

Survey report: assessing the impact of changes to libraries and customer service centres

Version 1.2

Herefordshire Council Research Team

August 2013

Contents

Introduction	3
Methodology	3
Survey	3
Analysis	3
Results.....	4
Your visit	4
Q1. Which location did you visit?	4
Q2. What is your post code?	5
Q3. How did you get here?	6
Q4. How often do you use any library / customer service centre?.....	6
Q5. Which days and times do you usually use this library / customer service centre?	7
Q6. What did you come in to do today?	8
Alternative Use	10
Q7. If you could not access a library and/or customer service centre convenient to you, could you use an alternative way of accessing the service(s) you use?.....	10
Q8. What are the barriers to accessing services in a different way?	12
Comments	13
Q9. Please outline any other impacts reduced or closed services will have on you and how they can best be addressed? In this section please outline any special needs that should be considered.	13
Q10. We want to ensure that any changes made are fair to everyone. To help us do this, please tell us if you think any of the proposals above will particularly affect any group of people.	15
Q11. Any other comments?	17
About you	19
Did you know?	21
Appendix A: Cross-tabulations	22
Days and times visited by centre (Q5 by Q1).....	22
What did you come in to do by age and disability (Q6 by Q13 and Q14)	27
Barriers to accessing services in a different way by age (Q8 by Q13).....	28
Barriers to accessing services in a different way by disability (Q8 by Q14).....	30
Appendix B: The questionnaire	30

If you need help to understand this document, or would like it in another format or language, please call the Research Team on 01432 260442 or e-mail researchteam@herefordshire.gov.uk

Introduction

At a time of significant budget cuts facing Herefordshire Council, this consultation formed part of an impact assessment for a review of customer and library services. It was designed to help understand the impact on users of bringing together customer service centres, libraries and other facilities, closing some facilities, or reducing opening hours.

The results were to be used alongside data already held on the frequency of use and type of services that are accessed at libraries and customer service centres. Proposed changes to the services were due to be presented to the council's Cabinet in mid-September 2013; [click here](#) for public Cabinet papers.

Methodology

Survey

The aim of the survey was to gather the views of users of the services, so the questionnaire was only available in hard copy format from all libraries and customer service centres. Questionnaires could be completed there and then, or taken away and returned on another visit. Herefordshire Council officers (not library or customer services staff) were based at Hereford, Leominster and Ledbury centres on occasion to encourage visitors to complete a questionnaire and offer help if needed.

The questionnaire itself was anonymous, but respondents could give their name and address if they wanted to find out more about any of the different ways of accessing service. The analysis presented here is completely independent of those names and addresses.

Respondents were asked to complete only one form, although the anonymity of the questionnaire means it is impossible to check whether this instruction was followed. There were no obvious 'bulk' responses however. Several respondents completed one form for two or more people (ticking different categories in the 'about you' section – e.g. male and female); in these cases the response was duplicated so that both people's views were counted.

The survey was open from 6th July until 8th August 2013. Since completed forms had to make their way from centres across the county to the council's Plough Lane offices for data entry, they were accepted by the research team for a fortnight after this date. A total of 3,457 responses were received and inputted for analysis, one of the largest responses ever received for a Herefordshire Council questionnaire.

Analysis

Where percentages are used, they are rounded to the nearest whole number. The "base" is the sample base from which the percentages are calculated. In all questions, the sample base is all respondents to that particular question. Any variation from this is noted and explained in the main body of the report. It should be noted that in some cases a sizeable number of respondents did not answer the question and this should be taken into account when interpreting these results – these numbers are shown in the 'not answered' column of the tables.

Answers to questions requiring a free text answer are not included in this basic report, only the number of respondents who made a comment and a basic analysis of the most common words in the comments and themes emerging from those comments that it was possible to analyse in the time available.

