Interacting with Government

December 2008

Australians’ use and satisfaction with e-government services

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT INFORMATION MANAGEMENT OFFICE (AGIMO)
## Contents

**Foreword**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>one Executive summary</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>About the study</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major findings</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>two Introduction</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>About the study</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General use of the internet</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadband connection</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for not having a broadband connection</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of newer communication technologies</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>three Use of government services</th>
<th>23</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery channel used for the most recent contact with government</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of multiple channels to contact government</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of government contacted</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transaction type being undertaken</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services being accessed</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of intermediaries for contact with government</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>four Use of e-government services through the internet</th>
<th>33</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of government accessed by internet</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transaction type accessed by internet</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services accessed by internet</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes towards government websites</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent use of the internet and government websites</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes towards the most recent government website visited</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government websites used in the previous 12 months</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes towards government websites visited in the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interacting with Government: Australians’ use and satisfaction with e-government services
eight Security and privacy issues
   Introduction
   Anonymity and convenience
   Anonymity and tailored services
   Updating information
   Security and ease and speed of access

nine Why people do not use e-government services
   Introduction
   Why people who are internet users did not use it to contact government
   Disability as a barrier to internet use
   Reasons for unsuccessful attempts to find government information or services online
   Potential for growth in internet use
   The telephone
      Reasons why contact made in person and not by telephone
      Reasons contact made by internet and not by telephone

ten Future service delivery preferences
   Introduction
   Preference for e-government service delivery channels
   Suggestions for improvement when contacting government online
   Future options for receiving communications from government

eleven Conclusions

twelve Appendix 1– Background and Methodology
   Terms of reference
   Methodology

thirteen Appendix 2–Definitions

fourteen Appendix 3–Statistical Reliability
Figures

Figure 1 Trends in general internet use by age 11
Figure 2 General internet use and broadband connection 12
Figure 3 General internet use and broadband connection 13
Figure 4 Broadband connection and internet use by location 14
Figure 5 Broadband connection by household type 14
Figure 6 Most common reasons for not having a broadband connection 15
Figure 7 Use of newer communication technologies 16
Figure 8 Use of newer communication technologies—by age 17
Figure 9 Use of newer communication technologies—average age of users and non-users 18
Figure 10 Use of newer communication technologies—by location 19
Figure 11 Use of newer communication technologies—frequency of contact with government by internet 21
Figure 12 Changes in method of contacting government—by year 25
Figure 13 Changes in method of contacting government—by service delivery channel 25
Figure 14 Method of contacting government—males by age 27
Figure 15 Method of contacting government—females by age 27
Figure 16 Type of transaction involved in most recent contact with government 29
Figure 17 Most common services used in most recent contact with government 30
Figure 18 Use of the internet to contact government in the previous 12 months 35
Figure 19 Contacting government by internet—age profile 37
Figure 20 Characteristics of those who used the internet to contact government in the previous 12 months 38
Figure 21 Level of government accessed by internet 39
Figure 22 Contacting government by internet—type of transaction 40
Figure 23 Government services accessed by internet 41
Figure 24 How the most recent government website visited was found 43
Figure 25 How the most recent government website visited was rated 44
Figure 26 Positive perceptions of government websites by proportion of contact by internet 45
Figure 27 Negative perceptions of government websites by proportion of contact by internet 46
Figure 28 How government website and email addresses are found 47
Figure 29 How government websites visited in previous 12 months were rated 48
Figure 30 Awareness of australia.gov.au 49
Figure 31 Type of telephone contact 53
Figure 32 Level of government accessed by telephone 53
Figure 33 Contacting government by telephone—type of transaction 54
Figure 34 Government services accessed by telephone
Figure 35 Satisfaction with services received
Figure 36 Average ratings for achieving what was intended—by channel
Figure 37 Average ratings of achieving what was intended—by type of transaction
Figure 38 Average ratings of achieving what was intended—by level of government
Figure 39 Satisfaction with outcome—time series by channel
Figure 40 Satisfaction with outcome—by channel
Figure 41 Satisfaction with outcome—by type of transaction
Figure 42 Satisfaction with outcome—by level of government
Figure 43 Satisfaction with length of wait for reply—by channel
Figure 44 Satisfaction with length wait for reply—by type of transaction
Figure 45 Satisfaction with length wait for reply—by level of government
Figure 46 Satisfaction with ease of finding specific information—by channel
Figure 47 Satisfaction with ease of finding specific information—by type of transaction
Figure 48 Satisfaction with ease of finding specific information—by level of government
Figure 49 Satisfaction with ease of using the service—by channel
Figure 50 Satisfaction with ease of using the service—by type of transaction
Figure 51 Satisfaction with ease of using the service—by level of government
Figure 52 Dissatisfaction by service delivery channel used to contact government 2007–2008
Figure 53 Most common factors influencing choice of channel
Figure 54 Use of the internet to contact government services
Figure 55 Most common reasons for making contact by internet
Figure 56 Use of the telephone to contact government services
Figure 57 Most common reasons for making contact by telephone
Figure 58 In-person contact with government
Figure 59 Most common reasons for making contact in person
Figure 60 Use of mail to contact government services
Figure 61 Most common reasons for making contact by mail
Figure 62 Those who can be encouraged to increase their use of the internet to contact government
Figure 63 Those who can NOT be encouraged to increase their use of the internet to contact government—by current internet use
Figure 64 Most common factors that would encourage increased use of the internet to contact government
Figure 65 Factors that would encourage increased use of the internet to contact government
Figure 66 Those who can be encouraged to increase their use of the internet to contact government
Figure 67 Those who can NOT be encouraged to increase their use of the internet to contact government—by proportion of internet contact with government 93

Figure 68 Preferred means of contacting government—what would encourage increased internet use 94

Figure 69 Preference between re-entering information and agency storing the details 97

Figure 70 Preference between personalised services and anonymity 97

Figure 71 Preference between telling government once and advising agencies separately 98

Figure 72 Preference for security over ease of use 99

Figure 73 Most common reasons for not using the internet to contact government 104

Figure 74 Most common reasons for not using the internet to contact government—time series and themes 104

Figure 75 Most common reasons why attempts to find government information or services online were unsuccessful 106

Figure 76 Most common reasons why internet users contacted government in person rather than by telephone 108

Figure 77 Most common reasons why internet users contacted government in person rather than by internet or telephone—individual reasons by category 109

Figure 78 Most common reasons for using the internet to contact government instead of the telephone 110

Figure 79 Most common reasons for using the internet to contact government instead of the telephone 2007–2008 111

Figure 80 Preferred method of contacting government 115

Figure 81 Internet—preferred use compared with actual use 116

Figure 82 Telephone—preferred use compared with actual use 116

Figure 83 In-person contact—preferred use compared with actual use 117

Figure 84 Preferred way of contacting government compared with method actually used 118

Figure 85 Preferred service delivery channel and broadband connection 119

Figure 86 Preferred service delivery channel by age 119

Figure 87 Sample distribution 130
Foreword

This is the fourth in a series of annual studies into Australians’ use and satisfaction with e-government services. The studies show that the way people interact with government has changed significantly in a relatively short period of time.

When the first study was released in 2005, overwhelmingly, Australians made contact with government in person. In 2008, the internet is the most common way people last made contact with government.

The insights provided by this latest study provide an important guide for governments in improving service delivery. The focus for governments is changing from encouraging greater use of the internet to providing e-government services that meet the needs and preferences of the Australian population.

While Australians now regard the internet as a key way of interacting with government, they continue to identify areas where the delivery of e-government services could be improved. Such improvements may have the potential to lead to ever increasing use of e-government services.

Governments at all levels also need to recognise that they must adapt to a world in which interaction increasingly occurs online and that they will need to do so at a greater rate. New technologies such as blogs, social networking websites and wikis are now being used by Australians in all parts of the country and in all age groups. These changes present both opportunities and challenges for governments to deliver services that can keep pace with the rapidly evolving expectations of Australians.

THE HON LINDSAY TANNER MP
Minister for Finance and Deregulation
Executive summary

1.1 About the study

This study is the fourth 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

Four in five people use the internet and older Australians are increasingly doing so.

- Four in five people use the internet, including most people under 44. The take-up rate among the older population is increasing, with three-quarters of those aged 55 to 64, and two in five aged 65 or older, now internet users.

Access to broadband continues to grow.

- Broadband access continues to increase, rising from 57% in 2006 to 68% in 2008.
- Seven in ten of those living in metropolitan areas have a broadband connection compared with six in ten people in the rest of Australia.

Use of newer communication technologies is strong.

- More than four in five people use newer communication technologies at least monthly. The most common are email, SMS, news feeds, instant messaging, social networking sites and blogs.
- Some newer technologies offer government additional means of communication with non-internet users: three in ten people who do not use the internet use text messaging at least once a month.

Use of e-government (internet and telephone) channels for government contact has continued to grow. Growth is being driven by increased use of the internet rather than the telephone.

The internet is now the most common way people last made contact with government.

- The number of people who use the internet to contact government continues to increase, although the rate of growth has slowed compared with previous years of this study. In 2008 nearly two-thirds of people had contacted government by internet at least once in the previous twelve months.
• People using the internet to contact government are doing so more often. More than three in ten now use the internet for the majority (all or most) of their contact with government, double the rate reported in 2004–05.

• Use of the internet for most recent contact with government has doubled since 2004–05. In 2008 the internet replaced contact in person as the most common way people had last made contact with government.

• Levels remain static, at three in ten, for using the telephone for this most recent contact.

• Younger people are more likely to use the internet to contact government, with those aged 25 to 34 having the highest rate of use. Growth has been strongest, however, in older age groups. Since 2004–05, rates have doubled for those aged 55 to 64 and tripled for those aged 65 or more.

• More people would prefer to use the internet to contact government than actually do so. Since 2007, the internet has been the most preferred way to contact government. In 2008 the gap between preference and actual use still exists, but is decreasing.

Satisfaction with using the internet to contact government and with service delivery remains high.

• The majority of people are satisfied with the ease of using the service, the ease of finding information and the outcome when dealing with government.

• Those who use the internet to contact government continue to have the highest levels of satisfaction followed closely in 2008 by those who made contact in person. Those who used mail to contact government had the lowest levels of satisfaction.

• Despite high satisfaction with using the internet to contact government, people continue to be less satisfied with the amount of time it takes to receive a reply to an enquiry made online. Focus groups also highlighted some areas for improvement. Commonly reported frustrations included difficulty in finding information and services, the language government websites use and not knowing if and when a response to email correspondence would be received.

Convenience continues to be a key factor in the decision to use an e-government channel.

• Convenience is the prime motivator for over four in five of those choosing to contact government by internet. The benefits mentioned include being able to use the internet at a time that suits, time savings compared with other options and the ability to avoid queues.

• Convenience, particularly time savings in finalising a transaction, was also a major motivator for using the telephone to contact government. Specific features of the telephone service were also important. These include the speed and convenience of an automated system and the ability to interact with a ‘real person’ who could answer questions and explain things.

While contact with government in person is declining the proportion of people who say they do so because they have no alternative is increasing.

• The proportion of people who make contact in person because they have no alternative has more than doubled from 2006 to 2008.
• The main reasons for this lack of choice were needing to show or sign documents or believing they could only deal with the issue in person. Where contact in person is made by choice, convenience is the prime motivator for doing so, particularly for people in regional areas.

