumers with hearing impairments

In 2015, Ofcom published the *Disabled consumers' use of communications services* report.¹ This Briefing Sheet provides key headlines from the hearing impairment section of the report, focusing on access to and use of communications devices and services.

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 from focus on hearing-impaired consumers

- **Access to the internet (anywhere) was unchanged since 2012 for hearing-impaired consumers, and was significantly lower than for non-disabled consumers.** Over two-thirds (69%) of hearing-impaired consumers had access to the internet, at home or elsewhere; lower than the proportion of non-disabled consumers (88%). Access was lower among 15-34 year olds when compared to non-disabled consumers, but comparable among the other age groups.
- **Hearing-impaired consumers were significantly more likely than non-disabled consumers to have access to a landline at home.** Around eight in ten (83%) had access to a landline (comparable to 2012), compared to around seven in ten (72%) non-disabled consumers (down on 2012).
- **Access to smartphones and computing devices was significantly lower for hearing-impaired consumers than for non-disabled consumers.** Levels of access to smartphones (46%), PC/laptops (71%) and tablet computers (32%) had all increased for hearing-impaired consumers since 2012, but remained lower than for non-disabled consumers in 2014 (66%, 79% and 42% respectively).
- **Consumers with hearing impairments were more likely than non-disabled consumers to have a free-to-air TV service, and less likely to have pay TV.** Around half (48%) had access to a pay-TV service in the home, lower than 55% of non-disabled consumers. Access to a free-to-air TV service was higher (61%) than for non-disabled consumers (50%).
- **Three in ten hearing-impaired consumers said their disability limited or prevented their use of communication services and devices.** They were less likely to say that their disability limited their use of a computing device or the internet (3%-4% stating this) compared to their use of other devices (11%-18%). Use of a landline was the most limited by a consumers' hearing disability, with 7% saying they did not use a landline 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

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 levels of access to 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 consumers²

	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

² 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.