Results

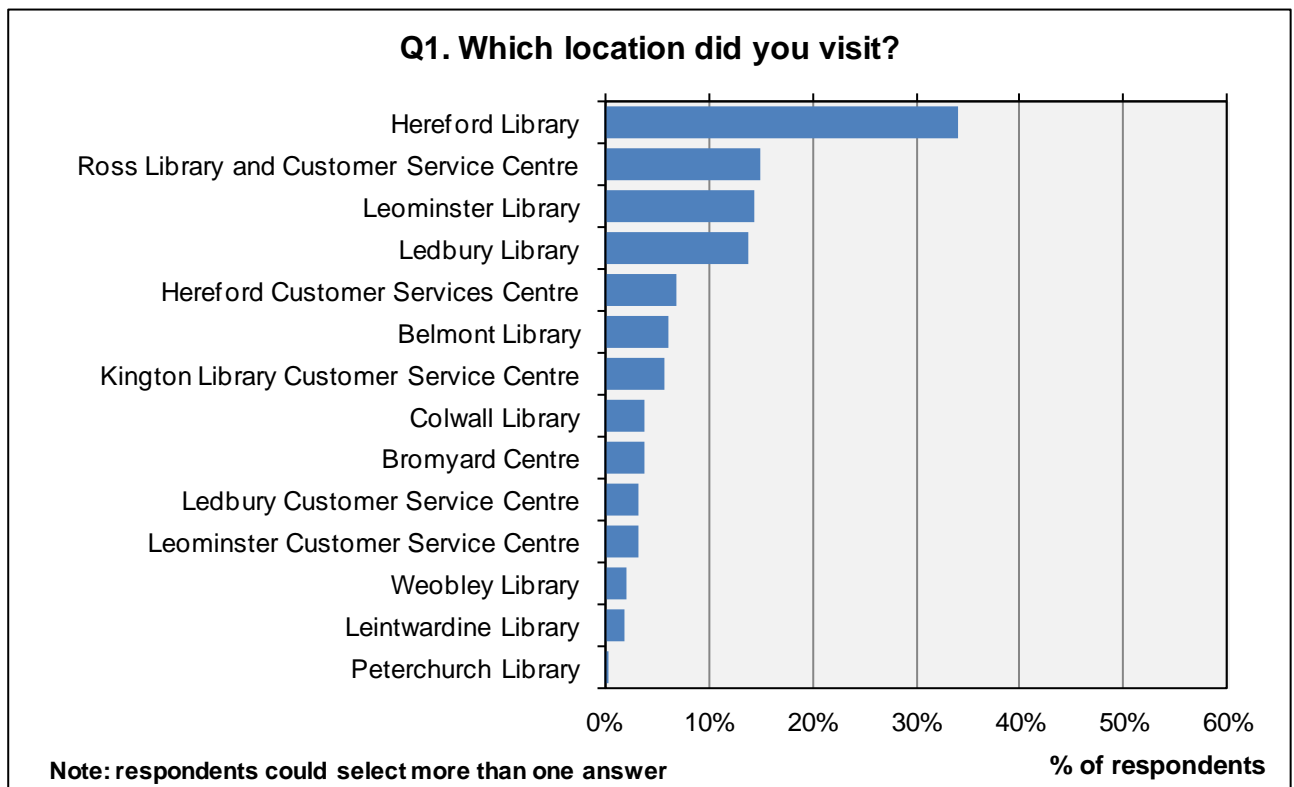
This section presents a basic analysis of the 3,457 responses received to each of the questions in the questionnaire, mainly in the form of a table and chart for each question. Some questions have been cross-tabulated with others to provide a better understanding of what the results say; in this case the detailed results are shown in the appendices with a reference from the relevant section of the main report. It would be possible to extend this analysis, for example to look at the response to all questions by each location.

Your visit

Q1. Which location did you visit?