The potential for growth in the use of the internet to contact government remains strong. Three in five people could be encouraged to use the internet more often to contact government.
• Those who could be encouraged to increase their use of the internet to contact government include those who currently do so, as well as those who had made no contact with government by internet in the previous twelve months.
• The main factors that would encourage increased use of the internet to contact government include improvements to website usability and content, as well as infrastructure improvements such as faster loading times.
• Just over a quarter of people indicated they could not be encouraged to increase their use of the internet to contact government. However, a third of this group is already using the internet for all or most of their contact with government.

1.3 Conclusions
The internet is now an integral way of delivering government services.
• The internet is now positioned as the main service delivery channel for Australians to interact with government, however considerable potential for growth remains. Most people who use the internet to contact government could be encouraged to increase their use. Older Australians are increasingly using the internet for contact with government.

Governments need to recognise that channel choice is driven by convenience.
• In setting and monitoring service delivery standards and practices, government agencies need to appreciate that while security is an underlying issue for people, convenience is the dominant factor influencing the choice about how and when to contact government.
• There continues to be a need for governments to provide the telephone and in-person channels as well as the internet.

E-government will continue to evolve and grow.
• Adoption of newer technologies means that changes in use and take-up of e-government services are occurring quickly and are likely to continue to expand in the future. These changes, and the increasing blurring of boundaries between technologies, will present challenges for government service delivery.

Community expectations continue to grow as internet use increases.
• Community expectations about how e-government services should be delivered are evolving rapidly as more people have direct experience with and opportunities for communicating with government using the internet and telephone.
• Government agencies need to be aware, that although high levels of satisfaction with the internet for contact with government have been maintained as internet use has increased, expectations and standards in this area are evolving.
Government agencies also need to be aware that community expectations for government service delivery are increasingly being shaped by experience with private sector services and that service delivery standards need to be monitored on an ongoing basis.

There is scope for further increasing the use of and satisfaction with e-government services by addressing issues noted in this report.
two Introduction
two Introduction

2.1 About the study

This study is the fourth 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 studies’ examine:
• 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.

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 have been added and others modified or deleted. In addition, the 2008 study explores 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 newer communication technologies. These issues are explored in more detail in 2008 than in previous years.

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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 and 2008 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 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 and 2008 reports exclude these means of contact.
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 and 2007: four in five (79%).

There are some differences in internet use among different groups of the population. The relationship between age and internet use identified in 2007 remains evident in 2008, with most people under 45 using the internet. Three-quarters (74%) of those aged 55 to 64, and over two in five (44%) of those 65 or more now use the internet.

Figure 1 Trends in general internet use by age

Overall, those living in regional Australia (1,000 to 100,000 residents) are the least likely to use the internet (74%). 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 (80% and 79% respectively).

Regional focus group participants explained their inclination to make contact in person rather than by internet or telephone on the basis that they come from a close community and often knew an individual at the government office. While this particularly applied to local government it was also true where a state or territory government or Australian Government agency had a local office.
‘I think living in [a small regional community] as I do, it is very accessible ... you’re walking down the street and say, “hey, I want to find out something ... I’ll just ask John” or whoever I know in there. It’s so easy ... someone living much further away would probably think twice about an actual visit. By living here, to me the visiting and the face-to-face is so much easier.’

2.3.1 Broadband connection

The proportion of people with a broadband connection has increased from 61% in 2007 to 68% in 2008.

Two-thirds (66%) of those who have contacted government in the past twelve months use the internet and have a broadband connection. A further three per cent do not use the internet even though they have a broadband connection.

One in ten (13%) use the internet but do not have a broadband connection. One in five (19%) do not use the internet and do not have a broadband connection.
Figure 3  General internet use and broadband connection

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<th>Does use internet</th>
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<td>AND does NOT have a broadband connection</td>
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<td>66</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
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Q1. *Do you use the internet?*

Q2B. *Do you have a broadband connection?*

Base: All respondents (n=3650)

Note 1: ‘Does not have a broadband connection’ includes respondents who were unable to say if they have broadband.

Note 2: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.

Although the level of internet use among those living in metropolitan (80%) and rural/remote (79%) areas is similar, there are differences in broadband access. Seven in ten (71%) who live in metropolitan areas have a broadband connection, in contrast to six in ten (62%) rural/remote residents. Regional residents have a similar level of broadband access (60%) as the rural/remote areas, though levels of internet use (74%) are lower.

One in five (18%) of those living in rural or remote areas reported that they do not use broadband because it is not available in their area. This compares with 16% of those from regional areas and 6% of those who live in a metropolitan area.
Figure 4  Broadband connection and internet use by location

Q1. Do you use the internet?
Q2A. Do you have a broadband connection?
Base: All respondents (n=3650)

Households with children are more likely to have a broadband connection than households without children. Over four in five (84%) households of couples with children have a broadband connection, higher than couples with no dependent children. Single parents with dependent children are more likely to have a broadband connection (68%) than single adults with no dependent children at home (46%).

Figure 5  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=2448)

Interacting with Government: Australians’ use and satisfaction with e-government services
2.3.2 Reasons for not having a broadband connection

The most common reasons for not having broadband are a belief it is too expensive (27%) and that no benefit could be seen in a connection (16%). Fifteen per cent did not use the internet enough to require it, while some (11%) simply had not got around to it or found it too difficult or too complicated (7%). One in ten (10%) reported that broadband was not available where they lived and a similar proportion did not have a computer (9%).

Figure 6 Most common reasons for not having a broadband connection

Q2A. What are the main reasons you do not have a broadband connection?

Base: All respondents (n=1193)
Note 1: Respondents were able to provide more than one reason.
Note 2: Only the most common reasons are summarised in the above figure.

2.4 Use of newer communication technologies

All respondents were asked about their use of newer communication technologies. Over four in five (84%) people undertake at least one of these activities at least monthly, if not more regularly. The most common activities are:

- email, used by 75%
- text messaging using a mobile (SMS3), used by 61%
- news feeds (RSS4), used by 39%
- instant messaging5, used by 29%
- social networking sites6, used by 26%
- blogs7, read by 22%

There has been no significant shift in patterns of use between the 2007 and 2008 studies.

3 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 Instant messaging – Real time communication between two or more people over the internet.
6 Websites such as Facebook or MySpace
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.
The more established technologies, email and text messaging, continue to have relatively high levels of use. More recent applications such as social networking sites and blogs have notable levels of use.

**Figure 7 Use of newer communication technologies**

**QD1. Do you do any of the following online activities at least monthly?**
Base: All respondents (n=3650)
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.

There is a strong correlation between use of newer communication technologies and age, with nearly all those under 35 involved in some form of activity at least once a month. This declines to 49% for those 65 or more.
QD1. Do you do any of the following online activities at least monthly? 
Base: All respondents (n=3650)

There are differences in the age profile of those who use specific technologies at least monthly and those who do not.

Social networking sites, for example, are more likely to be used by younger people with an average age of 32, compared with an average age of 51 for non-users. Those using a mobile phone to access the web are also likely to be younger, with an average age of 34 compared with 47 for non-users. There is less of an age difference, however, between those making phone calls over the internet (40 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 (43 years) and those who do not use any (64 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.
Interacting with Government: Australians’ use and satisfaction with e-government services

As noted earlier, those living in regional areas are the least likely to use the internet, although three-quarters (74%) do. A similar pattern can be seen in use of newer communication technologies. While the difference is relatively small, people living in rural/remote and metropolitan regions have a consistently higher take-up rate than regional residents.

Newer technologies hold 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 newer technologies and the degree to which a person already uses the internet.

**People who do use the internet**

Newer technologies offer new options for governments in communicating with internet users. For example, over nine in ten (95%) of those who have used the internet to contact government during the previous twelve months use email at least monthly. Over four in five (84%) people who are internet users but used some other form of communication when contacting government over the previous twelve months use email regularly.

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

Base: All respondents (n=3650)

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

There is also a close relationship between use of newer technologies and the degree to which a person already uses the internet.
Internet users are also heavy users of text messaging (73% of those who have used the internet to contact government; 61% of those who have not contacted government by internet) and to a lesser extent instant messaging (39% and 26%).

Social networking sites have emerged as an important form of communication for a third (36%) of those currently using the internet to contact government. One in five (21%) of those who have not contacted government by internet use a social networking site at least monthly.

Just over half (53%) 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 (30%).

A relatively large proportion of those already communicating with government by internet also use blogs (30%), post to online forums (23%), or use wikis (23%) and podcasts (22%).

Newer phone technologies also play an important role for internet users. One in five (21%) of those who have used the internet to communicate with government make phone calls over the internet and 15% access the web with a mobile phone at least monthly. Use of these technologies is lower among those who have not used the internet to contact government (8% make phone calls over the internet and 7% access the web with a mobile phone).

**People who do not use the internet**

Two-thirds (64%) of those who do not use the internet do not use any newer technologies. Despite this, some of these technologies do offer a potential means of communicating with non-internet users. For example, three in ten (29%) people who do not use the internet did report using text messaging at least once a month.
Figure 11  Use of newer communication technologies—frequency of contact with government by internet

Q1. Do you use the internet?

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?

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

Base: Respondents who do not use the internet (n=755); Respondents who use the internet and who used the internet in last 12 months to contact government (n=2218); Respondents who use the internet but did not use the internet in last 12 months to contact government (n=663)

Interacting with Government: Australians’ use and satisfaction with e-government services
Interacting with Government: Australians’ use and satisfaction with e-government services
three Use of government services
three Use of government services

Overview

- Use of the internet to contact government is continuing to grow, while contact in person is continuing to decline.
- Use of the internet for the most recent contact with government has doubled in the four years to 2008 (rising from 19% in 2004–05 to 38% in 2008).
- Usage levels for telephone and mail remain static, at three in ten (30%) and one in ten (9%) respectively.
- Contact in-person is no longer the most common way people last accessed a government service. Use of the internet (38%) to do this is now slightly higher than in-person (34%) and the telephone (30%).

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 has seen sustained growth since 2004–05, with a corresponding decline in contact in person over the same period.

This growth in e-government has been driven by the internet to the point where internet use has doubled in the four years to 2008 (rising from 19% in 2004–05 to 38% in 2008). Use of the internet to contact government, is for the first time, now slightly higher than contact in person (34%).

The decline in contact in person (noted in previous studies) continues, while usage levels for telephone and mail remain static at three in ten (30%) and one in ten (9%) respectively.
Q4. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this...?

Base: All respondents (n=3650)
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.

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

Base: All respondents (n=3650)
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.
Age and gender affect the likelihood of using different service delivery channels to contact government.

**Internet**

The internet is the most frequently used channel for contacting government among those aged 44 or younger, with relatively little difference in the likelihood of males or females in this age group using the internet. Two in five people 24 or younger (39% males and 41% females) and just under half of those aged 25 to 44 (47% of both males and females) used the internet for their most recent contact with government. A notable exception to this is males aged 18 to 24 who made slightly higher use of in-person contact (39% used internet compared with 43% who made contact in person).

This pattern of internet use continues among those aged 45 to 64, although internet use declines to just under two in five as contact in person starts to become more frequently used. An exception to this trend is males aged 45 to 54, who maintain a higher level of internet use at 49%.

There is a marked drop in internet use among those 65 or older. Gender differences in levels of use are also evident. Nearly one in five (18%) males 65 or older used the internet for their most recent contact with government compared with one in ten (10%) females.

**Telephone**

Telephone use is higher among females in all age groups and lowest amongst the younger age groups. People aged 24 or younger are least likely to use the telephone to contact government, with one in five (19%) males and one in four (26%) females using this channel. Use increases among the 25 to 34 age group (males 25%, females 31%) then generally stabilises at around three in ten for older males and 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 24 or younger (43%) and is the most common way people 65 or older contact government (males 47%, females 48%).

