Australians’ use and satisfaction with e-government services

December 2011

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT INFORMATION MANAGEMENT OFFICE (AGIMO)
## Contents

Foreword 1

### one Executive summary

1.1 ABOUT THE STUDY 4  
1.2 MAJOR FINDINGS 4  
1.3 CONCLUSIONS 5

### two Introduction

2.1 ABOUT THE STUDY 8  
2.2 BACKGROUND 8  
2.3 USE OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES 8  
  2.3.1 Use of email and SMS 8  
  2.3.2 Use of other communication technologies 8  
  2.3.3 People who used the internet to contact government 12

### three Use of government services

3.1 INTRODUCTION 14  
  3.1.1 Delivery channel used for the most recent contact with government 14  
  3.2.1 Main method of contact 17  
  3.2.2 Use of multiple channels to contact government 18  
3.3 NUMBER OF GOVERNMENT CONTACTS 18  
3.4 LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT CONTACTED 19  
3.5 TRANSACTION TYPE BEING UNDERTAKEN 19

### four Use of e-government services through the internet

4.1 INTRODUCTION 22  
4.2 LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT ACCESSED BY INTERNET 24  
4.3 TRANSACTION TYPE ACCESSED BY INTERNET 24  
4.4 ATTITUDES TOWARDS GOVERNMENT WEBSITES 25  
  4.4.1 Recent use of the internet and government websites 25  
  4.4.2 Attitudes towards the most recent government website visited 26  
  4.4.3 Government websites used in the previous 12 months 27  
4.5 AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT PORTAL 28  
  4.5.1 Awareness of australia.gov.au 28

### five Use of e-government services by telephone

5.1 INTRODUCTION 32  
5.2 LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT ACCESSED BY TELEPHONE 32  
5.3 TRANSACTION TYPE ACCESSED BY TELEPHONE 33
six Satisfaction with service delivery
   6.1 INTRODUCTION 36
   6.2 SATISFACTION 36
      6.2.1 Achieving what was intended 37
      6.2.2 Achieving an outcome 38
      6.2.3 Waiting for a reply 39
      6.2.4 Finding specific information 39
      6.2.5 Ease of using the service 39
   6.3 DISSATISFACTION 39
      6.3.1 Overall reasons for dissatisfaction 40
      6.3.2 Dissatisfaction with the internet 41
      6.3.3 Dissatisfaction with the telephone 41
      6.3.4 Dissatisfaction with in-person contact 42
      6.3.5 Dissatisfaction with mail contact 42

seven Why people choose a particular service delivery channel to contact government
   7.1 INTRODUCTION 44
   7.2 THE INTERNET 45
   7.3 THE TELEPHONE 48
   7.4 IN PERSON CONTACT 50
   7.5 MAIL 52

eight Why people do not use e-government services
   8.1 INTRODUCTION 56
   8.2 WHY PEOPLE DID NOT USE THE INTERNET TO CONTACT GOVERNMENT 56
   8.3 WHY PEOPLE DID NOT USE THE TELEPHONE TO CONTACT GOVERNMENT 59

nine When internet is not an option
   9.1 INTRODUCTION 62
   9.2 CHANNELS USED BY THOSE FOR WHOM INTERNET IS NOT AN OPTION 62
      9.2.1 Channels used 62
      9.2.2 Channel preference 63
   9.3 PROFILE OF THOSE FOR WHOM INTERNET WAS NOT AN OPTION 64
   9.4 POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH IN INTERNET USE 65

ten Future service delivery preferences
   10.1 INTRODUCTION 68
   10.2 PREFERENCE FOR E-GOVERNMENT SERVICE DELIVERY CHANNELS 70
   10.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING CHANNEL PREFERENCE 71
      10.3.1 Preferred channel and type of transaction 71
      10.3.2 Preferred channel and age 72
      10.3.3 Preferred channel and location 73
10.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS WHEN CONTACTING GOVERNMENT ONLINE

10.5 FUTURE OPTIONS FOR RECEIVING COMMUNICATIONS FROM GOVERNMENT

eleven Conclusions

twelve Appendix 1—Background and methodology

12.1 TERMS OF REFERENCE

12.2 METHODOLOGY

thirteen Appendix 2—Definitions

fourteen Appendix 3—Statistical reliability
Figures

Figure 1 Use of email, SMS and other communication technologies 9
Figure 2 Use of email, SMS and other communication technologies—by age 10
Figure 3 Use of email, SMS and other communication technologies—average age of users and non-users 11
Figure 4 Changes in service delivery channel used to contact government—by year 15
Figure 5 Changes in service delivery channel used to contact government—by service delivery channel 15
Figure 6 Service delivery channel used to contact government—males by age 16
Figure 7 Service delivery channel used to contact government—females by age 17
Figure 8 Main service delivery channel used to contact government 17
Figure 9 Use of more than one service delivery channel 18
Figure 10 Number of times contact made with government 19
Figure 11 Type of transaction involved in most recent contact with government 20
Figure 12 Characteristics of those who used the internet to contact government in the previous 12 months 23
Figure 13 Contacting government by internet—by level of government 24
Figure 14 Contacting government by internet—type of transaction 25
Figure 15 How the most recent government website visited was found 26
Figure 16 Perceived usefulness of making contact by internet 26
Figure 17 How government website was rated 27
Figure 18 How government websites and email addresses are found 28
Figure 19 Prompted awareness of australia.gov.au 29
Figure 20 Prompted awareness of australia.gov.au—by location 29
Figure 21 Use of australia.gov.au 30
Figure 22 Use of australia.gov.au—by location 30
Figure 23 Contacting government by telephone—by level of government 32
Figure 24 Contacting government by telephone—type of transaction 33
Figure 25 Satisfaction with services received 37
Figure 26 Satisfaction with services received—by level of government 37
Figure 27 Average ratings for achieving what was intended—by service delivery channel 38
Figure 28 Satisfaction with outcome—time series by service delivery channel 38
Figure 29 Dissatisfaction—by service delivery channel 40
Figure 30 Most common factors influencing choice of channel 45
Figure 31 Use of the internet to contact government 45
Figure 32 Most common reasons for making contact by internet 47
Figure 33 Use of the telephone to contact government 48
Figure 34 Most common reasons for making contact by telephone 49
Figure 35 In-person contact with government 50
Figure 36 Factors influencing choice of in-person contact with government—by whether transaction involved information or payment 50
Figure 37 Most common reasons for making contact in person 51
Figure 38 Use of mail to contact government 52
Figure 39 Most common reasons for making contact by mail 53
Figure 40 Most common reasons for not using the internet to contact government 57
Figure 41 Most common reasons for not using the internet to contact government—individual reasons by theme 58
Figure 42 Most common reasons for contacting government in person rather than by telephone 59
Figure 43 Most common reasons for contacting government in person rather than by telephone—individual reasons by category 60
Figure 44 Availability of internet as an option for contacting government 62
Figure 45 Service delivery channels used to contact government—by availability of internet as an option 63
Figure 46 Preferred service delivery channel for contacting government—by availability of internet as an option 63
Figure 47 Availability of internet as an option for contacting government—by age 64
Figure 48 Type of transaction—by availability of internet as an option 64
Figure 49 Preferred service delivery channel for contacting government 68
Figure 50 Internet—preferred use compared with actual use 69
Figure 51 Telephone—preferred use compared with actual use 70
Figure 52 In-person—preferred use compared with actual use 70
Figure 53 Preferred service delivery channel for contacting government compared with channel actually used 71
Figure 54 Preferred service delivery channel—by type of transaction 72
Figure 55 Preferred service delivery channel—by age 72
Figure 56 Preferred service delivery channel—by location 73
Figure 57 Sample distribution 79
Figure 58 Total sample & sub-set 87
Foreword

This is the sixth and final study of Australians' use and satisfaction with e-government services under the 2006 e-Government Strategy. It shows that Australians continue to embrace the internet as a way of interacting with government. The internet has now become commonplace and a natural means for citizens dealing with government and is the preferred means of accessing government services.

Over the past three years, two thirds of people have used e-government channels to contact government, confirming the importance of providing convenient and efficient government services online.

The study also saw an increased take up in the use of new communications technologies such as email, text messaging and social networking tools.

Satisfaction with government websites remains high, and since 2009 there has been an increase in satisfaction in the way government websites are designed. In 2011 more Australians became aware of their ability to easily find information about Australian Government programs and services through the australia.gov.au website.

The opportunities for greater engagement with citizens through e-government channels will continue as the introduction of high speed broadband through NBN and the increased use of new communications technologies provides Government with greater flexibility in delivering better services to people, communities and business and improved government operations.

THE HON GARY GRAY AO MP
Special Minister of State
Interacting with Government: Australians’ use and satisfaction with e-government services
one Executive summary
Executive summary

1.1 ABOUT THE STUDY

This is the sixth and last report in a series exploring Australians’ use and satisfaction with e-government services (provided through the internet and telephone). It investigated:

- 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

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

- A strong preference for using the internet or telephone over other channels such as in person contact or mail is evident among those who have used an e-government channel before and those who have not.
- When there is a choice between using the internet or some other channel, the internet is the preferred method of contact with government. Just under half (47%) of those for whom the internet was an option used it in their most recent contact with government, with a similar proportion (46%) saying they prefer the internet over other forms of contact.

Use of e-government services is stabilising with similar proportions using internet to contact government as in 2009.

- Since 2008 use of e-government services has been stable, with two thirds of people (65%) using e-government services to contact government in 2011.
- The use of telephone has increased since 2009, from 30% to 38%. Use of internet has remained stable at 35% in 2011 compared with 38% in 2009.

People continue to be satisfied with e-government service delivery, however there has been no increase in satisfaction scores.

- Overall satisfaction with the outcome of the service received is high (86%). This is consistent with previous studies and could indicate either there has been little improvement in services or that services have improved at the same pace that public expectations around quality of service have increased.
- People are comparatively less satisfied with the time it took to receive a reply, although the rating remains high (82% satisfied to some degree). Consistent with previous studies, those who used the internet or contacted government in person are more satisfied (80% and 84% respectively) than those who used the telephone (74%) or mail (71%).
- The level of satisfaction with outcomes varies depending on the service delivery channel used. Unlike previous years, those who contacted government in person have the highest level of satisfaction (89%), closely followed by those who did so by internet (86%). Those who used mail had the lowest level of satisfaction (79%).

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

- Four in five (82%) people use the internet to contact government because it is convenient. Similarly, convenience is the most common driver for in-person contact (51%). It is also an important factor for over two in five (40%) of those who use the telephone. Channel features are the most common driver (55%) of those who used the telephone while contact by mail is driven by availability (44%).
1.3 CONCLUSIONS

Perception and awareness of government websites has increased.
- There has been a significant increase in the proportion of Australians aware of australia.gov.au.
- Satisfaction with government websites remains high, and since 2009 there has been a significant increase in satisfaction with the way government websites are designed to help you get things done quickly.
- For other aspects of government websites, satisfaction has been relatively stable. As in 2009, this indicates growing community expectations arising from increased use and comparisons with commercial websites.