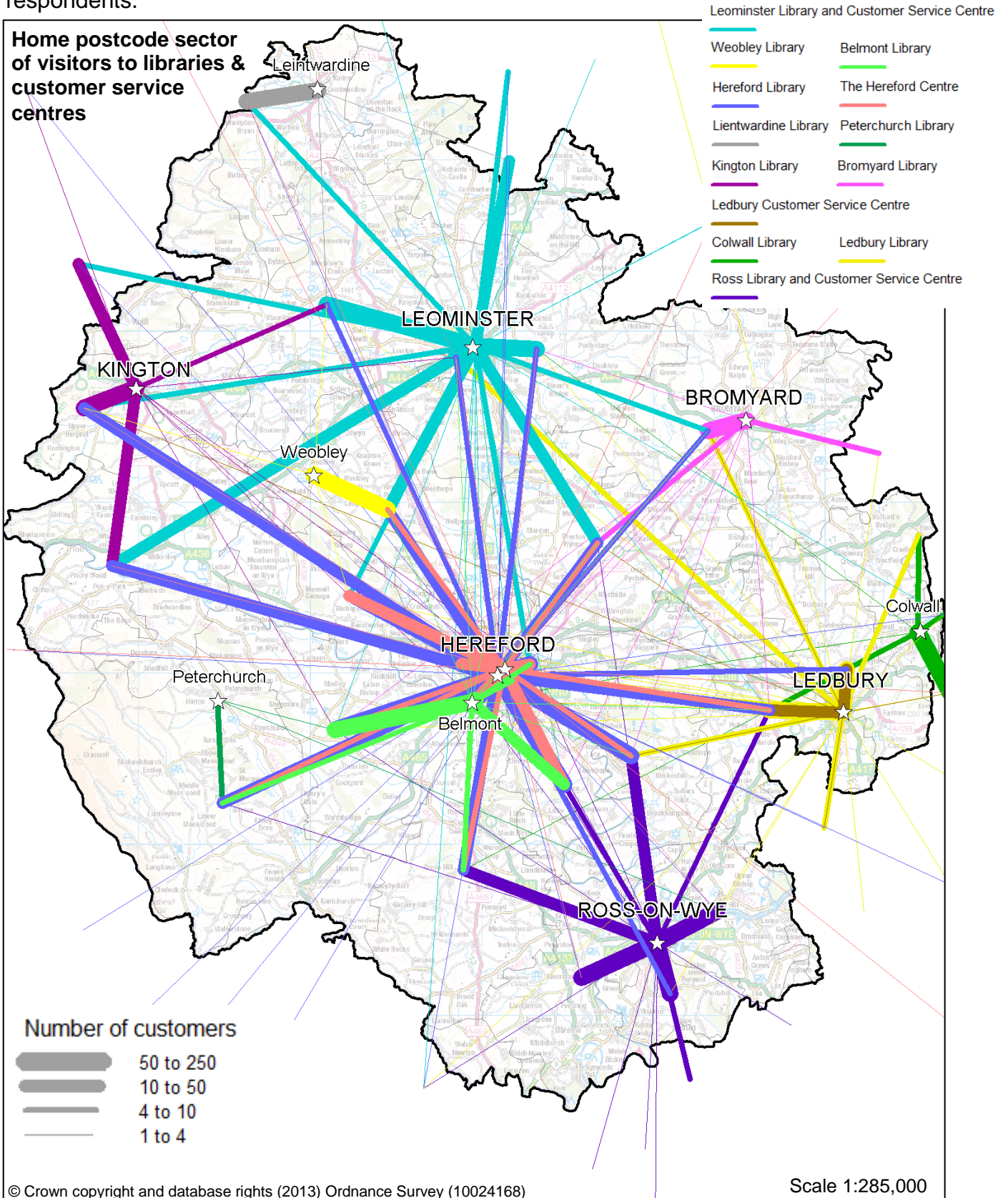
	Number of respondents	Per cent of respondents
Hereford Library	1,170	34%
Ross Library and Customer Service Centre	515	15%
Leominster Library	494	14%
Ledbury Library	475	14%
Hereford Customer Services Centre	235	7%
Belmont Library	211	6%
Kington Library Customer Service Centre	195	6%
Colwall Library	131	4%
Bromyard Centre	129	4%
Ledbury Customer Service Centre	107	3%
Leominster Customer Service Centre	107	3%
Weobley Library	69	2%
Leintwardine Library	63	2%
Peterchurch Library	9	<1%
Total respondents	3,446	100%
Not answered	11	

Note: respondents could select more than one answer.



Q2. What is your post code?

3,187 respondents provided at least part of their postcode in order to help understand where users travel from. The map shows the postcode sectors (four digits, e.g. HR4 0) that respondents travelled to each library or customer service centre from – the thicker the line, the more respondents.