While younger males are more likely to contact government in person than younger females (males aged 18 to 24 43%, 25 to 34 32%; females aged 18 to 24 33%, 25 to 34 26%), there is relatively little gender difference among those 35 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. Males in this older age group are more likely to use this channel (16% males compared with 11% females). Both males and females 65 or older use mail at a similar level to the internet.
Q4. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this...?

Base: All males (n=1828)
Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because some respondents reported their last contact with government involved more than one service delivery channel.

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

Base: All females (n=1822)
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.

Many focus group participants, however, clearly identified that they do use multiple means of resolving an issue in many instances.

“It’s never just a simple one contact process with government ... when I had a problem with sewerage on my property I rang the Authority ... I met them on site and they fixed the problem, but after the incident I thought well this is the second time this has happened and it doesn’t happen to any one else in the street, just me. So I wrote an email outlining the health hazard of it ... I didn’t get a reply until after a week [when] they rang me up and said you’ve got a problem with the pipes ... we need to send a camera down so then I had to go and meet them to give them access and that involved a series of calls to arrange an appointment.”

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 level of government (42%), 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 information with the agency.

Two in five (41%) people exchanged information in their most recent contact with government, while slightly fewer individuals contacted government only to obtain information (37%). One in five (20%) were simply providing information to an agency.

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8 In previous 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 results for these questions are therefore not directly comparable with the previous studies.
There was some evidence from the focus groups that the type of transaction influences the channel chosen to contact government.

‘It would depend entirely on what it was that I wanted. If it was a form there’s no way I would bother ringing, I’d just go onto the website ... If I had an issue I’d probably ring and I’d probably [then] follow up with an email and confirm the conversation so that’s in writing. If I just want some information I would probably use the internet – if it’s better to have a conversation then I would ring, so it would depend entirely on what I was after.’

Figure 16 Type of transaction involved in most recent contact with government

Q3B. What was the reason for this contact?
Base: All respondents (n=3650)

3.1.5 Services being accessed

In 2008, the types of services accessed during the most recent contact with government are consistent with trends identified in the previous studies. The proportion of contacts involving ‘community and social services’ (30%) continues to increase each year and 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’ (10%) remain the next most common categories of services used.
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=3650)

Note: Only the most common services used are summarised in the above figure.
3.2 Use of intermediaries for contact with government

In 2008, one in five (19%) 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.

The main reasons people used an intermediary were because the intermediary was more knowledgeable or the person did not understand what to do (31%), the person did not have time or was too busy to do it themselves (11%) or for convenience (11%).

One in five (19%) of those who used an intermediary received assistance with a tax return. Of these, 21% used an accountant or tax agent.

Intermediaries were used to find information in 15% of cases. A further one in ten (11%) used an intermediary for assistance in using the internet or contacting government online. Age, gender, life stage or geographic location did not affect the likelihood of people using an intermediary.

The role of intermediaries to help in dealing with government was raised in all focus groups – particularly for completion of forms and in following formal procedures.

‘I had to go and pick up a parcel at [Australian Government agency], but there was all this paperwork to complete ... the ... guy says well you can do it yourself, I ... hesitated, he said, or if you'd like, just go with your agent, it will cost you $70 or something, and I elected to do that, ... it was all done in about ten minutes, because she knew where to go and what to do. I wouldn't have known that.'
four Use of e-government services through the internet
Use of e-government services through the internet

Overview

- The number of people who access government services by internet is continuing to grow, but growth has slowed compared with previous years of this study.
- In 2008, over three in five (63%) people used the internet to contact government at least once in the previous twelve months. This has increased from 39% in 2004–05, 48% in 2006 and 59% in 2007.
- People who use the internet to contact government are using it more often. Three in ten (31%) people 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%).
- Two in five (38%) people used the internet for their last contact with government. Nine in ten (90%) used a website rather than email (8%) for this contact.

Finding government websites

- A quarter (26%) of people who used the internet to contact government already knew about the website because they had used it before. The same proportion (26%) found it by searching for it.
- Broadband users and those in older age groups were more likely to already know about the website because they had used it before.
- The majority (90%) of people used a search engine to locate a government organisation on the internet.

Attitudes towards government websites

- People provided high ratings for government websites in terms of usability, readability and efficiency. Trustworthiness rated particularly well. 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.

Awareness and knowledge of the Australian Government portal

- Three in five (59%) people who used the internet to contact government in the previous twelve months were aware of the Australian Government portal. This is similar to 2007 (61%).
4.1 Introduction

The number of people who access government services by internet is continuing to grow, but growth has slowed compared with previous years of this study. In 2008, over three in five (63%) people who contacted government in the previous twelve months had used the internet to do so at least once. This has increased from 39% in 2004–05, 48% in 2006 and 59% in 2007.

Those who use the internet to contact government are also using it more often. More than three in ten (31%) people 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%).

Focus group participants indicated that as they became more experienced in using the internet to contact government they were more likely to use it more often.

‘I think it’s a learning curve. Once you’ve done it once you’re more inclined to do it a second time, or hear someone else talking about they’ve done it that way. So I think as time goes on, internet will be used more and more.’

Figure 18 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=3650)
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.

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:

- **Age**—Younger people are more likely to use the internet to contact government. More than three-quarters (77%) 44 or younger use the internet to do so, compared with just over a quarter (27%) of those 65 or older. Those aged 25 to 34 have the highest rates of use (81%).
Rates are increasing across all ages, but growth in the use of the internet to contact government has been strongest in the older age groups. Rates have doubled for those aged 55 to 64 (28% in 2004–05 to 57% in 2008) and nearly tripled for those aged 65 or more (10% in 2004–05 to 27% in 2008).

- **Personal income**—Those with lower incomes are less likely to have contacted government by internet. At least four in five of those with a personal income above $70,000 have used the internet to contact government compared with three in four among those earning between $50,000 and $70,000; two-thirds of those earning between $30,000 and $50,000 and half of those with a lower income.

- **Employment**—Those in the workforce9 (73%) are more likely to have contacted government using the internet than people not in the workforce (59%) and those who are retired (35%).

- **Nature of employment**—People employed in office based occupations10 (78%) are more likely to have used the internet to contact government than those engaged in non-office occupation11 (65%).

- **Education**—Three-quarters (76%) of those who have completed, attempted or are currently completing some form of post secondary studies used the internet to contact government. This compares with three in five (58%) who had completed high school, but no other studies, and a third (35%) who had not completed year 12 of high school (or its equivalent).

- **Household type**—Households with dependent children12 (72%) are more likely to have used the internet to contact government than other families13 without dependent children (60%) and single adults without dependent children (53%).

- **Location**—Those living in regional areas (54%) are less likely to have used the internet to contact government than those in metropolitan (66%) or rural/remote (62%) areas. The proportion of those living in rural or remote areas that have used the internet to contact government in the previous twelve months has increased notably: from 45% in 2007 to 62% in 2008.

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9  ‘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. 10  Managers or administrators, professionals, community and personal service workers and clerical and administrative workers 11  Technicians or trade workers, sales workers, machinery operators or drivers, labourers 12  Includes couples and single parents with dependent children 13  Couple without dependent children or extended families
Figure 19  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=3650)
Figure 20  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=3650)
4.2 Level of government accessed by internet

The proportion of people who use the internet to contact each level of government has grown each year of this study. The proportion of people contacting the Australian Government by internet has increased by nearly two-thirds (from 21% in 2004-05 to 34% in 2008). Use has doubled for contacting state and territory governments (19% in 2004-05; 39% in 2008) and grown by 150% at local government level (14% in 2004–05; 34% in 2008).

**Figure 21 Level of government accessed by internet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Government</th>
<th>2004–05</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian Government</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State and territory governments</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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=1340)

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.

The decision to use the internet to contact a particular level of government, or to use another channel, was explained in some focus groups as being related to the nature of the transaction usually associated with that level of government.

‘Local government, because it tends to be about something you want to do in your neighbourhood …. It tends to be a thing of action you need to have done or something you don’t want in writing [if you are complaining about someone] so local government tends to be over the counter or maybe on the phone. You can always follow up with an email or letter. Other [levels of] government are more about filling in forms or finding out what you are entitled to … so then I use the internet.’
‘It varies in the sense of what they are there for ... its usually face-to-face in local council and then fall back on anything else, a quick phone call or whatever. In state government I’m likely to use a phone, or email, or whatever in some form or another, but I wouldn’t go to deliberately see somebody. ... As far as Canberra’s concerned you resort to internet or phone ... anything that saves time and [then] you hope for pot luck.’

4.3 Transaction type accessed by internet

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 (19%) used the internet to provide information but did not seek any.

This was supported by the majority of focus group participants who used the internet to contact government.

‘The internet is a very, very valuable tool, especially if it’s used properly and particularly if you just want information it’s very efficient.’

‘My usage of [the internet] depends on what it is I want to do; I’ll go to the website if it’s information or something I know that’s going to be on there. If there is someone I know I might ring them but I would get my information from the web first. I would talk to them just to explain something.’

Figure 22 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=1340)
4.4 Services accessed by internet

There are 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’ (22% compared with 30% for all methods of contact) or ‘health and health services’ (3% compared with 9%). The internet is more likely to be used to contact government for ‘business services, economics, finance and taxation’ (15% compared with 10% for all methods of contact).

There have been no major changes in the categories of government service that have been accessed over the four years of the study.

Figure 23 Government services accessed by internet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Category</th>
<th>All Contacts %</th>
<th>Contacts by Internet %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community and social services</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business services, economics, finance and taxation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land, property, planning and construction</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and health services</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary industry, natural resources and energy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International, travel and immigration</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and training</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political system, election and representatives</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment, climate and conservation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law, justice and consumer protection</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency services, defence and national security</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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=3650); Respondents who used the internet in their most recent contact with government (n=1340)

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 (90%) accessed a website and eight per cent used email.

Those whose last contact with government was through a website were asked how they had found it. A quarter (26%) already knew about the website because they had previously used it. The same proportion (26%) found out about the website by searching for it. One in six (17%) obtained its address from a printed source (such as a printed article or brochure), while 13% obtained it from a government department or employee.

Broadband users and those in older age groups were more likely to know about the website because they had used it before.
**Figure 24**  How the most recent government website visited was found

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Finding Website</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Already know it because used it before</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searched for it</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtained it from a printed source</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtained from a government department/employee</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heard about it from a friend/family member</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Found it from a link on another website</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heard about it through work/employer</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saw it in a newspaper advertisement</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saw it on a TV advertisement</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heard about it at school/University</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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=1217)

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:
  - to help find information
  - to get things done quickly
  - for all kinds of people.

The strength of government websites is that they are seen as being up-to-date, with seven in ten people (72%) rating this factor as excellent.

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14 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'.
Those accessing either Australian Government or state or territory government websites were more likely to provide a rating of excellent (73% and 74% respectively) than those accessing local government (67%).

Government services which received higher than average ratings for each factor included transport routes or timetables and government jobs.

Ease of use and being designed to help find information were rated as excellent by just over half (57%) of government website users. The rating for being designed for all kinds of people was still positive, though more moderate than for the other factors (only 37% rated this as excellent).