Older users continue to adopt e-government channels.
- Those in older age groups continue to adopt communication technologies such as email, SMS and social networking sites.
- The take up rate of e-government services among those over 65 lags behind that of other age groups. Australians in this age group indicate they might be more likely to use e-government channels if they had better skills and/or improved access.

The use of e-government channels for contacting government is now well established.
- E-government channels are now well positioned for Australians to interact with government, with two thirds of people using e-government for their most recent contact.

There is still scope for increasing use of e-government channels for contacting the government.
- Comparison of actual channel use against preference indicates that, while mail and in person channels are still widely used, most people would prefer to use e-government channels. Those who did not use their preferred channel did so because there were barriers which prevented use, such as no e-government option being available, or the interaction had to be done in person.
- Use of communication technologies such as email and text messaging continues to increase, opening up greater communication options which could be used to encourage use of e-government channels for contacting government.
ONE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

2.1 ABOUT THE STUDY

This study is the sixth and last 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 with the exception of 2010.

The studies examined:
• how people contact government (internet, telephone1, 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 consisted of quantitative telephone surveys and qualitative focus group research to better understand the results from the telephone survey. The telephone questionnaire was refined in 2008 to reflect technology changes and maintain the relevance of the studies for service delivery policy development and design. Some new questions were added and others modified or deleted. In addition, the 2008 and 2009 studies explored in greater depth some issues and trends highlighted in 2007. Further refinements were made in 2011 to explore in greater detail the use of multiple channels for a single government contact.

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

The general topics explored in the study have been expanded in 2011 to explore the use of multiple channels for the same contact. This issue is explored in much greater detail in 2011 than in previous years.

2.3 USE OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

All respondents were asked about their use of communication technologies. Nine in ten (92%) people undertake at least one of these activities at least monthly, if not more regularly.

2.3.1 Use of email and SMS

Email and text messaging continue to have high levels of use:
• email, used by 84% (up from 80% in 2009)
• text messaging using a mobile (SMS2), used by 81% (up from 69% in 2009).

2.3.2 Use of other communication technologies

The results from the 2011 study saw significant increases in use of a number of communications technologies compared with previous years, in particular for accessing the web via a mobile phone or similar portable device and making phone calls over the internet, as well as continuing growth in the use of social networking sites and SMS:
• use the web via mobile phone, 38% (up from 18% in 2009)
• phone calls over the internet, 36% (up from 20% in 2009)
• social networking sites3, used by 47% (up from 36% in 2009)
• instant messaging4, used by 35% (up from 31% in 2009)

1 Telephone—This refers to use of a landline in this report. In 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2011 respondents have also had the option of nominating a mobile phone as the way they last made contact with government. To date the numbers of responses in this category has 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 size. Where sample size was too small to allow meaningful analysis, mobile phone results are included in the ‘Other’ category where relevant. References to the telephone in the 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2011 reports excludes mobile phone.
2 SMS—Short Messaging Service
3 Websites such as Facebook or MySpace that let people create profiles about themselves and then communicate with others and form online networks.
4 Instant messaging—Real time text-based communication between two or more people over the internet.
• blogs, read by 27% (up from 25% in 2009)
• read wikis at 28%, (up from 20% used wikis in 2009)
• Twitter, used by 6% (up from 4% in 2009).

In contrast there has been a slight downturn in maintaining blogs and reading news feeds:
• news feeds (RSS), used by 40% (down from 43% in 2009)
• maintaining own blog by 5% (down from 7% in 2009).

**Figure 1 Use of email, SMS and other communication technologies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMS or text messaging</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make phone calls</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use social networking</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the web via RSS</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the web via mobile</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read blogs</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read wikis</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to podcasts</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post to an online forum</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use a tablet</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use social bookmarks</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain own blog</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribute to wikis</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use wikis</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q01. Do you do any of the following online activities at least monthly?

Base: All respondents (n=3,011)
Note 1: Respondents were able to provide more than one activity.
Note 2: Use Twitter was added in 2009. ‘Text messaging using your mobile’ became ‘SMS or text messaging using your mobile’ in 2009. ‘Use the web via your mobile phone’ became ‘Use the web via your mobile phone or similar portable device’ in 2009. ‘Use wikis’ was split into ‘Read wikis’ and ‘Contribute to wikis’ in 2011. ‘Use an app,’ ‘Use a tablet’ and ‘Use social bookmarks’ were added in 2011.

5 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.
6 Wikis—Wikis are websites which allow multiple users to create, modify and organise web page content in a collaborative manner. Examples include Wikipedia.
7 Twitter—A web-based service that lets users send short text messages to a group of people.
8 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 (for example, news bulletins).
There were mixed feelings in the focus groups about use of other communications technologies, particularly social networking and blogs, by government. While there was some negative perception of government using social networking, with such use being considered ‘illegitimate’, there were a number of mentions of uses of social networking by government departments and agencies that were seen as positive, particularly among younger participants and those with more exposure to social networking.

‘I associate Facebook and Twitter with social networking and I don’t associate it with serious government bureaucracy and doing things seriously.’

‘Brisbane City Council is actually on Facebook and they do posts, like daily posts and blogs and what is happening in the area.’

‘I spend a bit of time on Facebook when I’m not working and I follow some agencies like the New South Wales Police Force. If there’s any media alerts or anything they put up whether there’s road closures or if there’s been something happening in your area.’

There is a strong correlation between the use of communication technologies and age. Nearly all those under 55 undertook some form of activity at least once a month. Although those aged 65 or more remain the lowest users of these technologies, they are the group who has seen the biggest increase, rising from 51% in 2008 to 59% in 2009 to 69% in 2011.

The technologies that have seen the biggest increases since 2009 are phone calls over the internet, using the internet on a mobile phone or other portable device, social networking and SMS:

- Growth in use of the internet on a mobile phone or portable device has increased from one in five (18%) in 2009 to two in five (38%) in 2011. This growth has been driven by those under the age of 55, with extremely strong growth among females aged 18–24, up from one in three (36%) in 2009 to three in four (75%) in 2011.
- Making calls over the internet has increased from one in five (20%) in 2009 to one in three (36%) in 2011. The growth has been stronger among females than males, increasing from one in six (17%) to one in three (36%) among females and from one in four (23%) to one in three (36%) among males. The growth has been fairly consistent across age groups, with strong growth among older age groups, increasing from a small group (8%) in 2009 to one in five (22%) in 2011.
- The proportion of people who have engaged in social networking at least monthly has increased from one in three (36%) in 2009 to just under half (47%) in 2011. This growth has been driven by those under 55.
- The proportion of people who have used SMS at least monthly has increased from 69% in 2009 to 81% in 2011. This was driven by those over 25, with the strongest growth in those over 65.

**Figure 2  Use of email, SMS and other communication technologies—by age**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18–24</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25–34</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35–44</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45–54</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55–64</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q01. Do you do any of the following online activities at least monthly?

Base: All respondents (n=3,011)
In 2008 and 2009 there were differences in the age profile of those who used specific technologies at least monthly and those who did not. These trends persist in 2009 however the mean age for use of most technologies has increased.

Social networking sites, for example, are more likely to be used by younger people with an average age of 36, compared with an average age of 55 for non users. Those using a mobile phone to access the web are also likely to be younger, with an average age of 35 compared with 53 for non users. There is less of an age difference, however, between those making phone calls over the internet (42 years compared with 48 years). There is a 22-year gap between the average age of those who use at least one newer communication technology monthly (44 years) and those who do not use any (67 years).

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

**Figure 3** Use of email, SMS and other communication technologies—average age of users and non-users

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

Base: All respondents (n=3,011)
There is little difference in the use of communications technologies by location. However, while the difference is relatively small, people living in rural/remote and metropolitan regions generally have a higher take-up rate than regional residents.

There is a marked difference between those in metropolitan areas and those in regional or rural/remote areas in use of mobile internet and apps. In metropolitan areas, two in five people use the web on their mobile phone (42%) or have used apps (39%). This is significantly higher than those in regional areas (31% and 29% respectively) and rural/remote areas (26% respectively).

2.3.3 People who used the internet to contact government

Communication technologies offer other options for governments in communicating with internet users. For example, nearly all (97%) of those who used the internet for their most recent contact with government use email at least monthly, significantly more than the three quarters (77%) of those who did not use the internet to contact government.

Similarly, those who have used the internet to contact government are heavier users of text messaging (91%) and social networking sites (58%) compared with those who have not contacted government by internet (75% and 42% respectively).

The use of the internet on mobile phones and internet-based calls such as Skype are also much higher among those who used the internet to contact government compared with those who have not. Half (50%) of those who have contacted government by internet use the web on their mobile phone compared with three in ten (31%) of those who did not make contact by internet. Similarly, half (49%) of those who have contacted government by internet made a call over the internet compared with three in ten (29%) of those who did not make contact by internet.

Half (52%) 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 (42%).

A relatively large proportion of those already using the internet for contact with government also use instant messaging (43%), read blogs (37%) or listen to podcasts (28%), all up slightly from 2009.
three Use of government services
three Use of government services

Overview

- The ways in which people contact government have stabilised.
- One in three (35%) people used the internet for their most recent contact with government. Use of the telephone and in person contact was also relatively static at two in five (38% respectively). The use of mail has also stabilised at around one in ten (11%).
- E-government is most likely to be used for information-based transactions, with 47% of those completing information transactions using the telephone and 40% using the internet. However, transactions involving payment are more likely to be done in person (54%).

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.

### 3.1.1 Delivery channel used for the most recent contact with government

E-government (internet and telephone) use saw sustained growth from 2004–05 to 2008, with a corresponding decline in contact in person over the same period. In contrast, since 2008 use of e-government services has been stable, with two thirds of people (65%) using e-government (internet and telephone) services to contact government in 2011. However, while there has been little change in the use of e-government services, the use of telephone has increased since 2009, from 30% to 38%.

In general, in the past few years use of the internet has become commonplace and accepted as a means of dealing with both government and private enterprise. This has led to more trust in government websites and online services, and fewer concerns about privacy and security.

‘Three years ago you’re sitting there and you’re going, well, I’ve put my bank card details in and you’re not quite sure, and, now, I don’t even think about it. You know the sites that you’re going to … it’s so easy and so quick.’

‘I think the improvement of technology is … getting better and better every day. We’re getting the type of things that make it easy for us and more private but all this stuff is making it easier to do a living lifestyle.’

‘… three years ago, well … I wasn’t ready to do internet contact then. Three years ago I was a phone person. You’ve got to do what you’re comfortable with.’
INTERACTING WITH GOVERNMENT: AUSTRALIANS’ USE AND SATISFACTION WITH E-GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Three Use of Government Services

Figure 4 Changes in service delivery channel used to contact government—by year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Internet</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>In-person</th>
<th>Mail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004–05</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q3A. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this...?
Q5B. Apart from ... which other methods of contact did you use?

Base: All respondents (n=3,011)
Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because some respondents reported their last contact with government involved more than one service delivery channel.
Note 2: Data for in-person contact for 2011 excludes transactions involving payment.