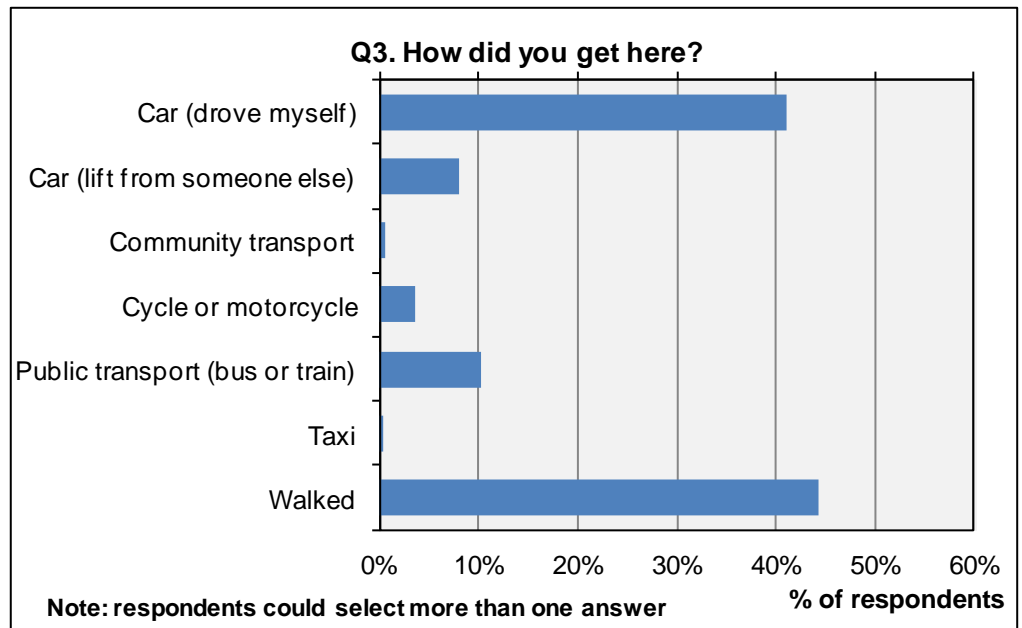


Note that because full postcodes have been used for the destinations (centres), but four-digit centroids have been used for the respondents' origins, someone from the same postcode going to a centre may appear to have travelled on the map. Respondents who selected more than one centre have been counted for all centres selected.

Q3. How did you get here?

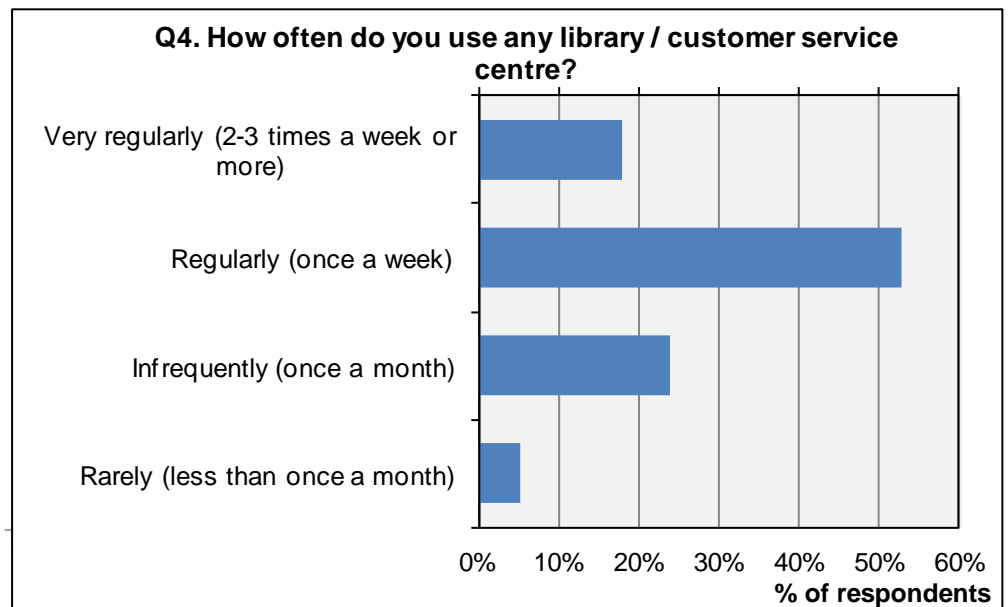
	Number of respondents	Per cent of respondents
Car (drove myself)	1,407	41%
Car (lift from someone else)	271	8%
Community transport	20	1%
Cycle or motorcycle	122	4%
Public transport (bus or train)	351	10%
Taxi	9	<1%
Walked	1,519	44%
Total respondents	3,432	100%
Not answered	25	

Note: respondents could select more than one answer.



Q4. How often do you use any library / customer service centre?

	Number of respondents	Per cent of respondents
Very regularly (2-3 times a week or more)	607	18%
Regularly (once a week)	1,786	53%
Infrequently (once a month)	804	24%
Rarely (less than once a month)	179	5%
Total respondents	3,376	100%
Not answered	81	



Q5. Which days and times do you usually use this library / customer service centre?