**Figure 25  How the most recent government website visited was rated**

- **Designed for all kinds of people**
  - Excellent: 37%
  - Good: 32%
  - Neutral: 14%
  - Poor: 9%
  - Very Poor: 3%
  - Can’t Say: 5%

- **Designed to help you get things done quickly**
  - Excellent: 55%
  - Good: 24%
  - Neutral: 9%
  - Poor: 6%
  - Very Poor: 4%

- **Designed to help you find out information**
  - Excellent: 25%
  - Good: 7%
  - Neutral: 7%
  - Poor: 22%

- **Easy to use and clearly written**
  - Excellent: 57%
  - Good: 28%
  - Neutral: 7%
  - Poor: 5%
  - Very Poor: 21%

- **Up to date**
  - Excellent: 72%
  - Good: 18%
  - Neutral: 5%
  - Poor: 22%

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=1217)

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

The most notable trend is that the higher the use people make of government websites, the higher their opinion is of them. This was evident for each of these issues.

Broadband users were more likely than those without broadband to provide a favourable rating for the following factors:

- being designed for all kinds of people (70% of those with broadband rated this as excellent or good compared with 60% of non-broadband users)
- being easy to use and clearly written (86% of those with broadband rated this as excellent or good compared with 77% of non-broadband users)
- designed to help you find out information (83% of those with broadband rated this as excellent or good compared with 75% of non-broadband users).
**Figure 26** Positive 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=1217)

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 poor opinion of them.

The category ‘being designed for all kinds of people’ received the highest proportion of poor ratings (12%), though this is still a low level of dissatisfaction.
4.5.3 Government websites used in the previous 12 months

The majority (90%) of people use a search engine to find government websites. There were also a range of other methods identified, including using a link from another site (21%) and finding the website address on written material from the organisation (also 21%).

Very few focus group participants indicated they automatically went to an organisation’s website when wishing to contact a government agency by internet. The most common action was to ‘google’ either the name of the organisation or the subject matter they were interested in. This was also true among those who knew the website address or were aware of government portals such as australia.gov.au.

‘I think everyone uses Google as their starting point for everything for government. It’s there so no matter what they’re looking for you just have to type into Google and then it’s point and click, you don’t have to type anything in, so if you’re looking for australia.gov.au I’d probably go to Google and put in australia.gov and there it would be.’
One of the motivations for ‘googling government’ is that focus group participants find government websites too complicated and that search results do not always provide relevant information. Participants did recognise, however, that commercial sites offer a relatively simpler set of choices.

‘The commercial sites tend to be much simpler ... if you go to a bank they really only offer a few things ... it’s a range of loans or deposits and accounts so it’s a lot more intuitive, you can go there and find out what you want without going to a big manual ... a government [department] is very complicated unless you know exactly where to go ... and if you do a search you tend to get hundreds of choices ... I don’t want the minutes from a meeting six months ago when they discussed something. So rather than look at a government website I just google what I am looking for and see what pops up.’

**Figure 28** How government website and email addresses are found

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Finding</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use a search engine</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use a link from another site</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find it on written material from the organisation</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have it saved as a ‘favourite’</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use a government entry point</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ring them up</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone book/yellow or white pages</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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=2295)

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

Those living in rural or remote areas (97%) are more likely to use a search engine than regional (88%) or metropolitan residents (91%). Broadband users (92%) are also more likely than those without broadband (84%) to use a search engine.

Those aged over 65 are less likely to use a search engine (72%) compared with the average (90%).
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 rate\(^5\) the quality of government websites compared with non-government business websites, their trustworthiness and the likelihood of recommending them to someone else.

Ratings tended to be very positive on each of these issues. This was particularly the case in relation to their trustworthiness, with 60% rating government websites as excellent for this and a further 23% rating them as good.

Ratings for the extent to which people would recommend them to someone else also rated well, with half (49%) rating them as excellent and a further 30% rating them as good.

The ratings for quality compared to non-government business websites was still high, though slightly more moderate with 43% rating government websites as excellent and 33% as good.

**Figure 29  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=2295)
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.

\(^{15}\) 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’.
The ratings for government websites on each of these issues vary with age. Younger people (those aged 18 to 24) have the highest ratings on each of these issues, and ratings decrease steadily as age increases.

The biggest difference was in quality compared with non-government business sites. Eighty-two per cent of those aged 18 to 24 provided a rating of either good or excellent. This declines steadily with age to a low of 66% for those 65 and 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 2008 compared with 61% in 2007).

**Figure 30** Awareness of australia.gov.au

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Aware of australia.gov.au</th>
<th>Not aware of australia.gov.au</th>
<th>Can't say</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Base: Respondents who used the internet in last 12 months to contact government (n=2295)
FOUR
USE OF E-GOVERNMENT SERVICES THROUGH THE INTERNET

Interacting with Government: Australians’ use and satisfaction with e-government services
five Use of e-government services by telephone
five Use of e-government services by telephone

Overview
- Three in ten (30%) people contacted government by telephone in 2008.
- 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 (62%) of those whose most recent contact was by telephone.
- Those contacting government by telephone are more likely to be exchanging information (45% of telephone users compared with an average of 37%), 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, and 32% in 2007).

5.2 Type of telephone and mobile phone contact
Those whose last contact with government was either by telephone16 or they spoke or left a message using a mobile phone17 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.

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16 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.
17 By voice or automated telephone system.
5.3 Level of government accessed by telephone

The proportion of people who use the telephone to contact different levels of government has remained relatively stable over the period of these studies. Around three in ten people who contact the Australian Government use the telephone. A similar proportion of those contacting local government use the telephone. While the proportion of people contacting state and territory governments by telephone is lower, at around one in five, this has also been relatively constant throughout this series of studies.

Figure 32 Level of government accessed by telephone

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=1113)
Q3C. What was the level of government for this contact?

Base: Respondents who used the telephone for their most recent contact with government (n=1083)
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

Those using the telephone to contact government are more likely to be exchanging information (45% of telephone users compared with 37% 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 slightly lower than the overall population (16% compared with 20%) — a similar situation to those who are contacting government to obtain, but not provide, information (37% of telephone users; 42% for all people).

Figure 33 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=1083)

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. Two in five (39%) of those contacting a government agency by telephone were accessing a ‘community and social service’ compared with an average of 30%. The likelihood of a telephone user contacting other government services is similar to the average.
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=3650). Respondents who used the telephone in their most recent contact with government (n=1083)

Note: Only the most common responses are summarised in the above figure.
FIVE USE OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES BY TELEPHONE

Interacting with Government: Australians’ use and satisfaction with e-government services
six Satisfaction with service delivery
Overview

Satisfaction

- Overall satisfaction with an outcome 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 (91%) and with the ease of finding the information sought (89%).
- However, 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 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 (78%).

Dissatisfaction

- As in 2007, dissatisfaction with government contact is relatively low:
  - The most common cause of dissatisfaction is the length of time taken to receive a reply (14%). This mirrors the 2007 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-nine per cent of people are satisfied with the ease of finding information.
- Ninety-one 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 35 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=3632); excludes those who refused or could not nominate their method (or main method if there was more than one) of contacting government (n=18)
Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% because some respondents were not able to say if they were satisfied or dissatisfied.
6.2.1 Achieving an outcome

The overall rating for achieving the intended outcome is also very high, with an average rating of 8.4. This mirrors results in 2006 and 2007 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 used the telephone or mail to contact government had lower average ratings (8.1 each) than those who used the internet (8.6) or had contact in person (8.7).

There is little difference in the average ratings for achieving intended outcome compared with previous studies for three of the service delivery channels. The average ratings for internet have ranged from 8.6 to 8.9, telephone from 8.1 to 8.3, and in-person from 8.7 to 8.8. For mail however, the average rating for achieving the intended outcome is declining (from 8.8 in 2006, 8.5 in 2007 and now to 8.1 in 2008).

Figure 36 Average ratings for achieving what was intended—by channel

Q9A. I would like you to rate the extent that you achieved what you intended, with 0 meaning that you DIDN’T ACHIEVE any of what you intended, through to 10 meaning that you ACHIEVED EXACTLY what you intended with that contact.

Q4. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this….?
Q5. Which was the MAIN method of contact?

Base: Respondents with most recent contact with government using the internet (n=1204); telephone (n=956), in-person (n=1146) mail (n=244)

Note: Some respondents were not able to say the extent to which they achieved their intended outcome.

There is little variation when dealing with the different types of transactions. The average rating for exchanging information (8.7) was only slightly higher than the average for providing information (8.3) and seeking information (8.3). These ratings have remained steady over the previous three studies.
Q9A. I would like you to rate the extent that you achieved what you intended, with 0 meaning that you DIDN'T ACHIEVE any of what you intended, through to 10 meaning that you ACHIEVED EXACTLY what you intended with that contact.

Q3B. What was the reason for this action?

Base: Respondents’ most recent contact with government and type of transaction: sought information (n=1326); provided information (n=744); exchanged information (n=1506)

There was no impact on satisfaction depending on the level of government contacted.
Q9A. I would like you to rate the extent that you achieved what you intended, with 0 meaning that you DIDN’T ACHIEVE any of what you intended, through to 10 meaning that you ACHIEVED EXACTLY what you intended with that contact.

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

Base: Respondents’ most recent contact with the Australian Government (n=1540); state and territory governments (n=1035); local government (n=985)

The differences in satisfaction scores for achieving an outcome by channel used to contact government show a similar pattern to 2007. The lowest level of satisfaction is reported by those using mail (78%). People tend to be more satisfied with contact by internet (91%), in-person (89%) and telephone (83%).

**Figure 39  Satisfaction with outcome—time series by channel**

![Bar chart showing satisfaction scores by channel and year](chart)

Q9B. How satisfied were you with the outcome? Would you say...?

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

Q5. Which was the MAIN method of contact?

Base: Respondents’ most recent contact using the internet (n=1204); telephone (n=956); in-person (n=1146); mail (n=244)

Note 1: Satisfaction with outcome was asked slightly differently in 2004-05 when respondents were asked their level of satisfaction with the extent that they achieved what they intended. In 2006 and 2007 they were asked their level of satisfaction with the outcome.

Note 2: Data for the mail and in-person channels is not available for 2004-05.

Nine in ten people (87%) were satisfied with the outcome when last contacting government. Those contacting government by mail are the most likely to be not at all satisfied with achieving their intended outcome, with one in seven (13%) reporting this view of their most recent experience.
Q9B. How satisfied were you with the outcome? Would you say...?
Q4. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this....?
Q5. Which was the MAIN method of contact?

Base: Respondents’ most recent contact with government using the internet (n=1204); telephone (n=956); in-person (n=1146) mail (n=244)
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.

There were no notable differences in satisfaction or dissatisfaction ratings with the outcome across the different types of transactions.
Q9B. How satisfied were you with the outcome? Would you say...?

Q3B: What was the reason for this contact?

Base: Respondents’ most recent contact with government and sought information (n=1326), provided information (n=744), exchanged information (n=1506)
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.

There is no significant difference between overall satisfaction with the outcome when dealing with the different levels of government.

Figure 42 Satisfaction with outcome—by level of government

Q9B. How satisfied were you with the outcome? Would you say...?

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

Base: Respondents most recent contact with the Australian Government (n=1540); state and territory governments (n=1035); local government (n=985)
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.

Participants in the focus groups generally had a high level of satisfaction with the outcome of their dealings with government. However, in discussing their experiences they often had suggestions for how the experience could be further improved. These improvements tended to be directed at operational aspects and private sector services were frequently raised as a reference point.