Figure 5 Changes in service delivery channel used to contact government—by service delivery channel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Delivery Channel</th>
<th>2004–05</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-person</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q3A. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this...?
Q5B. Apart from ... which other methods of contact did you use?

Base: All respondents (n=3,011)
Note: Data for in-person contact for 2011 excludes transactions involving payment.

Except for 18 to 24 year olds, gender continues to affect the likelihood of using different service delivery channels to contact government. Similarly, age continues to play a heavy role in the use of different service delivery channels.

Internet

The internet is the most frequently used channel by those aged 18–24 at just under half (47%). This proportion decreases steadily with age, to a low of one in six (15%) among those aged 65 or over.

Young females between the age of 18 and 34 are more likely to make contact with government by internet compared with males of the same age. However the reverse is true in older age groups, with males aged 35 and over more likely to make contact by internet than females.

There is a marked drop in internet use among those 65 or older. Only one in six (17%) males 65 or older and an even smaller proportion of females (14%) used the internet for their most recent contact with government.
Three Use of Government Services

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

Telephone

The pattern of telephone use to contact government continues to show use is higher among females in all age groups and lowest among the younger age groups. People aged 18 to 24 are least likely to use the telephone to contact government, with just over a quarter (27%) of males and a similar proportion of females (28%) using this channel. Use increases among the 25 to 34 age group (males 33%, females 43%) then generally stabilises at around a third for older males and over two in five for older females. Females aged 35–44 are the most likely to make contact with government by telephone at fifty-two per cent.

In person

Contacting government in person is a relatively common way for all age groups to access government services. It is the most common form of contact for those over the age of 45 with over two in five (42%) of those aged 45–54 making contact in person, increasing to just under half (46%) of those aged 55–64 and just over half (55%) of those over 65.

Mail

Use of mail for contacting government is relatively low for all age and gender groups.

Figure 6 Service delivery channel used to contact government—males by age

Q3A. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this...?
Q5B. Apart from ... which other methods of contact did you use?
Base: All male respondents (n=1,477)
**Figure 7** Service delivery channel used to contact government—females by age

**Q3A. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this...?**

**Q5B. Apart from ... which other methods of contact did you use?**

Base: All female respondents (n=1,534)

### 3.2.1 Main method of contact

Just over half of people (54%) use e-government (internet and telephone) as their main way of communicating with government. A significantly smaller proportion (37%) mainly makes contact with government in person, while a small group mainly use mail (7%).

**Figure 8** Main service delivery channel used to contact government

**Q6. Of all of the forms of contact you used, including the most recent one, which was the MAIN method of contact?**

Base: All respondents (n=3,011)
3.2.2 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. Around three in ten (30%) people use more than one channel when contacting government about a particular issue.

Figure 9 Use of more than one service delivery channel

Q5A. Still thinking about the last issue you contacted government about, did you use more than one METHOD of contact?
Base: All respondents (n=3,011)

Participants in the focus groups said it is common to use multiple methods of contact in order to streamline face-to-face contact. That is, they use the internet to prepare for in-person contact by downloading forms, getting background information and so on, before attending a government office in-person.

‘Once you know that you’ve got to fill a form in for something you know you’ve either got to mail it in or scan it and email or you’ve got to do something with it, you know there’s a second or third level, but at least you can go on the internet and find the form you need.’

‘He went online to find that he could actually sort of log in and apply for some of it but he is still ended up having to read them and then go to Centrelink to take all the forms in.’

‘I jumped on the internet to see if it was a form that I could fill out and just do everything on the internet. I printed it off ... but it wasn’t something that I could completely do over the internet. I then had to go in to [the Department] to complete it’.

Use of secondary channels varies depending on the channel used for the most recent contact, although generally telephone is the most popular alternative contact channel.

3.3 Number of Government Contacts

Two thirds (65%) of people’s most recent contact with government only made contact once, while one in five (22%) made contact 2–3 times.
3.4 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 (49%), with state and territory (23%) and local government (28%) having similar levels of contact.

The most common channel used to contact the federal government is in-person (47%), while equal proportions of people contact the Australian Government by internet or phone (35% respectively). Similarly, in-person contact was the most popular channel used to contact state or territory government (47%), with two in five (38%) making contact with state or territory government by internet or telephone. In contrast, the most popular way to contact local government is the telephone (45%), followed by in-person (38%) and the internet (33%).

3.5 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
• exchanged information with government
• received a payment from government
• made a payment to government.

Relatively equal proportions of people contacted government for each type of transaction, with the most common seeking information but not providing any (24%) followed by receiving a payment (23%). One in five (19%) exchanged information with the government, while one in six (16% and 15% respectively) provided information or made a payment.

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9 In the 2005 to 2007 studies the ‘exchanged information’ category specifically included a reference to making or receiving a payment. In 2008 a separate question was asked about payments. In 2011 making and receiving a payment were added as options within the same question. Thus the results for this question are therefore not directly comparable with the outcomes from previous years.
Figure 11  Type of transaction involved in most recent contact with government

- Only sought or obtained information but did not provide information (23%)
- Provided information but there was no exchange of information (19%)
- Exchanged information (16%)
- Received a payment (15%)
- Made a payment (15%)

Q: Was the most recent contact you had with a government service in the last 12 months mainly because you were…?
Base: All respondents (n=3,011)
four Use of e-government services through the internet
Use of e-government services through the internet

Overview

- Around a third of people (35%) used the internet for their most recent contact with government.
- Younger people are the most likely to have used the internet for their most recent contact with government. Two in five (42%) of those aged between 18 and 54 used the internet for their most recent contact.
- Education is linked to the use of internet to contact government. Two in five (42%) of those who have completed, attempted, or are currently completing some form of post secondary study used the internet in their most recent contact with government, more than double the proportion of those who had not completed Year 12 of high school (or its equivalent).

Finding government websites

- Four in five (79%) people use a search engine to locate a government organisation on the internet.
- Just over a quarter (27%) of people who used the internet to contact government found the website by searching for it. A similar proportion (24%) already knew about the website because they had used it before.

Attitudes towards government websites

- Nearly everyone (95%) who made contact with the government by internet found that contact useful, although a small group (5%) did not.
- Government websites continue to be perceived as being up to date, with three in four people (77%) rating this factor as excellent and a further one in six (15%) rating it as good.

Awareness and knowledge of the Australian Government portal

- Awareness of the Australian Government portal has risen significantly since 2009 (64% in 2011 compared with 59% in 2009).
- Half (48%) of those aware of australia.gov.au have visited the site.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Around a third of people (35%) used the internet for their most recent contact with government.

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

- **Age**—Younger people are the most likely to have used the internet for their most recent contact with government. Two in five (42%) of those aged between 18 and 54 used the internet for their most recent contact, compared with three in ten (29%) of those aged 55 to 64 and one in six (15%) of those 65 and over.
- **Personal income**—Those with lower annual incomes are less likely to have used the internet for their most recent contact with government. At least one in three of those with a personal income above $50,000 used the internet for their most recent contact with government compared with just over a quarter (27%) of those earning between $15,001 and $30,000 and three in ten (30%) with a lower income.
- **Employment**—Those not in the workforce\(^{10}\) are the least likely to have used the internet for their most recent contact with government at 34%, while 41% of those in the workforce made contact by internet. Consistent with age, only one in six (15%) of those retired made contact by internet.
- **Education**—Two in five (43%) of those who have completed, attempted, or are currently completing some form of post secondary study used the internet in their most recent contact with government. This compares with three in ten (29%) who had completed high school, but no further studies, and only one in five (19%) who had not completed Year 12 of high school (or its equivalent).

---

\(^{10}\) 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.
• **Household type**—Households with dependent children\(^\text{11}\) are more likely to have used the internet to contact government (42%) than other families\(^\text{12}\) without dependent children (32%) and single adults without dependent children (25%).

• **Location**—Those living in rural/remote areas are less likely to have used the internet to contact government (26%) than those in metropolitan (38%) or regional (31%) areas.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural/remote</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal income</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than $150,000</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,001–$150,000</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$90,001–$100,000</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$70,001–$90,000</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,001–$70,000</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,001–$50,000</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,001–$30,000</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,000 or less</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In workforce</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in workforce</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-secondary education</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finished high school</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not finish high school</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Household with dependent children</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple with no dependent children/extended family</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single adult</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18–24</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25–34</td>
<td>42</td>
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<tr>
<td>35–44</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45–54</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55–64</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: Respondents who contacted the government via the internet (n=1,036)

---

\(^\text{11}\) Includes couples and single parents with dependent children  
\(^\text{12}\) Couple without dependent children or extended families
4.2 LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT ACCESSED BY INTERNET

The proportion of people who use the internet to contact each level of government is relatively similar. Similarly, there has been little change in ratio of internet use to contact government since previous studies. Of those who contacted the Australian Government, one in three (35%) used the internet, down slightly since 2009 (39%). Similarly, use of the internet to contact state and territory government has decreased slightly from 42% in 2009 to 38% in 2011. The use of the internet to contact local government has changed very little since 2008 (33% in 2011 compared with 34% in both 2008 and 2009).

Figure 13 Contacting government by internet—by level of government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian Government</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State and territory gov.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q2. Was the most recent contact you had with a government service with...?
Q3A. Thinking of the most recent form of contact, did you do this...?
Q3B. Apart from...which other methods of contact did you use?
Base: Respondents’ most recent contact with the Australian Government (n=1,434); state and territory government (n=684); local government (n=832)

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. A third (32%) of those contacting government by internet were seeking but not providing information, one in five (21%) were exchanging information, and one in five (18%) made a payment. Smaller proportions provided information but did not seek any (16%) or received a payment (11%).
**Figure 14  Contacting government by internet—type of transaction**

- Only sought or obtained information but did not provide information (21%)
- Provided information but there was no exchange of information (11%)
- Exchanged information (18%)
- Received a payment (16%)
- Made a payment (2%)
- Other (32%)

**Q: Was the most recent contact you had with a government service in the last 12 months mainly because you were...?**

Base: Respondents who contacted the government via the internet (n=1,036)

Note 1: Percentages may be shown as 0% due to rounding of decimals.
Note 2: In 2009 separate questions were asked about information and payments. These questions have been combined in 2011. Because of this, results for this question are not directly comparable with previous studies.

### 4.4 Attitudes Towards Government Websites

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

In addition, all respondents were asked about finding government websites.

#### 4.4.1 Recent use of the internet and government websites

One in three (35%) people used the internet for their last contact with government, whereas three in five (65%) used a non-internet channel. Of those who used the internet, three in five (60%) accessed a website, 23% used email and 17% used an online contact form.