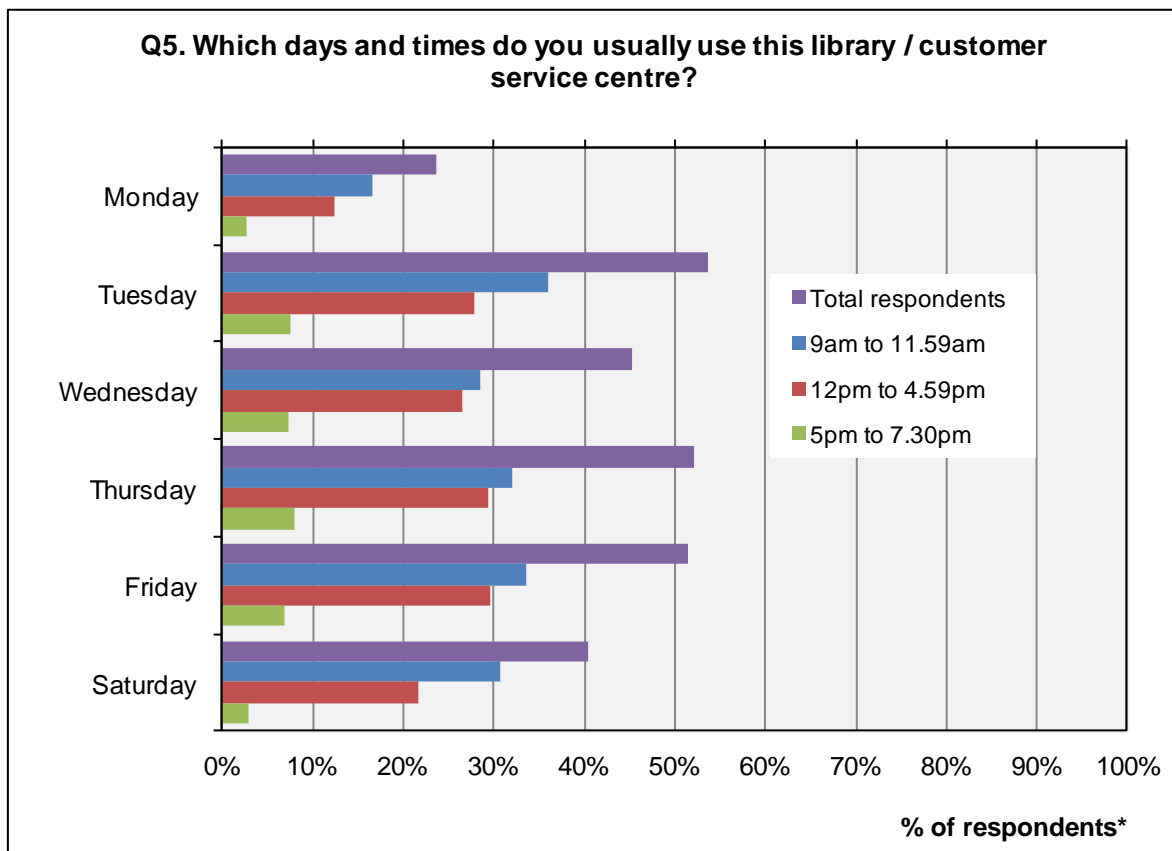
(please tick all that apply)

Number of respondents	9am to 11.59am	12pm to 4.59pm	5pm to 7.30pm	Any time	Base*
Monday	576	425	89	817	3,457
Tuesday	1,241	962	258	1,856	3,457
Wednesday	983	919	256	1,563	3,457
Thursday	1,107	1,014	275	1,798	3,457
Friday	1,162	1,027	238	1,779	3,457
Saturday	1,061	745	102	1,401	3,457

Percentage of respondents	9am to 11.59am	12pm to 4.59pm	5pm to 7.30pm	Any time	Base*
Monday	17%	12%	3%	24%	100%
Tuesday	36%	28%	7%	54%	100%
Wednesday	28%	27%	7%	45%	100%
Thursday	32%	29%	8%	52%	100%
Friday	34%	30%	7%	51%	100%
Saturday	31%	22%	3%	41%	100%

*Base=total survey respondents (3,457)

Note: respondents could select more than one time slot per day.