‘One area there that they can improve upon is the help menus that a lot of them have. A lot of the private companies...computer companies, or printer companies, you can go...in the help menu and you can pose a question; they can give you some possibilities, and then it will...ask did this help you? and if not you can go into other areas to try...I think ...that’s an area where...they could do a lot to...help you get around some of the complications.’
Many focus group participants believed the more exposure and experience one had in dealing with a particular government agency the more one learned their system and the more likely one would find the experience satisfactory.

‘... they’ve obviously gone to their web designer and said “well this is how we lay out information” and what seems logical to that particular department ... is different to what a customer might think. So a customer might say I want to go here, but [the Department] thinks its better to go there, there and then there to get to there. Eventually you learn their logic and its fine.’

6.2.2 Waiting for a reply

Overall satisfaction score with 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 varies with the channel used to contact government. Respondents who used the internet or contacted government in person are more satisfied (88% and 84% respectively) than those who used the telephone (79%) or mail (74%).

Figure 43 Satisfaction with length of wait for reply—by channel

Q9C. How satisfied were you with...how long you had to wait for a reply to your inquiry?

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

Base: Excludes respondents where no reply was required: Respondents’ most recent contact using the internet (n=870); telephone (n=887); in-person (n=956); mail (n=199)

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

The type of transaction has no impact on satisfaction with the length of time waiting for a reply. Over four in five (84%) of those who sought or obtained information were satisfied with length of time, a similar level to those who provided information (82%) or exchanged information (83%).
There is little difference in the levels of satisfaction between levels of government with the length of time taken for a reply.

Q9C. How satisfied were you with...how long you had to wait for a reply to your inquiry?

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

Base: Excludes respondents where no reply was required; respondents’ most recent contact with government and sought information (n=1040); provided information (n=615); exchanged information (n=1260)

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.
The length of time waiting for a reply was frequently raised in focus groups. Other issues also frequently raised were frustration arising from the lack of control the person felt in managing the process, and difficulty in understanding or being able to use the answer when it is eventually delivered.

‘...I think the internet is an invaluable tool to find just about anything [about a government department] and there is an open interface 24 hours and a lot of the time they’ll respond to an email quickly, but it’s frustrating when you send an email and it goes for a week without a response and you’re not sure whether it’s made it to them, whether they’re looking at it going, what do we do with this one? Or it’s sitting in someone’s inbox, that’s gone on holiday for a week, that’s the only problem with email.

When it goes to a government department [and there is no response] you just don’t know what’s happened ... it’s all out of your hands once you push the button.’

‘There is nothing worse than being able to talk to somebody or have a response from somebody that does not know what you are talking about and what your particular problem is, so often we get routed around to some area, and they don’t know what it is and you go off somewhere else and you just run around in circles. Now I’ve also had situations where, I eventually get someone to answer me but I can’t understand [the answer] ... the common thing [behind satisfaction] is that they understand me quickly, a quick response time and being able to understand or use the response I get.’

Focus group participants referred to private sector standards for response times and felt something similar should apply to public sector organisations.

‘They should have some performance standards, some guaranteed performance like the company where you work, something like an email will be answered in twelve hours or your money back or the phone will be picked up in a certain number of rings.’

One participant, who worked for a government agency, noted their organisation did have internal standards for response times for all communication. Members of the public, however, are unaware of these standards and therefore do not complain if they are not met.

### 6.2.3 Finding specific information

Nine in ten (89%) of those who used government services were satisfied with the ease of finding specific information, a similar result to 2007 (90%).

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 satisfied (91%), followed by telephone (88%) and in-person (87%). Those who used mail continue to be the least satisfied (82%).
Figure 46  Satisfaction with ease of finding specific information—by channel

Q9D. How satisfied were you with... the ease of finding the specific information or service you were after?

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

Q5. Which was the MAIN method of contact?

Base: Respondents’ most recent contact using the internet (n=1204); telephone (n=956); in-person (n=146); mail (n=244)

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

The type of transaction has minimal impact on the satisfaction level with ease of finding specific information. The satisfaction level for those seeking or obtaining information (89%), for those providing information (89%) and for those exchanging information (88%) was the same.

Figure 47  Satisfaction with ease of finding specific information—by type of transaction

[Graph showing satisfaction levels by type of transaction]
Q9D. How satisfied were you with... the ease of finding the specific information or service you were after?  
Q3B. What was the reason for this contact?  
Base: Most recent contact with government and sought information (n=1326); provided information (n=744); exchanged information (n=1546)  
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.

There was also no difference in satisfaction scores when considering the level of government contacted.

Figure 48 Satisfaction with ease of finding specific information—by level of government

Q9D. How satisfied were you with... the ease of finding the specific information or service you were after?  
Q3C. What was the level of government for this contact?  
Base: Respondents’ most recent contact with the Australian Government (n=1540); state and territory governments (n=1035); local government (n=985)  
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.

6.2.4 Ease of using the service

Nine in ten (91%) people who contacted government are satisfied with the ease of using the service. This is a similar level of satisfaction to 2007 (92%).

The channel used to contact government does have an impact on satisfaction with ease of using the service. As in 2007, nearly all of those using the internet to contact government (95%) were satisfied. This is closely followed by satisfaction levels for those contacting government in person (91%) and those using a telephone (88%). One notable difference is that the level of satisfaction with ease of using mail (84%) is lower than in 2007 (91%)
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.

The difficulty in simply understanding government websites was highlighted by one participant.

‘...it is, I suppose user friendly, but it doesn’t feel like that... I found it extremely difficult, the language you know. I didn’t go to university ... I feel I should have gone and got a degree. I just use the internet for my emails and basic stuff, a bit of research on Google I’m a very visual person ... and there must be a huge majority [of people dealing with government] who are very visual. I go to something like that [an Australian Government agency website] and it feels quite overwhelming and I don’t really understand any of it at all ... so I look for a few key words and just click on them.’

A number of participants felt the issue of ease of use would be resolved for websites with a standardised approach across government.

‘What could work is how Windows made every application much the same ... it doesn’t matter what you’re in, if you’re in Word or if you’re in Excel or if you’re just anywhere... they’ve standardised that top bar so that you know a file leads to this... Maybe if the federal departments got together and said let’s standardise all our websites so that the homepage will be much the same across each one...so the
person knows what to click on when they visit the website or it will be much the same in the next and in the next one. Instead of having to look over the whole website and find out if everything’s there or on a different position.’

As in 2007, both the type of transaction and level of government contacted had little impact on satisfaction levels with ease of using the service.

**Figure 50** Satisfaction with ease of using the service—by type of transaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transaction</th>
<th>Extremely satisfied</th>
<th>Very satisfied</th>
<th>Somewhat satisfied</th>
<th>Not very satisfied</th>
<th>Not satisfied at all</th>
<th>Can’t Say</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sought or obtained information</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided information</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchanged information</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q9E. How satisfied were you with... the ease of using the service?

Q3B: What was the reason for this contact?

Base: Respondents’ most recent contact with government and sought information (n=1326), provided information (n=744), exchanged information (n=1506)

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

**Figure 51** Satisfaction with ease of using the service—by level of government contacted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Extremely satisfied</th>
<th>Very satisfied</th>
<th>Somewhat satisfied</th>
<th>Not very satisfied</th>
<th>Not satisfied at all</th>
<th>Can’t Say</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian Government</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State and territory governments</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.3 Dissatisfaction

Dissatisfaction levels for contact with government have not changed from 2007 and are relatively low with one in ten people indicating dissatisfaction with:

- the outcome of their contact with government (10%)
- the ease of using the service (8%)
- the ease of finding information (8%).

As in 2007, the largest cause of dissatisfaction (14%) is the length of time taken to receive a reply.

The level of dissatisfaction varies depending on the service delivery channel used. In 2008, 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. Overall, levels of dissatisfaction are increasing for people who used mail for their most recent contact with government.

As in 2007, the most problematic issue for those using mail to contact government is the time spent waiting for a reply (20% in 2008 and 15% in 2007) and to a lesser extent, the outcome of their contact (15% in 2008 and 11% in 2007). These issues are also the main reasons for dissatisfaction among those who contacted government by telephone.

Figure 52 Dissatisfaction by service delivery channel used to contact government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wait for reply*</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of finding specific information</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of using service</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q9E. How satisfied were you with... the ease of using the service?

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

Base: Respondents’ most recent contact with the Australian Government (n=1540); state and territory governments (n=1035); local government (n=985)

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.
Overall reasons for dissatisfaction

The main reasons for overall dissatisfaction with contact with government have not changed from 2007. The key reasons again are customer service and usability related. Access was also a reason cited for dissatisfaction.

Customer service—Three in five (62%) 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:

- Just over a quarter (27%) of those who were dissatisfied felt they had to wait too long to be served.
- One in ten (9%) believed they were given incorrect advice.
- Seven per cent felt the person they dealt with did not understand the issue, or their issue was not resolved.
- Seven per cent felt they were transferred too many times.

Usability—One in five (20%) 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’ (10%) or ‘website usability’ (10%).

Access—One in ten (12%) mentioned an access issue as a reason for being dissatisfied. For 9%, a reason for their dissatisfaction was that they could not complete their enquiry by telephone.

Focus group comments about the most common areas of frustration and dissatisfaction people face when contacting government by internet or telephone included the following issues:

The language used in websites

‘With the internet just using more common language where people can understand would help. I guess it’s more really the language that they are using...they seem to forget...it is also for the lay person.’

Responsiveness

‘Just feedback, response and just having some sort of response or communication that you know someone is going to reply back to an email.’

‘Over the phone, waiting time just... drives me crazy and not being passed on again, it is the communication of going to the right department and being transferred to too many people ...’
Quality of the information provided

‘And giving the right information out because we are the ones that are copping it at the end if we get given the wrong information, we are the ones that have to go out there. But I think that getting their information across correctly would be the best thing and communication time and the feedback, I think that would be cool.’

6.3.2 Dissatisfaction with the internet

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

Customer service—Two in five (39%) mentioned at least one customer service issue as a reason for their dissatisfaction. Specifically, one in seven (13%) felt they had waited too long to be served.

Website usability—A quarter (23%) 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.

Access—One in ten (10%) mentioned at least one access 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 difficulty of understanding the language used by some government websites. While recognising the difficulties in communicating some government services on a website they questioned the degree to which government website design recognises the need for simple communication.

‘It’s almost as if the government are only giving the information because they have to, they’re begrudgingly putting it there…It’s almost as if they don’t want to be contacted, they’re doing it by obligation rather than by design to help and assist.’

‘It’s very sort of bland, almost, user friendly, but it doesn’t feel as if they really knew how to [communicate]…’

‘Their web page is very convoluted… I mean it’s a very complicated department, they’ll even admit that themselves, it’s all about numbers and text. You can’t put a beautiful picture of a form on the screen, it just doesn’t work… but they’ve got to be able to do something, they’ve got to be able to make it a little bit easier, because even if you do have English as your first language I’ve no idea how you’d use their website.’

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—Seven in ten (72%) mentioned at least one customer service issue as a reason for their dissatisfaction. Specifically:
Thirty-five per cent felt they had to wait too long for an answer. Getting transferred too many times was experienced by 13%, and 9% believed they were given incorrect advice.

**Access**—One in six (17%) mentioned at least one access issue as a reason for their dissatisfaction.

**Telephone usability**—One in six (15%) mentioned at least one usability issue as a reason for their dissatisfaction. Specifically, 8% found the automated menu too complicated.

Focus group participants talked extensively about issues with the telephone. They frequently raised concerns about not knowing who they were dealing with or who to contact when ringing a government agency.