Those whose last contact with government was through a website were asked how they had found it. Just over a quarter (27%) found out about the website by searching for it. A similar proportion (24%) already knew about the website because they had previously used it. One in six (16%) obtained its address from a printed source (such as a printed article or brochure), while one in ten (12%) obtained it from a government department or employee.
**Figure 15** How the most recent government website visited was found

- **Searched for it**: 27%
- **Already know it because used it before**: 24%
- **Obtained it from a printed source**: 16%
- **Obtained from a government department/employee**: 12%
- **Heard about it from a friend/family member**: 9%

**Q7B3. How did you find out about this...?**

Base: Respondents whose most recent contact was by online contact form, blog, RSS feed, online forum, Twitter, Facebook, website by internet or website by mobile phone (n=544)

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

**4.4.2 Attitudes towards the most recent government website visited**

Nearly everyone (95%) who made contact with the government by internet found that contact useful, although a small group (5%) did not.

**Figure 16** Perceived usefulness of making contact by internet

- **Internet was useful**: 95%
- **Internet was not useful**: 5%
- **Can't say**: 0%

**Q7B2. Did you find this form of contact useful?**

Base: Respondents whose most recent contact with the government was via the internet (n=649)

* Less than 0.5%

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
- designed to get things done quickly
- designed for all kinds of people.
The strength of government websites continues to remain as being up to date, with three quarters of people (77%) rating this factor as excellent and a further one in six (15%) rating it as good.

While very few people rate any of the quality measures as poor or very poor there has been only slight improvement in the likelihood of the websites being rated as ‘excellent’ for the other attributes tracked in this study.

Just over half rated the government website they had most recently visited as being designed to help you get things done quickly (59%), a significant increase from 2009. A similar proportion (56%) gave ‘excellent’ ratings for ease of use (56%), while half gave ‘excellent’ ratings for being designed to help find information (52%). A more moderate proportion (41%) gave an ‘excellent’ rating for the website as being designed for all kinds of people.

Figure 17  How government website was rated

Q7B4–8. 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 0, 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=412)
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.

4.4.3 Government websites used in the previous 12 months

There has been little change in the way people find a government website. The most commonly mentioned way to find a government website (79%) is to use a search engine while one in four (21%) reported using written material from the organisation. One in five (18%) had found the website using a government entry point while one in six (16%) used a link from another site.
Figure 18  How government websites and email addresses are found

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Finding Website or Email Address</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use a search engine</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find it on written material from the organisation</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use a government entry point</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use a link from another site</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ring them up</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have it saved as a ‘favourite’</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qn: If you wanted to contact a government organisation using the internet, how would you go about finding their website or email address?
Base: All respondents (n=3,011)
Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents were able to provide more than one response.

4.5  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.

4.5.1  Awareness of australia.gov.au

Awareness of the Australian Government portal has increased significantly since 2009 (64% in 2011 compared with 59% in 2009).
Awareness of australia.gov.au is relatively consistent among those living in metropolitan, regional, or rural/remote Australia, although it is slightly higher among those in regional areas (68% compared with 61% in metropolitan areas and 60% in rural/remote areas).

Figure 20  Prompted awareness of australia.gov.au—by location

Half (48%) of those who are aware of australia.gov.au have visited the site.

While those in rural/remote areas were the least likely to report awareness of the site, those who are aware of it were the more likely to have visited the site than those in metropolitan or regional areas. Three in five (62%) of those in rural/remote areas who have heard of australia.gov.au have visited the site, compared with 50% of those in metropolitan areas and 45% of those in regional areas.
Figure 21 Use of australia.gov.au

- 49% Have visited australia.gov.au
- 48% Have not visited australia.gov.au
- 3% Can’t say

Q14B. Have you ever visited australia.gov.au?
Base: Respondents aware of australia.gov.au (n=1,924)

Figure 22 Use of australia.gov.au—by location

- Metropolitan: 50% Have visited, 48% Have not visited, 2% Can’t say
- Regional: 45% Have visited, 52% Have not visited, 3% Can’t say
- Rural/remote: 62% Have visited, 37% Have not visited, 1% Can’t say

Q14B. Have you ever visited australia.gov.au?
Base: Respondents aware of australia.gov.au (n=1,924)
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of decimals.
five Use of e-government services by telephone
Use of e-government services by telephone

Overview

• Two in five (38%) people contacted government by telephone in 2011.
• This level of telephone use has been relatively stable throughout this series of studies although it has increased in 2011.
• Those contacting government by telephone are more likely to be seeking, but not providing, information (32% of telephone users compared with 24% of all people contacting government) or exchanging information (24% compared with 19%).

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Use of the telephone to contact government has been relatively stable throughout this series of studies, although it has increased in 2011 with two in five people (38%) contacting government by telephone (28% in 2004–05 and 2006, 32% in 2007, 30% in 2008 and 30% in 2009).

5.2 LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT ACCESSED BY TELEPHONE

There was relatively little change in the proportion of people who used the telephone to contact different levels of government between 2004 and 2009, although there was an increase in the use of telephone in 2011. Overall two in five (38%) people contacting government used the telephone on their most recent occasion, up from three in ten (30%) in 2008 and 2009. The increase is particularly strong among those who contacted local government or state and territory government. Of those contacting local government, over two in five (45%) made contact by telephone, up from 34% in 2009. Two in five (38%) of those contacting state and territory government used the telephone, compared with 24% in 2009. Use of the telephone to contact the Australian Government remained relatively stable, at 35% in 2011 compared with 31% in 2009.

Figure 23 Contacting government by telephone—by level of government

Q2. Was the most recent contact you had with a government service with...?

Base: Respondents who contacted the government by landline telephone (n=1,120)

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 dealt with.
5.3 TRANSACTION TYPE ACCESSED BY TELEPHONE

Those using the telephone to contact government are more likely to be seeking, but not providing, information (32% of telephone users compared with 24% of all people contacting government) or exchanging information (24% of telephone users compared with 19% of all people contacting government). This is largely a reflection of the nature of the channel.

The proportion of those who use the telephone to provide, but not obtain, information is similar to the overall population (17% compared with 16%). However, the telephone was less likely to be used when making or receiving a payment (23% of telephone users compared with 38% of all people contacting government).

Figure 24  Contacting government by telephone—type of transaction

Q1. Was the most recent contact you had with a government service in the last 12 months mainly because you were...?
Base: Respondents who contacted the government by landline telephone (n=1,120)
FIVE USE OF E-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 of the service when dealing with government is high. The majority (86%) of people are satisfied, a rating consistent with previous studies.
- Similar ratings were achieved for ease of using the service (89%) and with the ease of finding the information sought (87%).
- As with previous studies, people are less satisfied with the amount of time it took to receive a reply to an enquiry (82%).
- The level of satisfaction with outcomes varies depending on the service delivery channel used:
  - Those who contacted government in person have the highest level of satisfaction (89%), closely followed by those who did so by internet (86%). Those who used mail had the lowest level of satisfaction (79%).

Dissatisfaction

- As in 2009, dissatisfaction with government contact is relatively low:
  - The most common causes of dissatisfaction are the length of time taken to receive a reply (16%), and dissatisfaction with the outcome of the service (12%). This mirrors previous results.
- The level of dissatisfaction varies depending on the service delivery channel used:
  - People who contacted government in person or by internet 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 they did not achieve any of what they intended and ‘10’ meant they achieved exactly what they intended.

6.2 SATISFACTION

As in previous years, the majority are satisfied with the level of service they receive:
- Eighty-six per cent of people are satisfied with the outcome of the service.
- Eighty-seven per cent of people are satisfied with the ease of finding information.
- Eighty-nine 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 at Eighty-two per cent.
Satisfaction with services received does not vary greatly depending on the level of government contacted. Although the differences are relatively small, satisfaction was consistently higher among those who had contacted the Australian Government compared with those who had contacted state or territory government or local government.

More people were satisfied with the ease of using services provided by the Australian Government (90%) than those provided by local government (89%) or state and territory government (87%). Over four in five (84%) who had contact with the Australian Government were satisfied with the wait for a reply compared with only 79% respectively of those who contacted state or territory government or local government.

**Figure 25  Satisfaction with services received**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Ease of finding specific information</th>
<th>Ease of using service</th>
<th>Waiting for a reply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q9B-gE. How satisfied were you with …?
Base: Respondents who were able to nominate how they most recently contacted government (n=3,006)
Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% because some respondents were not able to say if they were satisfied or dissatisfied.

**Figure 26 Satisfaction with services received—by level of government**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Ease of finding specific information</th>
<th>Ease of using service</th>
<th>Waiting for a reply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q9B-gE. How satisfied were you with …?
Base: Respondents who were able to nominate how they most recently contacted government and whose most recent contact was with the Australian Government (n=1,431); state and territory government (n=683); local government (n=831)

### 6.2.1 Achieving what was intended

The overall rating for achieving what was intended is very high, with an average rating of 8.3. This mirrors results in previous years.
There are marginal differences in satisfaction ratings depending on the service delivery channel used. Respondents who had contact in person had the highest average rating (8.6), while those who used the telephone had the lowest average rating (7.6). Those who used mail also rated relatively low (7.7). Ratings of satisfaction for all service delivery channels are lower than in 2009.

Satisfaction with the outcome achieved is consistent when the contact involved information, at 8.0 for exchanging information, 7.8 for providing information and 7.6 for seeking information. Satisfaction is higher among those who received or made a payment (9.3 and 9.1 respectively).

### 6.2.2 Achieving an outcome

The differences in satisfaction scores for achieving an outcome by channel used to contact government show a similar pattern to previous years. The lowest level of satisfaction is reported by those using mail (79%). People tend to be more satisfied with contact in person (89%) and internet (86%).

### Figure 27 Average ratings for achieving what was intended—by service delivery channel

![Average ratings for achieving what was intended—by service delivery channel](image)

**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.

**Base:** Respondents with most recent contact with government using the internet (n=1,036); telephone (n=1,120); in-person (n=1,368); mail (n=354)

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

There are marginal differences in satisfaction ratings depending on the service delivery channel used. Respondents who had contact in person had the highest average rating (8.6), while those who used the telephone had the lowest average rating (7.6). Those who used mail also rated relatively low (7.7). Ratings of satisfaction for all service delivery channels are lower than in 2009.

Satisfaction with the outcome achieved is consistent when the contact involved information, at 8.0 for exchanging information, 7.8 for providing information and 7.6 for seeking information. Satisfaction is higher among those who received or made a payment (9.3 and 9.1 respectively).

### Figure 28 Satisfaction with outcome—time series by service delivery channel

![Satisfaction with outcome—time series by service delivery channel](image)

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

**Q3A. Thinking of the most recent form of contact, did you do this...?**

**Q5B.** Apart from ... which other methods of contact did you use?

**Base:** Respondents with most recent contact with government using the internet (n=1,036); telephone (n=1,120); in-person (n=1,368); mail (n=354)
Those contacting government by telephone or mail are the most likely to be not at all satisfied with achieving their intended outcome, with one in ten (11% and 9% respectively) for both telephone and mail reporting this of their most recent experience. Those contacting the government in person are the most likely to be extremely satisfied at 31%.

Satisfaction with outcome was much higher among those who made or received a payment, with 97% of those receiving a payment and 93% of those making a payment reporting they were satisfied with the outcome. Those providing information were the most likely to be not satisfied at all, at 12%.