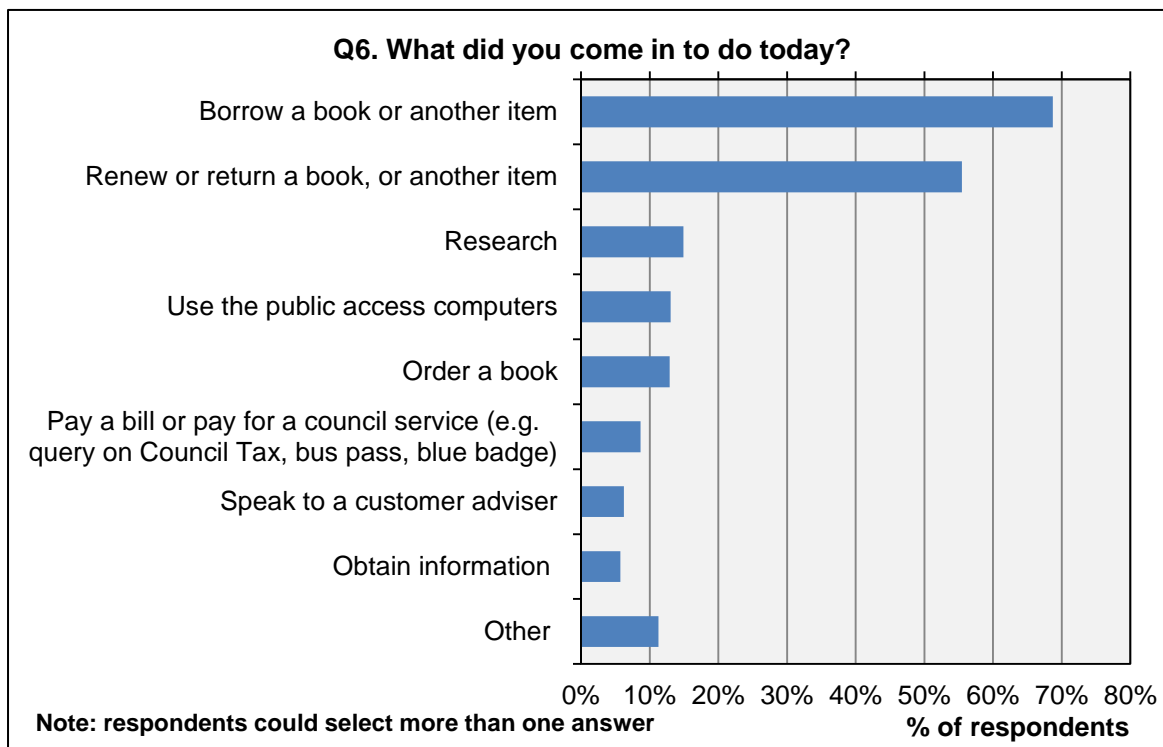


Clearly the responses to this question would vary depending on the centre visited and its opening times. The responses to this question for each centre are shown in Appendix A, and these should be considered alongside the opening times for the centres in July/August 2013.

Q6. What did you come in to do today?

Reason for visiting	Number of respondents	Per cent of respondents
Borrow a book or another item	2,318	69%
Renew or return a book, or another item	1,871	55%
Research	504	15%
Use the public access computers	440	13%
Order a book	435	13%
Pay a bill or pay for a council service (e.g. query on Council Tax, bus pass, blue badge, etc)	293	9%
Speak to a customer adviser*	210	6%
Obtain information*	193	6%
Other*	381	11%
Total respondents	3,374	100%
Not answered	83	

Note: respondents could select more than one option



It was considered probable that reasons for visiting may vary by age and disability, so this question was analysed by these characteristics – see Appendix A. Results did vary by age, but not very much by disability.

* Respondents to these options were asked to specify more detail. 784 comments were made in total, and the results are shown in the word cloud below.