‘I don’t really have much to do with the phone if I can … when you ring you have to fight to try and get anyone to ask them a question and get a response back, and making it kind of more harder to understand the system … you just never know who to talk to.’

‘They just make it hard to talk to the best person. Not many of us are going to compliment the government okay, but if they do something really well, you’d have the same trouble ringing them as you would to make a complaint.’

### 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 (69%), mentioned at least one customer service issue as a reason for their dissatisfaction. Specifically, three in ten (31%) felt they had to wait too long to be served and a further 12% did not think the person understood the issue.

**Access**—One in ten (9%) 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  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 (83%)
  - specific features of the internet (20%); particularly control of the amount and type of information (7%).

- **Telephone**
  - convenience (44%)
  - specific features of telephone (44%); particularly speed and convenience of using an automated telephone system (21%) and a preference to speak to a ‘real person’ (12%).

- **In-person**
  - convenience (39%)
  - specific features of in-person contact (30%).

- **Mail**
  - availability (55%); particularly where it was the only possible form of contact (44%)
  - convenience (27%).

Encouraging greater use of the internet

Three in five (62%) 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** (22%)—improving layout, navigation and search tools, making government websites easier to find, and having better search facilities within them.

- **Website content** (10%)—including more basic and concise information as well as more highly detailed information.

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 2008 is similar to the pattern in 2007.

• **Internet**—The prime motivator for contacting government by internet continues to be convenience (83% in 2008 compared with 80% in 2007). Features of the internet are important for one in five (20%) people, a slight decrease from 2007 (26%).

• **Telephone**—Convenience also remains an important motivator for selecting the telephone. Over two in five (44%) telephone users mentioned aspects of convenience as reasons for selecting this means of contacting government, a slight decrease from 2007 (50%). Equally, the specific features of telephone contact are a motivator for two in five (44% in 2008; 40% in 2007), particularly the speed and convenience of using an automated telephone system (21%). There is also a small group (12%) who prefer to speak to a ‘real person’.

• **In-person**—All three themes have relatively similar levels of influence on the decision to contact government in person. Convenience, as a factor influencing the choice to make contact in person, has however increased in relative importance from 2007 (29%) to 2008 (39%). This is now equal with availability (39% in 2008, 35% in 2007) as the leading motivator for using this channel. Features of in-person contact were also mentioned in 2008 by three in ten (30%) as a reason to select this means of contacting government. This is similar to the level recorded in 2007 (34%).

• **Mail**—Availability of other channels continues to be the dominant motivator for selecting mail as the means of contacting government. Just over half (55%) of those who did use mail in 2008 did so because it was the only possible form of contact (44% in 2007). One in four nominated convenience (27% in 2008; 25% in 2007) and features of the channel (23% in 2008; 23% in 2007) as a factor in their choice.

**Figure 53 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=1340); landline telephone, SMS or spoke/ left a message with a mobile phone (n=1113); in-person (n=1247); mail (n=317)

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 2008.

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

Figure 54 Use of the internet to contact government services

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

Base: All respondents (n=3650)

Convenience continues to be the dominant motivator in the decision to contact a government agency by internet.18

Convenience—Over four in five (83%) 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.

18 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 are therefore not directly comparable to previous results for this question.
• One in five (19%) reported using the internet because they can do it at a time that suits.
• The same proportion (19%) mentioned using the internet because it required a shorter time compared with in-person or mail contact.
• Six per cent used the internet to avoid waiting in queues.

Features of the internet—Twenty per cent mentioned at least one feature of the channel as a reason for contacting government by internet:
• For 7% 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 55 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=1340)
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.

The convenience of the internet as a means of contacting government was frequently raised in focus groups, particularly in terms of the level of control it gives the user.

‘I prefer to do it on the internet ... I’m not dependent on someone else’s timeframe, the information is available whenever I’m available and if I want to send an email I know it will get there immediately ... whereas if you ring their call centre you will be lucky to get an answer in twenty minutes.’

Others also saw the efficiency of the process as an advantage of the internet, especially in comparison to the telephone.
‘The good thing about the internet is, if you are sending an email, you’ve got written proof. I like to deal with emails ... because then I’ve got a trail, I can say, okay I did send this email on this day, this is the response you’ve got, this is what I’d send back etc. So that’s the reason to use internet. Whereas over the phone you’ve got to write down the date, the time, who you spoke to, if there is a staff number available, or a receipt number, and keep those records, otherwise they’ll go, when did you call? Who did you speak to?’

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 56 Use of the telephone to contact government services

Q4. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this ...?
Base: All respondents (n=3650)

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.

Forty-four per cent nominate convenience as a specific reason for contacting government by telephone. Convenience also features as a specific feature of the channel motivating use of the telephone: for 21% the speed and convenience of an automated telephone system motivates a decision to use this channel.

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 (19%)
• requiring a shorter time, for one in seven (14%).

Channel features—Similarly, over two in five (44%) mentioned at least one feature of the channel as a reason for using the telephone to contact government:

• One in five (21%) used it for the speed and convenience of the automated telephone systems (up from 11% in 2007).
• For one in ten (12%) the telephone enabled them to talk to a ‘real person’.
• For one in ten (10%), the telephone provided an opportunity to ask questions and get immediate answers.
• A further one in ten (10%) found the ability to clarify and explain things to get the results required was a motivator for using the telephone.

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

Cost—One in ten (9%) reported that the telephone being a cheaper option was important to them (up from 1% in 2007).

Figure 57 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=1113)

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.

‘So if you want to actually get something done I use the telephone ... you talk to a real person, someone that has the capacity to do something or answer that question specifically on what you’re doing. And without having to expend the time and the energy of travelling someplace to ask a simple question or to get a simple form, or try and search for information on some website and not be sure you have the correct thing ... I think the phone’s the most direct timesaver, talking to an actual person that can do something. Especially if you can just press some numbers and get straight to the person.’

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 34% in 2008.

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

The most frequently reported reasons for contact in person are:

Availability — Two in five (39%) mentioned at least one issue associated with lack of choice as a reason for contacting government in person. Specifically:
• Sixteen per cent could only make contact in person.
• Fifteen per cent mentioned having to make contact a particular way or need to show or sign documents.

**Convenience**—Two in five (39%) mentioned at least one convenience issue as a reason for doing so. Specifically:

• One in ten (9%) used in-person contact because it enabled contact at a time that suited (this has dropped from 19% in 2007).
• A small group (7%) did so because the government office was close by, or they were in the area.

**Features of the channel**—Three in ten (30%) mentioned at least one feature of the channel as a reason for contacting government in person. Specifically:

• Fourteen per cent had chosen to do so because of a preference to speak to a ‘real person’.
• In-person contact provided the opportunity to clarify and explain what they wanted for 6%, and to ask questions and get answers for 5%.

**Figure 59 Most common reasons for making contact in person**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Availability</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Could only do this in person</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had to do it this way, had to show/ sign documents</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Told to do it this way</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Convenience</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can do it at a time that suits me</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the area, government office is close by</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had it/ always done it this way</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t have to wait for someone to send out information/ forms</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel features</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preferences to speak to a real person</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to clarify/ explain to get the result that I want</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to ask questions and get answers immediately/ don’t have to wait for email reply</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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=1247)
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.

Having to make contact in person because there was no choice was discussed in a number of the focus groups. A typical situation was explained in the following terms.

‘There was no choice really … in the end they wanted a personal interview with me and while you can often get a form off the website or ring up and have it mailed out there is always some point where they simply want to see you in their office.’
On the other hand, those who chose to make contact in person saw it as offering distinct advantages over other channels.

‘There’s a degree of reassurance when talking to somebody, because you can read their body language and come away saying, “he didn’t know much”’, or on the other hand, “I feel confident that Fred has spoken to me”. So you go away [happy], whereas the impersonality of the internet...you might be getting information, but you’re not necessarily getting any “colour” with it, any feel for it.’

Others, while also talking about the convenience of being able to drop into an office, emphasised that the personal contact offered advantages not available with other channels.

‘I could use the email but because I come to town three or four times a week for doctors or to get the mail I tend to drop in. The [council] office is close to the post office ... if I come to pick my mail up, I can just walk across there, half the time I’ve parked outside. Quite often they’ll tell me a lot more than I need to know, but I’m getting information which is handy. If I went to the website I wouldn’t get it and it would probably take longer anyway.’

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 60 Use of mail to contact government services

Q4. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this ...?
Base: All respondents (n=3650)

The factors motivating use of mail were relatively stable from 2004–05 to 2007. In the twelve month period between 2007 and 2008 however, availability issues have gained
importance to the point that just over half (55%) 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 27% of all mail users nominating a convenience factor – a result similar to 2007 (25%). Since 2007 the importance of features of the channel as an influence on choice has declined markedly from 23% in 2007 to 7% in 2008.

The main factors influencing choice of mail are:

**Availability**—Just over half (55%) 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 (17%) reported using mail because there was no other way of contacting government. A further eight per cent mentioned that the transaction could not be done online.

**Convenience**—Just over a quarter (27%) mentioned at least one aspect of convenience. Specifically:
- One in six (17%) did so because it allowed contact at their convenience.
- Six per cent used mail because they could do it at a time that suited them.

**Features of the channel**—a small group (23%) mentioned a characteristic or quality associated with this form of communication, such as needing documentation (17%).

**Figure 61 Most common reasons for making contact by mail**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Availability</th>
<th>No other way available</th>
<th>Form was sent in</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has to sign a form</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was sent to me (therefore I replied by mail)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Told to do it this way</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>Can do it at a time that suits me</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habit/ always do it this way</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channel features</td>
<td>Don’t have to go into a government office</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Better response to a written letter/ they are more accountable if it’s in writing/ gets to the right person</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t need a computer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t have to wait in queue</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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=317)

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 (62%) people could be encouraged to increase their use of the internet to contact government. This has fallen from three-quarters (73%) in 2007.

This group comprises:
- People who already use the internet and have previously contacted government by internet (40% of all people—this includes 19% who reported that all or most of their communication with government is by internet 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 (11% of all people).

Two in five (38%) of all people could NOT be encouraged to increase their use of the internet to contact government.

This group comprises:
- Internet users who have previously contacted government by internet (21% of people—this includes 11% who reported that all or most of their communication with government is by internet and 10% 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 (6% of all people).
- People who are not current users of the internet (11% of all people).
Seven Why People choose A Particular Service Channel to Contact Government

**Interacting with Government: Australians’ use and satisfaction with e-government services**

**Figure 63 Those who can NOT be encouraged to increase their use of the internet to contact government—by current internet use**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internet Use</th>
<th>Does use the internet and has contacted government by internet</th>
<th>Does use the internet but has NOT contacted government by internet</th>
<th>Does not use the internet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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=3650)

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. However, the proportion of people saying that improvements in the usability of websites would increase the likelihood of their use has declined from 26% in 2007 to 22% in 2008.

The main factors that would encourage an overall increase in internet use are:

- **Website usability** improvements, mentioned by one in five (22%) in 2008 and 26% in 2007. 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 (10%) people in 2008 (12% in 2007). 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 eight per cent in 2008 (10% in 2007).

- **Better access** would encourage greater use by seven per cent (9% in 2007), 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 7% (8% in 2007).

- **Skill level** is an issue for seven per cent of people (9% in 2007), who reported improved familiarity with using the internet or computers in general would encourage their use of the internet to contact government.

- **Cost** of an internet connection is an issue for a small group of people (5% in both 2007 and 2008) who report that they would be encouraged to contact government using the internet if these costs were lower.
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=3650)

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.