### 6.2.3 Waiting for a reply

As in 2009, overall satisfaction with the length of time taken for a reply was the lowest at 82%. The level of satisfaction with the time taken for a reply across channel used is also similar to findings in 2009. Respondents who used the internet or contacted government in person are more satisfied (80% and 84% respectively) than those who used the telephone (74%) or mail (71%).

Those who received a payment were more likely to be satisfied with the time taken to complete the transaction at 93%, while those who exchanged information were the least likely to be satisfied with the time taken at 78%.

### 6.2.4 Finding specific information

Nine in ten (87%) of those who used government services were satisfied with the ease of finding specific information, similar to 2009 (88%).

The type of channel used to contact government reveals differences in the levels of satisfaction with ease of finding specific information, though satisfaction is high for all channels. Respondents who contacted the government in person are the most likely to be satisfied (88%), followed by the internet (85%) and mail (82%). Unlike previous years, in 2011 those who used the telephone are the least likely to be satisfied with finding specific information (81%).

There is a common perception among focus group participants that the internet is an excellent tool to source simple information, but in more complex or less common situations telephone or in-person contact is required. A number of participants also reported that it can be difficult to find specific information on websites because of the volume of information contained on them.

‘Information that you might be searching for, you might have a really specific need and it’s not answered on the website, you need to call and clarify, so it’s good for information but not always.’

‘I would go to the search and if it didn’t give me what I wanted then I would be on the phone. You can potentially get lost in a minefield of information ... I heavily rely on search engines within sites and hope that they take me to the right part of the website.’

### 6.2.5 Ease of using the service

Satisfaction with ease of use is similar to 2009, at 89%. The channel used to contact government has an impact on satisfaction with ease of using the service. Respondents who contacted the government in person are the most likely to be satisfied (90%), followed by the internet (89%) and mail (86%). Unlike previous years, in 2011 those who used the telephone are the least likely to be satisfied with the ease of using the service (83%).

### 6.3 DISSATISFACTION

Dissatisfaction levels for contact with government have remained relatively consistent, and are relatively low with one in ten people indicating dissatisfaction with:
- the outcome (12%)
- the ease of using the service (10%)
- the ease of finding information (11%).

As in 2009, the largest cause of dissatisfaction (16%) is the length of time taken to receive a reply. This was particularly the case for those contacting the government by telephone (24%), and those using mail (20%).
The level of dissatisfaction varies depending on the service delivery channel used. 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. However, dissatisfaction among those whose most recent contact was by internet has increased since 2009 across all four satisfaction measures.

The most problematic issue for those using the telephone or mail to contact government is the time spent waiting for a reply (25% for telephone, and 22% for mail) and to a lesser extent, the outcome of their contact (19%, and 17% respectively).

Those receiving or making a payment are less likely to report they are dissatisfied across all four satisfaction measures than those whose contact involved information. There is little difference between the dissatisfaction scores for contacts involving information.

**Figure 29 Dissatisfaction—by service delivery channel**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for dissatisfaction</th>
<th>Internet 2009</th>
<th>Internet 2011</th>
<th>Telephone 2009</th>
<th>Telephone 2011</th>
<th>In-person 2009</th>
<th>In-person 2011</th>
<th>Mail 2009</th>
<th>Mail 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wait for reply</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of finding specific information</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of using service</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q9B-E. How satisfied were you with.....
Q3A. Thinking of the most recent form of contact, did you do this....?
Q5B. Apart from ... which other methods of contact did you use?

Base: Respondents with most recent contact with government using the internet (n=1,036); telephone (n=1,120); in-person (n=1,368); mail (n=354)
Note: Base for ‘wait for reply’ excludes those for whom no reply was required

### 6.3.1 Overall reasons for dissatisfaction

The main reasons for overall dissatisfaction with contact with government have not changed from 2009. The key reasons again are customer service and usability related. Access was also a reason cited for dissatisfaction.

**Customer service**—Seven in ten (72%) 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:
- Three in ten (29%) of those who were dissatisfied felt they had to wait too long to be served.
- One in seven (13%) felt the person they dealt with did not understand the issue or believed they were given incorrect advice.
- One in ten (10%) said they were transferred too many times.
- Eight per cent felt they did not receive the desired response.

**Usability**—One in four (22%) mentioned at least one usability issue as a reason for their dissatisfaction. Depending on the channel used to contact government, the reasons reported were ‘telephone usability’ (12%) or ‘website usability’ (5%) or ‘general usability’ (7%).

**Access**—One in ten (7%) mentioned an access issue as a reason for being dissatisfied. For seven per cent, a reason for their dissatisfaction was they could not complete their enquiry by telephone.
6.3.2 Dissatisfaction with the internet

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

Customer service—Three in five (61%) mentioned at least one customer service issue as a reason for their dissatisfaction. Specifically:

- One in five (22%) felt there was too long a wait to be served.
- One in seven (13%) felt they had been given the wrong advice.

Website usability—Three in ten (30%) of those dissatisfied with contact by internet mentioned at least one website usability issue as a reason for their dissatisfaction.

Website content—A small group (4%) mentioned at least one website content issue as a reason for their dissatisfaction.

While general levels of satisfaction are high, focus group participants raised concerns about the ease of use of websites.

‘I think reading on the internet you can miss some things if you don’t click the right tab, whereas if you sit down and say “look, this is what I want to do, how does that affect me?” they’ve got all the information there and they know the right buttons to click.’

‘If you go to a new website and you try to burrow down to find some specific information, and you haven’t been there before, you end up ... sometimes you find it straight away. Other times you sit there and you can go through it for an hour and go, this is absolute crap; just pick up the phone and talk to somebody.’

‘I tried to deal with it online, I had to end up going in face to face. I didn’t understand what I had to do and nothing was clear.’

There were concerns by participants in the focus groups about the length of time spent waiting for a reply when contact is made by internet.

‘Sending an email ... or you’re filling in their request for service form—which were the first two options and I went both ways – and I didn’t get a response, I had to end up ringing up.’

‘I’ve emailed my local Council three times; filled in three service requests ... and I’m still waiting for the information.’

6.3.3 Dissatisfaction with the telephone

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

Customer service—Three in four (76%) mentioned at least one customer service issue as a reason for their dissatisfaction. Specifically:

- Three in ten (29%) felt they had to wait too long for an answer.
- One in six (16%) did not think the person understood the issue.
- Fifteen per cent felt they had been given the wrong advice.

Telephone usability—One in four (24%) mentioned at least one usability issue as a reason for their dissatisfaction. Specifically:

- Six per cent were dissatisfied they could not talk to a real person, or had to do use automated answering.
- Five per cent found it difficult to find the number for the relevant service provider.

Access—One in ten (11%) mentioned at least one access issue as a reason for their dissatisfaction.

The main source of dissatisfaction with telephone services among respondents in the focus groups was the time it took to get through to a real person, either due to being kept on hold for extended periods of time, or having to deal with automated telephone services.
‘I had to wait for about a week for someone to contact me even though they’d arranged a designated time to call me at that time, but anytime I needed to call them I sat on hold for anywhere between half an hour and an hour, so by that time I’m already irate.’

‘You are put on hold, you’re in a line, you could sit there for half an hour/three quarters of an hour and still not get the right person.’

‘I have been through five options but none of those are what I want. So I listen again to see if there is something similar to what I want and then at the end of that, there’s nothing and I have to press 5 anyway to find what I want, to talk to somebody.’

6.3.4 Dissatisfaction with in-person contact

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

Customer service—Seven in ten (72%) mentioned at least one customer service issue as a reason for their dissatisfaction. Specifically:

• Three in ten (30%) felt they had to wait too long to be served.
• A further fourteen per cent did not think the person understood the issue.
• One in seven (13%) felt they had been given the wrong advice.

Access—A small group (6%) 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 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 continue to influence the decision to choose a particular service delivery channel to contact government. The relative importance of these factors varies by channel.

Convenience continues to be the dominant motivator for using the internet to contact government:

- Four in five (82%) of those who used the internet to contact government gave at least one reason relating to convenience for doing so.
- Specific important features include that it requires shorter time (17%) and that people can use it at a time that suits (17%).

The main drivers for using the telephone to contact government are channel features:

- Three in five (59%) of those who contacted government by telephone did so because of features specific to that method of contact.
- The most important telephone features were the speed and convenience of the automated system (20%) and being able to speak to a ‘real’ person (18%).
- Convenience is also important for two in five users (40%).

The reasons for contacting government in person vary between those who made or received a payment, and those that sought, provided or exchanged information:

- For those whose in-person contact involved payments, convenience was the biggest driver (63%).
- However, for those whose in-person contact involved information, availability was the main factor (37%).

The prime motivator for using mail to contact government was availability:

- Over two in five (44%) of those who used mail to contact government did so because another channel was not possible or available.
- Of these, one in five had no other way of making contact (20%) and one in six (17%) were responding to being sent a form.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

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

- Convenience—the convenience of using that particular channel.
- Channel features—characteristics and qualities associated with this means of communication.
- Availability—another channel not being possible or available. This includes reasons relating to physical access barriers (referred to as ‘Infrastructure’ in Chapter 8), limitation or obstruction to using another channel (‘Access’ in Chapter 8) or requirements of the type of contact that limit the use of other channels (‘Availability’ in Chapter 8).

The relative importance of these factors varies by channel:

- **Internet**—The prime motivator for contacting government by internet continues to be convenience (82% reported at least one reason relating to this theme). Aside from overall convenience (65%), the main reasons provided were that less time is required (17%) and that it can be used at a time convenient to the individual (17%).

- **Telephone**—Channel features motivated three in five (59%) to use the telephone, an increase from 2009 (51%) and 2008 (44%). However, convenience also remains an important motivator for selecting the telephone. Two in five (40%) mentioned aspects of convenience as reasons for using this channel to contact government, the same as in 2009 (41%). The specific reasons for choosing telephone contact included the speed and convenience of using an automated telephone system (20%), a preference for speaking to a person (18%) and shorter time required (19%).
• **In person**—Unlike other contact methods, the reasons for contacting government in person vary between those who made or received a payment, and those that sought, provided or exchanged information. For those whose in-person contact involved payment, convenience was the biggest driver (63% compared with 27% availability and 18% channel features). However, for those whose in-person contact involved information, availability was the main factor (37% compared with 31% convenience and 28% channel features).

• **Mail**—Availability of other channels continues to be the main motivator for selecting mail as the means of contacting government. Over two in five (44%) of those who used mail in 2011 did so because it was the only possible form of contact. Three in ten nominated either channel features (31%) and convenience (30%) as a factor in their choice.

![Figure 30: Most common factors influencing choice of channel](image)

**Figure 30 Most common factors influencing choice of channel**

Q7A-D: Still thinking of this most recent contact, why did you do it by…..? Why else? Anything else?
Base: Respondents whose most recent contact was by internet (n=649); landline telephone, SMS or spoke/left a message with a mobile phone (n=835); in-person (n=1,218); mail (n=249)
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 forms of contact are shown in the above figure.

### 7.2 THE INTERNET

Use of the internet to contact government has increased 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. However, there has been little change since 2008, with 38% using the internet to contact government in 2009 and 35% in 2011.