The importance of these issues in encouraging use of the internet was frequently raised in focus groups.

‘… but that’s the problem [of getting more people to try a website] isn’t it, it’s all down to webpage design, how often…they update it and understanding what the customer wants. When I look at government websites they’ve obviously gone to their web designer and said well this is how we lay out our information but what seems logical to the particular department just reflects their mindset not how the customer thinks … if they want me to use the website then they have to present it so I understand how they lay out the information.’

There are differences in attitude between internet users and non users.

- Those with at least some experience with the internet will be most encouraged by improvements in the usability of government websites (28%) and their content (13%). Improvements in the infrastructure (10%) 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 (22%) to the internet and an increase in their skill level (15%). There was also an indication that cost reductions (8%) 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 (35%) 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 65 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=3650)

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 has been dropped for the 2008 study.
7.7 People who cannot be encouraged to increase their use of the internet to contact government

Two in five (38%) people indicated there was nothing that would encourage them to increase their use of the internet to contact government, a notable increase from 2007 (27%).

Figure 66 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?

Base: All respondents (n=3650)

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 can not 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.
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=3650)

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 all groups of people.

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

- Areas that can be addressed to encourage this group to increase their internet use include improved usability (28%), better content and features (12%) and infrastructure (10%).
- A third (35%) of those who prefer internet to contact government could not be encouraged to increase their use of the internet to do so.

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

- The main area to be addressed to encourage this group to increase their internet use is usability (18%), followed by improvement in their skills (12%) and access (11%).
- Just over a third (37%) 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:

- The main areas that can be addressed to encourage this group to increase their internet use are usability (16%) 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:

- The main areas that can be addressed to encourage this group to increase their internet use are usability (19%) followed by better content and features (11%).
- Nearly half (48%) of those who prefer to contact government by mail could not be encouraged to increase their use of the internet to do so.

**Figure 68 Preferred means of contacting government—what would encourage increased internet use**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preferred channel of contact with government</th>
<th>Internet</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>In-person</th>
<th>Mail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of people who prefer this channel</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas to be addressed for each group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usability</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better content and features</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer service</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not interested</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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=1588); telephone (n=1223); in-person (n=624); mail (n=86)

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 have changed slightly in 2008. Care should be taken in comparing these 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.
Security and privacy issues
Overview

- Security remains an underlying concern for those who contact government by internet.
- Over half (57%) 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 (57%) prefers complete anonymity to a personalised interface when contacting government.
- These attitudes are consistent with previous studies.
- Despite this preference towards anonymity, two-thirds (68%) would still prefer the convenience of updating information (such as change of address) for government only once, and have government advise other agencies of these changes. This is slightly lower compared with 2007 (73%) and 2006 (72%).
- The majority (85%) 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.

8.1 Introduction

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.

8.2 Anonymity and convenience

There is a slight preference for anonymity over convenience. Over half (57%) 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 (38%) would prefer the agency to store their personal information for use next time.

These attitudes have fluctuated slightly over the four studies, with preference for anonymity ranging from 50% of people in 2004–05 to 55% in 2006 to 52% in 2007 and 57% in 2008.
Figure 69 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=2295)
Note 1: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.

8.3 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. Just over half (57%) would prefer to remain anonymous, while only a third (36%) 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, with preference for anonymity ranging from 50% of people in 2004–05 to 59% in 2006 to 54% in 2007 and 57% in 2008.

Figure 70 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=2295)
Note 1: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.

### 8.4 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. Two-thirds (68%) of those who contacted government by internet in the previous twelve months indicated they would prefer updating details once compared with only three in ten (29%) 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 slightly lower this year (68%) than in 2007 (73%) and 2006 (72%).

**Figure 71 Preference between telling government once and advising agencies separately**

```
0 20 40 60 80 100
2004–05 64 33 3
2006 72 25 3
2007 73 25 2
2008 68 29 3

Telling government once
Advising each agency personally
Refused/can’t say
```

**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=2295)
Note 1: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.
8.5 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. The majority (85%) of those who used the internet to contact government expressed this view, an attitude consistent with 2007 (84%), 2006 (82%) and 2004–05 (77%).

Females (89%) are more likely than males (81%) to prefer higher security with slower transactions.

In 2008, age has also become a factor in preferences for level of security and ease and speed of access. A larger proportion (81% to 89%) of the younger age groups prioritise security over ease and speed compared with those over 65 (72%). Age and gender were not factors in 2007.

Figure 72 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=2295)
Note 1: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.
nine Why people do not use e-government services
Overview

The internet

Half (52%) of those who use the internet did not use the internet or a mobile phone to contact a website in their last contact with government. The most common reasons for not doing so are that:

- they preferred contact with a ‘real person’ (16%)
- an online option was not available (14%)
- the process could only be done in person (13%).

A quarter (25%) 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 (43%)
- the website was too hard to use or understand (28%)
- they did not know where to find the website they wanted (11%).

The telephone

Two-thirds of people (68%), 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 (37%)
- there was no telephone option available (8%).

Over two in five (43%) mentioned at least one usability issue as a reason for not using the telephone to contact government; including 12% who had difficulty or disliked using an automated telephone system, 5% who had difficulty in navigating a telephone menu and 4% who got bounced from person to person.

Convenience is the overwhelming reason why e-government users choose the internet over the telephone to contact government. Features of the internet make it more appealing than the telephone for these users.
9.1 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 to contact government online were asked why their attempts had been unsuccessful.

9.2 Why people who are internet users did not use it to contact government

Half (52%) of those who use the internet did not use the internet or a mobile phone to 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 (28%) said their contact with government was only possible in person (13%), or that an online option was not available (14%).

Features of other service delivery channels—One in six (17%) 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 (16%).

Access—One in ten (12%) mentioned access issues such as lack of familiarity with using the internet (7%)

Website usability—One in ten (9%) mentioned website usability issues, with six per cent specifically mentioning website navigation difficulties. There has been virtually no change since 2007 for these responses.

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

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 have changed slightly for 2008.
Figure 73 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=1554)

Note 1: Category definitions have changed for 2008 and the figure above shows 2007 data recoded to 2008 definitions.

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.

Figure 74 Most common reasons for not using the internet to contact government—time series and themes

Archived
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=1554)

*Note 1: in 2004–05 the response was coded as 'not applicable – can only do it in forms'.
Note 2: Respondents were able to give more than one reason within more than one theme for not using the internet to contact government.
Note 3: Only the most common reasons are summarised in the above figures.

9.2.1 Disability as a barrier to internet use

Four 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 25%
- Sensory and speech (including sight problems) 22%
- Psychological 7%
- Head injury, stroke or brain damage 6%
- Intellectual 2%

The pattern of these results is consistent with results from 2006 and 2007. The results should be regarded as indicative estimates only because the number of respondents to this question is very small (N=33).

9.3 Reasons for unsuccessful attempts to find government information or services online

A quarter (25%) of internet users report they tried unsuccessfully to find government information or services online in the previous twelve months. Four per cent of those who claim to be non-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 (43%) and that the website was too hard to use or understand (28%). Those who found the website too hard to use or understand were more likely to be trying to exchange information with government (35%) compared with those seeking (23%) or providing information (21%). A further 11% did not know where to find the website they wanted.

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

- Those in rural or remote areas are more likely to say they do not know which department/agency/service to contact online (17% compared with 7% in regional areas and 6% in metropolitan areas).
- Those 65 and older are most likely to find the website too hard to use or understand (37% compared with the average of 28%).

Broadband users are more likely to say their reason for an unsuccessful attempt was the information they wanted was not there (45% compared with 35% for non-broadband users).
**Figure 75** Most common reasons why attempts to find government information or services online were unsuccessful

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did not have the information I wanted</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website too hard to use/understand</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Found website but search did not work</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website too slow</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Password/login issues</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know which department/agency/service to contact</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know where to go to find website</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many websites to choose from</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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=739)

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 a common theme in focus group discussions and seen as a factor in discouraging their use.

‘I had to go from one tab and then that tab goes to another tab and it’s like it’s one after the other, so when you get through it you go oh where was I where do I need to go it’s like kind of to-ing and fro-ing between tabs and then you kind of missed it and you go back and it says oh now you’ve got to click here to go here and it’s like you keep going link after link and it’s like you never get there. So I’m a kind of impatient person so if I can’t find it like you said straight away, I won’t use it.’

### 9.4 Potential for growth in internet use

As noted earlier in this report, there has been a continued take-up of the internet to contact government, but six in ten (62%) people did not use the internet for their last contact with government in 2008, compared with 71% in 2007.

A large proportion of this group use the internet for other purposes, as can be seen from the following proportions of internet users who did not use the internet for their last contact with government:
• three-quarters (73%) who used the telephone to contact government are internet users
• two-thirds (67%) who made contact in person are internet users
• seven in ten (72%) whose last contact was by mail are internet users.

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. One aspect that needs to be addressed is the 28% of internet users who said their contact with government was only possible in person or that an online option was not available.

9.5 The telephone

9.5.1 Reasons why contact made in person and not by telephone

Two thirds (68%) 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—Forty-three per cent of people advised that a telephone option was not available or not possible: either their contact was only possible in person (37% compared with 26% in 2007) or no telephone option was available (8%, down from 15% in 2007).

Usability of telephone—One in seven (13%) 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 (5%), had difficulty in navigating a telephone menu (4%), or got bounced from person to person (4%).

Convenience—One in ten (12%) cited a convenience related reason for not using the telephone to contact government.
• A small group (8%) made contact in person because a government office was close by or because it was easier to do things over the counter.

Process requirement—One in ten (11%) 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 (7%) or the issues were too complex for the telephone (5%).
Figure 76 Most common reasons why internet users contacted government in person rather than by telephone

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 (landline) (n=1128)
Note 1: Respondents were able to give more than one reason within more than one theme for making contact by telephone.
Note 2: Only the most common themes are summarised in the above figure.

Focus group participants raised concerns about the telephone as a means of contacting government.

‘...I’ve got no faith in the phone because you don’t really know who you are talking to...I would rather just run up to their office and ask them personally ... at least I know who I spoke to.’

‘I always feel like they’ve lost their human face, that they talk to you like it’s not like we’re talking here, they want to be politically correct all the time and obviously they have to be that way for fear of someone complaining about the way that they’re being dealt with, but I just think they’ve lost that human element. Even when you’re on the phone it’s really matter of fact and they’ll quote something to you and if you don’t understand it they just quote it again word for word...You just don’t feel like you’re really getting good communication.’
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=1128)

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.
9.5.2 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 the changes to the categories into account, there has been little change in the themes or the individual reasons mentioned compared with 2007. The only notable change is that convenience issues have fallen by ten percentage points.

Figure 78 Most common reasons for using the internet to contact government instead of the telephone

Convenience issues, followed by features of the internet compared with the telephone, continue to dominate the motivations for choosing the internet over the telephone to contact government.

**Convenience**—Convenience issues are cited by two-thirds (64%) of those who used the internet rather than the telephone for their most recent contact with government.

- A key benefit to using the internet is seen to be the ability to conduct their business with government at a time that suits (28% in 2008 compared with 36% in 2007).
- A quarter of people mentioned that their reason for choosing the internet over the telephone is that the online option requires a shorter time (25% in 2008 and 33% in 2007).
- Not having to wait in a queue (14%) is also a common reason to favour the internet compared with the telephone.
The simplicity and ease of using the internet (5%) and the convenience (unspecified) of using this method to contact government (4%) were also mentioned.

Features of the internet compared with the telephone—Factors in this theme are mentioned by a third (35%) of those who used the internet rather than the telephone to contact government.
- For one in ten (10%) people an advantage of the internet over the telephone is that they do not need to make a telephone call.
- Ability to control the type and amount of information and not having to rely on the service person is important for one in ten people (10%).
- Six 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.
- Five per cent reported their contact could not be done or was not available over the telephone. Reasons included written application forms, lodging tax returns or needing to download information.

Figure 79 Most common reasons for using the internet to contact government instead of the telephone 2007–2008

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=1180)
Note 1: The wording of the question has changed slightly over the past four studies. In 2008 the scope of the question has 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 study.
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.
ten Future service delivery preferences
ten  Future service delivery preferences

Overview

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

- Preference for the internet when contacting government has increased each year since 2004–05. Over two in five (44%) 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 (16%) 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, their age, location, and whether they have a broadband connection.

- A strong relationship between age and preferred channel of access is again evident in 2008. The younger the person, the more likely they are to prefer the internet, while the older the person, the more likely their preference is for telephone and to a lesser extent, in-person contact.
- Whether or not an internet user has a broadband connection has a strong influence on their preferred service delivery channel.
- Those living in metropolitan (47%) and rural/remote (49%) areas are more likely to prefer to use the internet to contact government than residents of regional areas (38%).

10.1  Introduction

Four in five (78%) people would prefer to use an e-government service delivery channel to contact government: the internet (44%), telephone (34%), or mobile phone (1%).

Preference for the internet for government contact continues to increase (from 31% in 2004–05 to 44% in 2008) while preference for contact in person with government
continues to decline (from 33% in 2004–05 to 16% in 2008). Preference for telephone contact remains stable at one in three (34%) of those who access government services.

**Figure 80 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=3650)

Note 1: 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’ or ‘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 and 3% in 2008. 1% of responses in 2008 were a preference for mobile phone.

Each study has shown that more people would prefer to contact government by internet than actually do so. The gap between preference and actual use still exists, but has halved over the last twelve months, dropping from 12 percentage points in 2007 to six percentage points in 2008.
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=3650)

The main reasons internet users who would have preferred to use the internet to contact government used some other channel were:
• the option was not available or it was not possible to undertake the transaction by internet (23%)
• contact had to be with a person (20%)
• a preference for speaking to a ‘real’ person (9%)
• 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 four percentage points in 2008. This is consistent with previous years.
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=3650)

Unlike the trend observed with the internet, where both preference and use are increasing, preference for and use of in-person contact are both decreasing. In 2008, the gap between preference for contact in person and actual in-person contact is 18 percentage points. This difference has been consistent since 2006.

Figure 83  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=3650)

### 10.2 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 2008:

- **Internet users**—Nine in ten (91%) would prefer to use an e-government service: internet (74%), telephone (17%).
- **Telephone users**—Most (84%) would prefer to use an e-government service: internet (25%), telephone (59%).
- **In-person users**—Three in five (59%) would prefer to use an e-government service: internet (28%), telephone (31%).
- **Mail users**—Three-quarters (74%) would prefer to use an e-government service: internet (39%), telephone (35%).
Q4. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you...?

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=1340); telephone (n=1083); in-person (n=1247); mail (n=317)

Note 1: Percentages may not add up to exactly 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 (56% compared with 19%). While just over a quarter (28%) of those who have a broadband connection would prefer contact by telephone, this rises to nearly one in two (45%) among those without broadband. Those without a broadband connection are also more likely to prefer in-person contact (28%) than those with broadband (12%).
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=3650)

There is a strong, linear relationship between age and preferred way of contacting government. The younger the person, the more likely they are to prefer the internet, while the older the person, the more likely their preference is to be for telephone, and to a lesser extent, in-person contact.
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=3650)

10.3 Suggestions for improvements when contacting government online

Just over two-thirds (70%) 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 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 ten (11%) suggested they would like to have more functionality, including addressing problems with website design, usability or the difficulty with finding things.

10.4 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. Two-thirds (68%) would like to receive email from government, but only one in seven (14%) would like to receive an SMS.

Just over a quarter (27%) were undecided about either option, with the main reasons being:
- they were not interested in or did not want this form of communication from government (17%)
- they already receive enough emails and did not want to overload their systems (15%)
- they would prefer to receive communications from government by mail in order to have a written copy (11%)
- they prefer to seek information themselves rather than have government send it to them in these ways (10%)

Other reasons were that they don’t check their messages that often (9%) or that they don’t want to receive junk email or spam (8%).

Focus group participants had mixed views about using newer technologies such as SMS to communicate with government. It was recognised as an increasingly common form of communication but seen as having limitations.

‘It would have limited application because you would have to have a specific phone number to send the message to … and there is a limit to how much you can say … I’m not 15 so I prefer to write something out in an email so the full message is there not just a few letters like Y R U…but my kids would not agree.’

It was seen as an ideal form of communication for the government to send brief messages such as a receipt for a document or form that did not require a response from the recipient.
‘Confirmation that a tax return has been lodged for example, very short message. You know that sort of thing, SMS responses is quite acceptable. But not when you get a response where you feel you might need to respond back and ask them multiple questions again; if it’s just a confirmation of something that’s fine.’

Others saw it as an appropriate form of communication for government to provide information such as reminders of appointments or logon details for a website.

‘I got an SMS from the Federal Government for elections because I work ... sometimes helping out on the election day and they SMSed me as a reminder for me to [work] in September. They sent me a code so I could access details on their website.’

There was some concern in terms of its potential to become intrusive and over used.

‘I find SMS intrusive and invasive; I don’t like using SMS. I want to have a mobile phone [just for phone calls]. I don’t want the government sending me text messages or private companies saying have you returned the video, I find it very invasive, and it beeps at all hours of the day or night. It’s too easy to just become overused.’

While email is generally seen as a fast and efficient way of communicating with government there was a widespread feeling of frustration with the process when no response to or acknowledgement of the communication was forthcoming. The private sector was seen as more efficient in its use of email. There was focus group evidence of an expectation that governments will need to adopt in future some private sector practices for people to be encouraged to communicate with government by email.

‘Well we have a company policy that an email will be answered within twelve hours of when we receive it, we will answer it within twelve hours whether its go away we don’t want to talk to you yes we will answer it. Just to say that we have received you email and we processing your enquiry or whatever but it’s twelve hours and it has to be done.’

‘If [the government] want us to email them more and more ... they have to bounce the email back at you and say its been received, it’s been forwarded to the relevant person, they will get back to you within, let’s face it they can say 24 hours would be good enough for most people ... we don’t expect one hour. That would be lovely but if they just said next business day, even if they just said some one will be back to you by the next business day to answer your query. I think most people will be happy with next business day.’
Conclusions

People now readily use e-government channels (internet and telephone) and accept the internet as a mainstream service delivery channel for interaction with government.

- The growth in internet interaction has been accompanied by a reduction in contact in person. Although traditional shopfronts remain an important channel, particularly in regional areas, the internet is now a core way for accessing government. While use of mail remains static, the proportion of people who use it by choice is decreasing.

Growth in broadband may help increase the frequency and scope of e-government use.

- People with access to broadband are more likely to use the internet to contact government. As the availability and take-up of broadband increases, growth in the use of the internet to contact government can be expected to continue, although the rate of growth may be slower than the rapid increase over the last five years.

Expectations continue to grow with increasing use of the internet.

- Satisfaction with the internet as a service delivery channel remains high but there is evidence that expectations about service standards are continuing to evolve. Service delivery does not operate in a static environment and a continuing effort to develop and extend products and services is required. Focus groups clearly identified that government is expected to deliver online services at least equal to good private sector practice. Despite the acknowledgement that government services are generally more complicated and difficult to deliver than private sector services, there is an expectation that government service delivery will improve in key areas such as timeliness and responsiveness.

Convenience is the key driver in the choice of channel.

- Convenience continues to increase as the dominant factor influencing choice about how and when to communicate with government. Governments need to recognise that issues such as the content, language and access to government websites need to be addressed to attract and retain users. Overall it is the quality and convenience of the end product that will encourage people to increase their internet contact with government.

The nature of e-government will continue to evolve and grow.

- The study has identified the extent and speed at which new technologies are adopted by the general population and the increasing use of these across the community. Continued growth of e-government may be dependent on being able to take advantage of the services being offered by these developments, while recognising that the fundamental issues identified in the study, such as timeliness and responsiveness must be addressed.
- Focus groups clearly highlighted the rapid evolution of expectations about e-government service delivery as more people become more experienced and comfortable with using the internet and in using it for communicating with government.
The potential for growth in the use of the internet to contact government remains strong.

- While there are strong indications that growth in internet use can be achieved by encouraging new users, it is important to recognise that potential for growth also lies in encouraging more use from those who have already made some use of e-government services.

The outlook

- The internet is emerging as the leading channel for interaction between people and government. Rising rates of internet use, increased access to broadband and the continuing development of government services online have helped to double internet contact with government in just four years of these studies.
- It is evident from the adoption of newer technologies that changes in use and take-up of e-government services are occurring quickly and are likely to continue to expand in the future. This, and the increasing blurring of boundaries between technologies, will present challenges for government service delivery.
- While high levels of satisfaction with the internet for contacting government have been maintained, government agencies need to be aware that expectations and standards continue to evolve, and service delivery therefore needs to be monitored on an ongoing basis. In setting and monitoring delivery standards and practices, agencies need to appreciate that while security is an underlying issue for people, convenience is the dominant factor influencing choice about how and when to contact government.
- Fundamental to the future growth and success of Australians’ use and satisfaction with e-government are:
  - recognising the role convenience plays in deciding how a person will communicate with government
  - appreciating that the older population is increasingly inclined to use an e-government option
  - recognising that government is increasingly expected to meet or exceed the service standards of the private sector
  - addressing the issues identified in this study.
Appendix 1—Background and methodology

12.1 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 and 2007 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.

12.2 Methodology

The 2008 study reflected the basic design developed for the original 2004–05 study and continued in 2006 and 2007. The 2008 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 changes

19 As a result some questions were deleted and new questions were added. Some questions were reworded slightly. Specific questions retain the same number throughout the time series, irrespective of these changes.

• a pilot test in June 2008 to test the questionnaire and average interview length
• a telephone survey of a representative sample of the Australian population aged 18 or more. Interviewing was conducted in June and July 2008 with 3,650 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 2008 involving forty-seven participants in five locations in metropolitan New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia, and in regional Victoria and South Australia.

**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.

**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 2008 survey sample**

Gender and age quotas were applied to ensure that a representative sample of the Australian population aged 18 and more was contacted in the 2008 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 2008 study is shown in Figure 89.
### Figure 87 Sample distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number of Interviews</th>
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**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 2008 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 2008 groups were conducted in Sydney, Brisbane, Perth, Wangaratta and Port Lincoln. Participants were recruited for each group using random digit dialing 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: 18–35, 36–55, 56–65 and 66–75)
- group participants in Sydney, Brisbane and Port Lincoln had used the internet to contact government in the previous twelve months
- group participants in Perth and Wangaratta had NOT used the internet to contact government in the previous twelve months.
Interacting with Government: Australians’ use and satisfaction with e-government services
Appendix 2–Definitions
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 and 2008 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 and 2008 reports exclude these means of contact.

Wiki: A website which allows multiple users to create, modify and organise web page content in a collaborative manner. Examples include Wikipedia.
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 2008 study, or when comparing results from 2008 and previous studies.

For example:

If the sample size was 3,650, 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 +/- 4.4%.

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

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