![Figure 31: Use of the internet to contact government](image)

Q3A. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this...?
Q5B. Apart from ... which other methods of contact did you use?
Base: All respondents (n=3,011)
The reasons provided for using the internet to contact government in 2011 were much the same as in 2009.

Convenience continues to be the dominant motivator in the decision to contact a government agency by internet. 13

Convenience—Over four in five (82%) of those who had used the internet for their most recent contact with government mentioned at least one aspect of convenience as a reason for doing so:
• Two thirds (65%) chose to use the internet because of its overall convenience.
• One in six (17%) mentioned using the internet because it required a shorter time compared with other channels.
• One in six (17%) reported using the internet because they can do it at a time that suits.
• One in ten (9%) used the internet to avoid waiting in queues.

Features of the internet—A quarter (24%) mentioned at least one feature of the channel as a reason for contacting government by internet:
• Eight per cent were motivated to use the internet because of the consistency of the information received each time they visited a website.
• Six per cent used the internet to avoid making phone calls.
• Six per cent chose to use the internet because of the ability to control the type and amount of information and not have to rely on people working at the service.

Availability—One in ten (9%) used the internet because it was the only option available or they were told to do it that way.

There have been no significant changes in the relative importance of factors related to convenience, availability or channel features for contacting the government by internet since 2009.

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13 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, 2009 and 2010 are therefore not directly comparable with previous results for this question.
Q7B. 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 whose most recent contact was by internet (n=649)
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.

Respondents from the focus groups reiterated the convenience of the internet, considering it the first port of call in government contact.

‘And the advantage of using the website which I think I would use first is that you can do it in your own time—entirely at your convenience—and not depend on people being behind telephones.’

‘Theoretically it should be the most efficient form of communication because you can go it at your own convenience, you can do it at 3 o’clock in the morning if you want, you’re not obligated by listening and waiting for somebody to answer the phone. You’re not on hold for half an hour. It should be the first option, the first port of call for any government agency.’

A number of respondents also mentioned the advantages of having written records of government contact, leading to more accountability and consistency in responses.

‘You’ve got a permanent record, so there’s a sense of, if I was the person on the other end, the government person, I would be very careful about what I said. I’m far more likely, I think, to give out the correct response because I’m accountable, which is something that I think is a good thing, because I would feel a lot safer asking somebody online.’
7.3 THE TELEPHONE

There has been a slight increase in the proportion of people who have used the telephone to contact government since the start of this series of studies. Two in five (38%) used the telephone at some point during the most recent contact they had with government.

Figure 33 Use of the telephone to contact government

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

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

**Channel features**—Telephone features have increased in importance. Three in five (59%) of those whose last contact with government was by telephone mentioned at least one feature of the channel as a reason for doing so compared with 51% in 2009 and 44% in 2008:
- One in five (20%) used the telephone because of the speed and convenience of the automated telephone system.
- One in five (19%) used the telephone so they could talk to a ‘real person’.
- One in seven (14%) used the telephone because it was cheaper than other channels.
- For 6% the telephone provided an opportunity to ask questions and get immediate answers.
- A further 6% found the ability to clarify and explain things to get the results required was a motivator for using the telephone.

**Convenience**—Two in five (40%) 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:
- it required a shorter time, for one in five (19%)
- a convenient access time, for one in five (18%).

**Availability**—One in seven (13%) 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.
**Figure 34  Most common reasons for making contact by telephone**

- **Convenience**
  - Requires shorter time: 19
  - Can do it at a time that suits me: 18
  - Easier: 4
  - Don’t have to wait in queue: 4

- **Channel features**
  - Speed/convenience of automated system: 20
  - Prefer to speak to a real person: 19
  - Cheaper: 14
  - Can ask and get answers immediately/don’t have to wait: 6
  - Can clarify/explain to get the result that I want: 6
  - Don’t have to go into a government office: 3

- **Availability**
  - Can’t do it online/online option is not available: 6
  - Not familiar with using computer/internet in general: 3

---

Q7A. Still thinking of this most recent contact, why did you do it by fixed telephone (landline)/SMS/phone? Why else? Anything else?

Base: Respondents who made contact by landline telephone, SMS or spoke to someone or left a message using a mobile phone (n=835)

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.

Respondents in the focus groups mentioned using the telephone to get more detailed information than is readily available on the internet, or to ask questions and clarify things after first using the internet.

‘With someone on the phone, you can sort of ask your question and they will say something and tell you the answer, and then you can reiterate and summarise what you think it is, just in case your interpretation is not—you know, you haven’t gotten it wrong, whereas on the website it’s just your interpretation and you might get it wrong.’

‘I go onto the website to try and search for something but then you get frustrated and you call them, or sometimes you’re at work doing it in your lunch break or something like that, rather using the internet than on the phone, because we’re in an environment that generally you only phone if you cannot find it on the internet.’
7.4 IN PERSON CONTACT

Overall, in 2011, two in five people contacted government in person in regard to an information based transaction.

Figure 35 In-person contact with government

Q3A. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this…?
Q5B. Apart from … which other methods of contact did you use?
Base: All respondents (n=3,011)
Note: Data for in-person contact for 2011 excludes transactions involving payment.

Unlike other contact methods, there are notable differences between the reasons for contacting government in person between those who made or received a payment, and those that sought, provided or exchanged information.

Overall, forty-four percent of people made contact with government in person. One in five (20%) contacted government in relation to a payment and a quarter (24%) contacted the government in relation to information.

Among those whose contact with government involved a payment, convenience was the biggest driver for making contact in person (63% compared with 27% availability and 18% channel features). However, among those whose contact with government involved information, more people used in-person contact because of lack of alternatives than any other type of reason (37% compared with 31% convenience and 28% channel features).

Figure 36 Factors influencing choice of in-person contact with government—by whether transaction involved information or payment

Q7D Still thinking of this most recent contact, why did you do it IN PERSON? Why else? Anything else?
Base: Respondents whose most recent contact was in-person (n=1,218).
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 forms of contact are shown in the above figure.
Overall, the most frequently reported reasons for contact in person are:

**Convenience**—Half (51%) mentioned at least one convenience issue as a reason for contacting government in person. Specifically:
- Two in five (40%) used in-person contact because of convenience in general, driven mainly by the convenience of making and receiving payments in person.
- Seven per cent used in-person contact because the government office was close by, or they were in the area.
- A small group (6%) did so because it enabled contact at a time that suited them.

**Availability**—Just over a third (39%) mentioned at least one issue associated with lack of choice as a reason for contacting government in person:
- A quarter (24%) could only make contact in person.
- One in ten (11%) mentioned having to make contact a particular way because of the need to show or sign documents.

**Features of the channel**—One in four (26%) mentioned at least one feature of the channel as a reason for contacting government in person. Specifically:
- Seventeen 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 or explain to get the results wanted for 7%.
- Six per cent used in-person contact so they could ask questions and get answers immediately.

*Figure 37 Most common reasons for making contact in person*

---

**Q7D. Still thinking of this most recent contact, why did you do it IN PERSON? Why else? Anything else?**

Base: Respondents whose most recent contact with government was made contact in person (n=1,218)

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.
7.5 MAIL

This level of mail use has been fairly consistent throughout these studies. In 2011, one in ten (11%) people used mail in their most recent contact with government.

Figure 38 Use of mail to contact government

As in 2009, more of those using mail now report they used mail as a necessity rather than by choice (44%).

Where a person has a choice, convenience and channel features are equally important reasons for using mail with 31% of mail users nominating a reason relating to channel features and 30% nominating a convenience factor.

The main factors influencing choice of mail are:

Availability—Forty-four per cent mentioned at least one aspect of this theme. Specifically:
  • One in six (17%) reported a form had been sent to them.
  • One in ten (12%) reported using mail because there was no other way of contacting government.
  • A further one in ten (11%) mentioned they had to sign a form.
  • The transaction could not be done online for eight per cent.

Features of the channel—Three in ten (31%) mentioned a characteristic or quality associated with this form of communication, such as needing documentation (22%).

Convenience—Three in ten (30%) mentioned at least one aspect of convenience, mainly convenience in general (22%).
**Figure 39  Most common reasons for making contact by mail**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was sent to me by mail (therefore I replied by mail)</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habit/always do it this way</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can do it at a time that suits me</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needed documentation/record of transaction</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't need a computer</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't have to go into a government office</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form was sent to me</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No other way available</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had to sign a form</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can't do it online/online option is not available</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q7C. Still thinking of this most recent contact, why did you do it BY MAIL? Why else? Anything else?

Base: Respondents who used mail (n=249)

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.
SEVEN
WHY PEOPLE CHOOSE A PARTICULAR SERVICE DELIVERY CHANNEL TO CONTACT GOVERNMENT

Interacting with Government: Australians’ use and satisfaction with e-government services
eight Why people do not use e-government services
Why people do not use e-government services

Overview

The internet
Two thirds (65%) of people did not use the internet in their last contact with government. Many of the reasons given for not using the internet were beyond the control of the person at that time:

• For one in six (16%) the contact was only possible in person.
• One in seven (14%) did not have access to the internet.
• For a small group (7%) an online option was not available.
• A small group (6%) did not have sufficient familiarity with using the internet.

The main reasons within the person’s control were:

• Preference for speaking to or meeting a ‘real’ person (17%).
• Difficulty navigating the website (6%).
• Lack of awareness of an online option (5%).

The telephone
Three in five (62%) people did not use the telephone to contact government. As with internet contact, many of the reasons given for not using the internet were beyond the control of the person at that time:

• Contact was only possible in person for a third (31%).
• For a small group (8%) no telephone option was available.
• Seven per cent needed to sign documents or forms.
• For a small group (8%) the issues were too complex to address over the telephone.

Convenience (15%) was also an important factor for not using the telephone to contact government. Specifically:

• One in ten (9%) made contact in person because a government office was close by or because it was easier to do things over the counter.
• Six per cent made contact in person because of delays getting through by telephone.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

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

8.2 WHY PEOPLE DID NOT USE THE INTERNET TO CONTACT GOVERNMENT

Two thirds (65%) of people did not use the internet in their last contact with government. The main reasons for not using the internet to contact government can be summarised under the following themes:

14 Caution should be taken when comparing these results to those of previous studies as some of the themes changed slightly from 2008 onwards, and in previous studies the questions were only asked of internet users.

15 In Chapter 7 ‘Availability’ included infrastructure, access and availability. However, for a more detailed discussion of why people do not use the internet to contact government these have been separated in this chapter.

• availability (requirements of the type of contact, such as needing to present signed forms, that limit use of the channel)
• infrastructure (physical access, of lack thereof, to channel)
• access (limitation or obstruction to use of channel)
• channel features (characteristics and qualities associated with specific channels but not considered to be present in other channels)
• usability (ease of using a product or service)
• awareness (awareness of options available)
• content (content of the product or service)
• convenience (convenience of the specific channel)
• security (concerns about the security of a product or service)
• privacy (concerns about the privacy of a product or service).

Many of the reasons given for not contacting government by internet relate to availability, infrastructure and access, meaning that contact by internet would not have been possible or available.

**Availability**—A quarter (24%) of those that did not use the internet for their last contact with government gave a reason to do with availability. For one in six (16%) it was only possible in person and for a small group (7%) an online option was not available.

**Infrastructure**—One in six (16%) reported problems with infrastructure, such as not having the internet or access to the internet (14%).

**Access**—One in ten (10%) mentioned access issues such as lack of familiarity with using the internet (6%).

Aside from availability, infrastructure and access, channel features and awareness were also important factors.

**Channel features**—One in five (21%) mentioned at least one feature related to other service delivery channels as a reason for not using the internet. The main issue mentioned was the preference for speaking to or meeting a ‘real’ person (17%).

**Awareness**—A further five per cent mentioned awareness issues, the most significant of which was being unaware whether the task could be done online (5%).

**Figure 40 Most common reasons for not using the internet to contact government**

Q8A. 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: Respondents whose most recent contact with government was not using the internet (n=2,334)

Note 1: Category definitions changed from 2008 onwards.
Note 2: Respondents were able to give more than one reason for not using the internet to contact government.
Figure 41 Most common reasons for not using the internet to contact government—individual reasons by theme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preferred to speak to/meet a real person</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More efficient/quicker by phone/convenient</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable—this contact is only possible in person</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online option is not available/cannot do it online</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t have computer/internet connection/access to internet</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to navigate website</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not familiar with using computer/internet in general</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website is slow</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasn’t aware that I could do it online</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns about security of information (including credit card information)</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government office is close by/easy to do it over the counter</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q8A. 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: Respondents whose most recent contact with government was not using the internet (n=2,334)
Note 1: Respondents were able to give more than one reason within more than one theme for not using the internet to contact government.
Note 2: Only the most common reasons are summarised in the above figures.
Note 3: In past years, this question was not asked of those who were not internet users. In 2011 all respondents who had not used the internet to contact government were asked the question (regardless of whether they were internet users or not).

There is a common perception among participants in the focus groups that internet contacts, particularly by email or web forms, could be lost or ignored, with no way of knowing they had been received or read, and little or no accountability for the public servant responsible.

‘If I want to send you something important by email I always ring to see if they’ve received it. That’s the way I would check. Because, otherwise, you could just go and into the ether sitting waiting for a reply and not getting it.’

‘I think what you’re implying is where the internet removes human intervention—or you just put through a payment or where you read information—it works. Whereas the human being on the other end still has to manage an inbox, which doesn’t work because it’s the same people who don’t care, who aren’t accountable.’
### 8.3 WHY PEOPLE DID NOT USE THE TELEPHONE TO CONTACT GOVERNMENT

Three in five (62%) people did not use the telephone to contact government. The main reasons why people who contacted government in person did not use the telephone to do so can be summarised under four themes:

**Availability**—Forty-four per cent of people advised that a telephone option was not available or not possible:
- Contact was only possible in person for a third (31%), while smaller proportions said they needed to sign documents or forms (7%) or no telephone option was available (8%).

**Convenience**—One in six (17%) cited a convenience related reason for not using the telephone to contact government:
- One in ten (9%) made contact in person because a government office was close by or because it was easier to do things over the counter, while six per cent made contact in person because of delays getting through by telephone.

**Usability of telephone**—One in ten (10%) mentioned at least one usability issue as a reason for not using the telephone to contact government:
- A small group (4%) chose not to use the telephone because they had difficulty or disliked using an automated telephone system (4%), while three per cent made contact in person because they got bounced from person to person on the telephone.

**Access**—A small group did not contact government by telephone because the issues were too complex to address over the telephone (9%).

#### Figure 42 Most common reasons for contacting government in person rather than by telephone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Availability</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usability</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channel features</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q88. 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: Respondents who contacted government in person rather than using the telephone (landline or mobile) (n=1,212)

Note 1: Category definitions changed from 2008 onwards.
Note 2: Respondents were able to give more than one reason for not using the internet to contact government.
Note 3: Only the most common reasons are summarised in the above figure.
Figure 43 Most common reasons for contacting government in person rather than by telephone—individual reasons by category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Availability</th>
<th>Convenience</th>
<th>Access</th>
<th>Usability</th>
<th>Channel Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable—contact had to be in person</td>
<td>Government office is close by/easy to do it over the counter</td>
<td>Prefer in-person/face-to-face</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone option is not available/cannot do it by telephone</td>
<td>Delays in getting through</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to sign documents/forms</td>
<td>Too complex for the phone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty/dislike of automated telephone system</td>
<td>Get bounced from person to person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty/dislike of automated telephone system</td>
<td>Difficult to navigate phone menu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government office is close by/easy to do it over the counter</td>
<td>Delays in getting through</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone option is not available/cannot do it by telephone</td>
<td>Too complex for the phone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to sign documents/forms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q88. 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: Respondents who contacted government in person rather than using the telephone (landline or mobile) (n=1,212)
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.

In general, there is a negative perception of automated telephone systems throughout the focus groups. In addition, some focus group participants mentioned the lack of reliability and knowledge of call centre staff.

‘If I make three phone calls, I get three different answers for the same question. And none of them seem to be right.’

‘The other problem with trying to phone any government department or utility, you can spend half an hour waiting for somebody to answer the phone, and they have this infuriating thing of saying that your call is valuable to them.’
nine When internet is not an option
nine  When internet is not an option

Overview

For a quarter (25%) of people, contact by internet was not available:
- One in seven (14%) were not able to make contact via internet because it was not possible for that particular contact. Nine in ten of those (89%) were only able to make contact in person.
- One in ten (11%) do not have access to the internet.

While circumstance or the type of contact may force people to make contact in person, it is not the preferred method of contact:
- Internet is the most preferred method of contact among those who are able to make contact by internet, with just under half (47%) saying they prefer it.
- Those who are unable to make contact by internet are most likely to prefer contact by telephone (38%), followed by internet (30%).

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Although two thirds of people do not use the internet to contact government (65%), in many cases this is because either they had no access to the internet, or the type of contact did not allow contact by internet. One in four (25%) people reported using the internet was not an option for them. Of those for whom internet was not an option, just over half (57%) said it was because the contact was not possible by internet, while over two in five (44%) said it was because they do not have internet access.

Figure 44  Availability of internet as an option for contacting government

9.2 CHANNELS USED BY THOSE FOR WHOM INTERNET IS NOT AN OPTION

9.2.1 Channels used

When the internet is available as an option, it is the most commonly used channel, with just under half (47%) of those who could make contact using the internet doing so. Of those for whom the internet was not an option, two thirds (64%) made contact in person, with 80% of those given no other option—that is, half (51%) of those for whom internet was not an option had no other choice than to make contact in person.
Interacting with Government: Australians’ use and satisfaction with e-government services

9.2.2 Channel preference

Similarly, when the internet is available as an option, people show a preference for using the internet to contact government. Just under half (46%) prefer to make contact on the internet, while just over a quarter (28%) prefer telephone. However, while many people are forced, either by their circumstances or by the type of contact, to make contact in person, that is not commonly the preference. Two in five (38%) of those who could not make contact via internet prefer to make contact using the telephone, while three in ten (30%) would prefer to use the internet if they were able to.
### 9.3 PROFILE OF THOSE FOR WHOM INTERNET WAS NOT AN OPTION

Younger people are more likely to have the internet available to them as an option, with at least four in five of all those aged 18 to 54 having the internet available to them as an option. Older age groups are less likely to have available internet options, with just over a quarter (27%) of those 55–64 and over two in five (45%) of those over 65 not being able to make contact via the internet.

**Figure 47** Availability of internet as an option for contacting government—by age

The most common type of contact among those for whom internet was not an option was receiving a payment (28%), followed by exchanging information (20%). In contrast, a quarter (26%) of those for whom internet was an option sought or obtained information, but did not provide it.

**Figure 48** Type of transaction—by availability of internet as an option

Q8A. 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: Respondents aged 18–24 (n=362), aged 25–34 (n=564), aged 35–44 (n=571), aged 45–54 (n=543), aged 55–64 (n=456), aged 65+ (n=515)

The most common type of contact among those for whom internet was not an option was receiving a payment (28%), followed by exchanging information (20%). In contrast, a quarter (26%) of those for whom internet was an option sought or obtained information, but did not provide it.

**Figure 48** Type of transaction—by availability of internet as an option

Q8A. 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: Those for whom internet was available as an option (n=2,267); those for whom internet was not available as an option (n=744)
9.4 POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH IN INTERNET USE

As noted earlier in this report, the uptake of using the internet to contact government has flattened out, with rates nearly identical to 2009. Six in ten (65%) people did not use the internet for their most recent contact with government in 2011, which is similar to the rate in 2009 and 2008.

There is still potential for growth among those currently unable to make contact by internet. A small group of people (7%) would prefer to make contact by internet, but are currently unable to do so.

There continues to be growth in the use of communications technology, particularly among older people, who also tend to be the least likely to make contact with government by internet. In addition, the most common reason given for not making contact by internet was that internet was not possible for that particular contact.

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

Two aspects that need to be investigated further are:
- How to encourage those who use the internet for other purposes to also use the internet to make contact with government.
- That a quarter (24%) of people said that their contact with government was only possible in person or that an online option was not available.
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 well established:
- Preference for the internet when contacting government has stabilised. Over two in five (42%) people now prefer to contact government this way.
- Preference for contacting government in person is similar to previous years, with one in five (21%) preferring to contact government this way.
- 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, three in four (75%) people would prefer to use the internet, telephone or mobile phone to contact government.
- As in 2009, 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 their age and location but is similar regardless of the reason for contact:
- The internet is more likely to be the preferred means of access for all types of contact, with between 38% and 46% indicating the internet is their preferred means of contact.
- Younger respondents aged 18–24 or 25–34 are more likely to prefer the internet (54% and 55% respectively), while older respondents aged 65 or over are more likely to prefer the telephone (45%).
- Those living in metropolitan and regional areas are more likely to prefer to use the internet to contact government (45% and 37% respectively) than residents of rural/remote areas (38%).

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Four in five (75%) people would prefer to use an e-government service delivery channel to contact government: the internet (42%), telephone (31%), or mobile phone (3%).

Preference for the internet for contact with government remains at similar levels to previous years, having stabilised at just over 40%, after an increase from 31% in 2004–05 and 33% in 2006. Preference for the telephone was also similar to previous years at around one in three (31%). Preference for in-person contact with the government has increased slightly from 17% in 2009 to 21% in 2011, although it remains significantly lower than the preference for in-person contact reported in 2004-05 (33%).

Figure 49 Preferred service delivery channel for contacting government

Q10A. 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=3,011)

Note: Percentages do not add up to exactly 100% because of other responses given by respondents including fax, mobile phone (SMS or voice), mail, ‘it depends on the situation’, ‘direct debit’, ‘other’, and ‘refused/can't say’. The proportions of responses covered by these responses are approximately 2% in 2004–05, 4% in 2006, 3% in 2007, 3% in 2008, 4% in 2009 and 4% in 2011. 3% of responses in 2011 were a preference for mobile phone (SMS or voice).
Each study has shown more people would prefer to contact government by internet than actually do so, with a gap of 7% between preferred and actual use. This gap is consistent with 2009 and 2008 (7% and 6% respectively), and is a significant drop from the 12% gap in 2007.

**Figure 50** Internet—preferred use compared with actual use

Q10A. 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?

Q3A. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this...?

Q5B. Apart from … which other methods of contact did you use?

Base: All respondents (n=3,011)

The main reasons internet users who would have preferred to use the internet to contact government used some other channel were similar to those in 2009, although there are some differences:

- contact had to be with a person (15%)
- a preference for speaking to a ‘real’ person (12%)
- do not have internet (8%)
- the option was not available or it was not possible to undertake the transaction by internet (5%)
- not familiar with using computer/internet (5%).

In contrast to previous years, in 2011 actual use of telephone to contact government was higher than preference for telephone, with a gap of 8%. While preference for telephone decreased slightly from 2009 (32% down to 31%), actual use of telephone increased from 30% in 2009 to 38% in 2011.
Q10A. 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?

Q3A. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this...?

Q5B. Apart from ... which other methods of contact did you use?

Base: All respondents (n=3,011)

Similar to previous years, actual use of in-person contact was much higher than the preference for in-person contact, with a gap of 24%. This is significantly higher than in 2009 (15%).

Figure 52 In-person—preferred use compared with actual use

Q10A. 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?

Q3A. Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this...?

Q5B. Apart from ... which other methods of contact did you use?

Base: All respondents (n=3,011)

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 2011:

- **Internet users**—Over four in five (85%) would prefer to use an e-government service: internet (62%), telephone (20%).
- **Telephone users**—Four in five (79%) would prefer to use an e-government service: internet (28%), telephone (49%).
• **In person users**—Three in five (61%) would prefer to use an e-government service: internet (36%), telephone (23%).

• **Mail users**—Three quarters (74%) would prefer to use an e-government service: internet (42%), telephone (29%).

**Figure 53** Preferred service delivery channel for contacting government compared with channel actually used

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**Q10A.** 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?

**Q3A.** Thinking of this most recent contact, did you do this…?

**Q5B.** Apart from … which other methods of contact did you use?

Base: Respondents with most recent contact with government using the internet (n=1,036); telephone (n=1,120); in-person (n=1,368); mail (n=354)

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

### 10.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING CHANNEL PREFERENCE

#### 10.3.1 Preferred channel and type of transaction

Preference for a particular type of channel is relatively similar regardless of the type of transaction.

The internet is more likely to be the preferred means of access for all types of contact, with between two in five (38%) and just under half (46%) indicating the internet is their preferred means of contact. The strongest preference for using the internet is for those receiving a payment, which is also the contact type with the biggest gap between preference for the internet and other forms of contact. Just under half (46%) report a preference for the internet to receive a payment, compared with one in four (26% and 24% respectively) who prefer to receive payments in person or by phone.

Telephone is the second most popular means of contact after the internet, with between one in four (24%) and one in three (34%) indicating telephone is their preferred means of contact. This is stable for all types of contact except for receiving a payment where telephone (24%) is slightly less preferred than in-person contact (26%).
Q1. Was the most recent contact you had with a government service in the last 12 months mainly because you were…?

Base: Respondents’ most recent contact with government and type of transaction: sought information (n=721); provided information (n=481); exchanged information (n=571); received a payment (n=677); made a payment (n=487)

Note: Percentages may not add up to exactly 100% because a small percentage of respondents nominated a preferred method of contact other than those summarised above.

10.3.2 Preferred channel and age

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 (55% of 25 to 34 year olds compared with 17% of those over 65). The older the person, the more likely their preference is to be for telephone, and to a lesser extent, in-person contact (45% and 30% respectively among those aged 65+). Mail is the least preferred channel for contacting the government across all ages.

Q10A. 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=3,011)
10.3.3 Preferred channel and location

Location is likely to have some impact on a person’s preference for contacting government by internet. Those living in a metropolitan area (45%) are more likely to indicate a preference for contacting government by internet than those in regional areas (37%) or in rural/remote locations (38%).

Preference for the internet has stabilised among rural/remote residents, at 38% compared with 40% in 2009.

Preference for in-person contact is stronger in rural/remote areas (30%) than in metropolitan areas (18%) or regional areas (26%).

Preference for telephone contact is similar across all locations.

Figure 56 Preferred service delivery channel—by location

Q10a. 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?

Q2. Was the most recent contact you had with a government service with...

Base: Respondents in metropolitan locations (n=1,870); regional locations (n=992); rural/remote locations (n=149)

Note: Only the most common means of accessing government services are included in the figures above.

10.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS WHEN CONTACTING GOVERNMENT ONLINE

Just under half (48%) of people 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’).

Of the suggestions provided, one in six (16%) suggested they would like to have more functionality, including addressing problems with website design, usability or the difficulty with finding things.

Similarly, two in five (42%) of those who have used the internet to contact government in the past 12 months did not have a suggestion for what else they would like to be able to do or find out when contacting government online. This would appear to be consistent with the high satisfaction ratings provided by those who contact government by internet (83%).

Of the suggestions provided, one in five (19%) suggested they would like to have more functionality, including addressing problems with website design, usability or the difficulty with finding things.
10.5 FUTURE OPTIONS FOR RECEIVING COMMUNICATIONS FROM GOVERNMENT

Respondents were asked if they would be happy to receive communications from government by email or SMS. Six in ten (60%) would be happy to receive email from government, while one in four (26%) would like to receive an SMS.

A quarter (26%) did not want to be or were undecided about either option, with the main reasons largely the same as those cited in 2008 and 2009:

- They were not interested in or did not want this form of communication from government (20%).
- They already receive enough emails and did not want to overload their systems (17%).
- They prefer to seek information themselves (13%).
- They would prefer to receive communications from government by mail in order to have a written copy (11%).
- Other reasons were they don’t have a computer or internet access (8%), don’t check their messages that often (7%) or don’t want junk emails or spam (5%).
eleven Conclusions
eleven Conclusions

In the period since this series of reports examining Australians’ use and satisfaction with e-government services commenced in 2004–05, there has been a major shift in citizens’ access to different communication channels used for contacting government and their attitudes towards their usage.

In the first wave of this study relatively few people had direct access to the internet and a supplementary sample of known internet users was required to ensure the study included an adequate number of internet users. Six years later it is clear that the internet is now used on a regular basis by most Australians, with 84% overall using communication technologies such as email and SMS at least monthly.

This is also reflected in how Australians now want to contact government. E-government channels are the preferred way of communicating with government for three in four citizens and more than half (54%) use e-government services (internet and telephone) as their main way of contacting government.

Government has responded to this shift with improved access to and content on their websites. Overall government websites are seen as up to date, clear and easy to use by most users with nearly all users (95%) regarding their most recent use of a government website as useful.

Perception and awareness of government websites has increased.
  • There has been a significant increase in the proportion of Australians aware of australia.gov.au.
  • People’s satisfaction with government websites remain high, and since 2009 there has been a significant increase in satisfaction with the way government websites are designed to help you get things done quickly.
  • For other aspects of government websites, satisfaction has been relatively stable. As in 2009, this indicates growing community expectations arising from increased use and comparisons with commercial websites.

There is a strong preference for e-government channels, however results have stabilised.
  • There is potential room for growth, with 7% of people reporting they would prefer to make contact with government by internet, but were unable to do so because they either do not have access to the internet, or the option was not available.
  • There has been relatively little change since 2009 in how or why people interact with government.
  • Usage levels of the internet and mail to contact government have stabilised.
  • Those who have not used an e-government channel show a strong preference for using either the internet or telephone rather than in person contact or mail. This suggests use of e-government channels may grow further.
  • To encourage use of e-government channels and maintain high levels of satisfaction, online government service providers should:
    o recognise that convenience is the dominant factor in determining how a person will interact with government
    o consider to what extent processes unnecessarily require people to access government services in person
    o appreciate that the older population is inclined to use an e-government option but generally prefers telephone not internet. This could be addressed by improving skills and access
    o recognise that government is expected to meet or exceed the service standards of the private sector.
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

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 2011 study reflected the basic design developed for the original 2004–05 study and continued in 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009. The 2011 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
- a telephone survey of a representative sample of the Australian population aged 18 or more. Interviewing was conducted in May and June 2011 with 3,011 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 July 2011 involving 79 participants in 5 locations in metropolitan and regional New South Wales and Queensland.

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 2011 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 database.

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16 As a result some questions and some code frames were reworded slightly. Specific questions retain the same number throughout the time series, irrespective of these changes.
In the 2006 study a large sample (n=5,040) was again drawn from the electronic WhitePages® and stratified by area and allocated to quotas for gender and age.

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

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

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

The 2011 sample frame design replicated the random digit dialling methodology adopted for the 2007, 2008 and 2009 studies. Target sample size was reduced to n=3,000 respondents, with quotas adjusted accordingly. The final sample size achieved was n=3,011.

**The 2011 survey sample**

Gender and age quotas were applied to ensure that a representative sample of the Australian population, aged 18 and over, was contacted in the 2011 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 2011 study is shown in the Figure below. More detailed demographics of the survey respondents are in Appendix 2.

**Figure 57 Sample distribution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number of Interviews</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
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<td>Other Vic.</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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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 2011 study.
• **Rounded numbers**: All numbers are rounded to the nearest whole number (with the exceptions of Figure 27 and Figure 58).

• 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 2011 groups were conducted in Sydney, Brisbane, Armidale and Cairns. Participants were recruited for each group according to the following criteria:

• internet use (all were internet home users)

• gender (a representative coverage of males and females were recruited for each group)

• age (participants were proportionally recruited in the following age groups: 18–34, 35–54, 55–64 and 65–75)

• group participants were asked if they had used the internet to contact government in the past twelve months, with a minimum of three attendees in this category per group

• group participants were asked if they worked in particular industries, with a maximum of two attendees who worked in the public service per group.
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’.

**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
- **rural/remote:** 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 before 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 (for example, news bulletins).

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

**Skype:** A software application that allows users to make voice and video calls and chat over the internet.

**SMS:** Short Messaging Service. Technology which allows people to send text messages by telephone, usually mobile phone services.
Social bookmarking: A method for internet users to organise, store, manage and search for information online.

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. Since 2006 respondents have also had the option of nominating a mobile phone (voice or SMS) 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 report exclude these means of contact.

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

VOIP: Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) first appeared in the mid 1990s. It enables telephone calls to be sent over the internet rather than by traditional phone networks.

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

Figure 58 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 within the 2011 study, or when comparing results from 2011 with previous studies.

For example:

With a sample size of 3,011, a response set of 50% for example, has a standard error of +/- 1.8 at a 95% confidence level (i.e. there are 95 chances in 100 that a repeat survey would produce a response set of between 51.8% and 48.2%).

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% of the survey estimate, 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.
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