Word cloud for Q6: please specify what you came in to do today – those who answered obtain information, speak to a customer adviser or other



Alternative Use

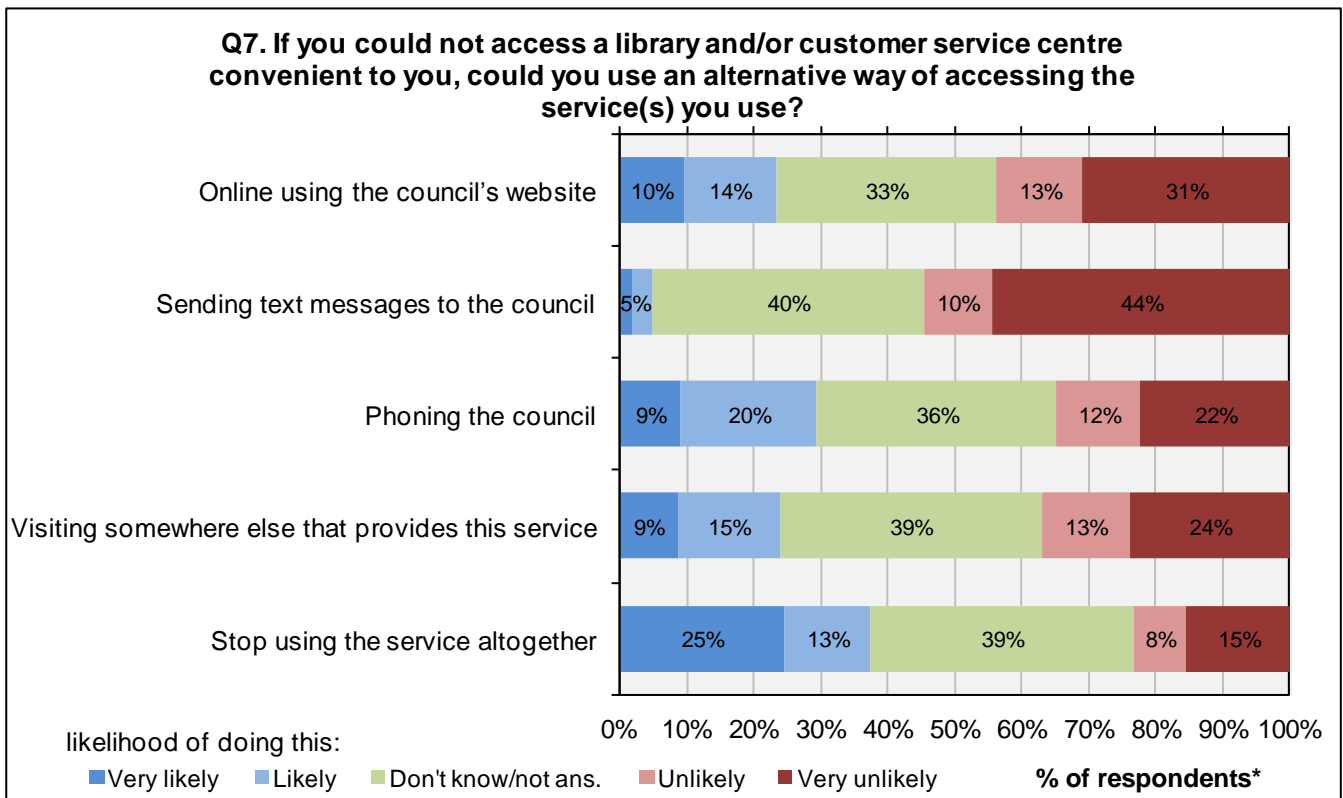
Q7. If you could not access a library and/or customer service centre convenient to you, could you use an alternative way of accessing the service(s) you use?

(please tick one box only per row)

Number of respondents	Very likely to do this	Likely to do this	Unlikely to do this	Very unlikely to do this	Don't know	Total resp.	Not ans.	Base*
Online using the council's website	330	477	441	1,070	119	2,437	1,020	3,457
Sending text messages to the council	69	102	355	1,536	103	2,165	1,292	3,457
Phoning the council	318	701	432	770	115	2,336	1,121	3,457
Visiting somewhere else that provides this service	299	527	455	827	269	2,377	1,080	3,457
Stop using the service altogether	853	440	275	533	377	2,478	979	3,457

Percentage of respondents	Very likely to do this	Likely to do this	Unlikely to do this	Very unlikely to do this	Don't know	Total resp.	Not ans.	Base*
Online using the council's website	10%	14%	13%	31%	3%	70%	30%	100%
Sending text messages to the council	2%	3%	10%	44%	3%	63%	37%	100%
Phoning the council	9%	20%	12%	22%	3%	68%	32%	100%
Visiting somewhere else that provides this service	9%	15%	13%	24%	8%	69%	31%	100%
Stop using the service altogether	25%	13%	8%	15%	11%	72%	28%	100%

*Base=total survey respondents (3,457)



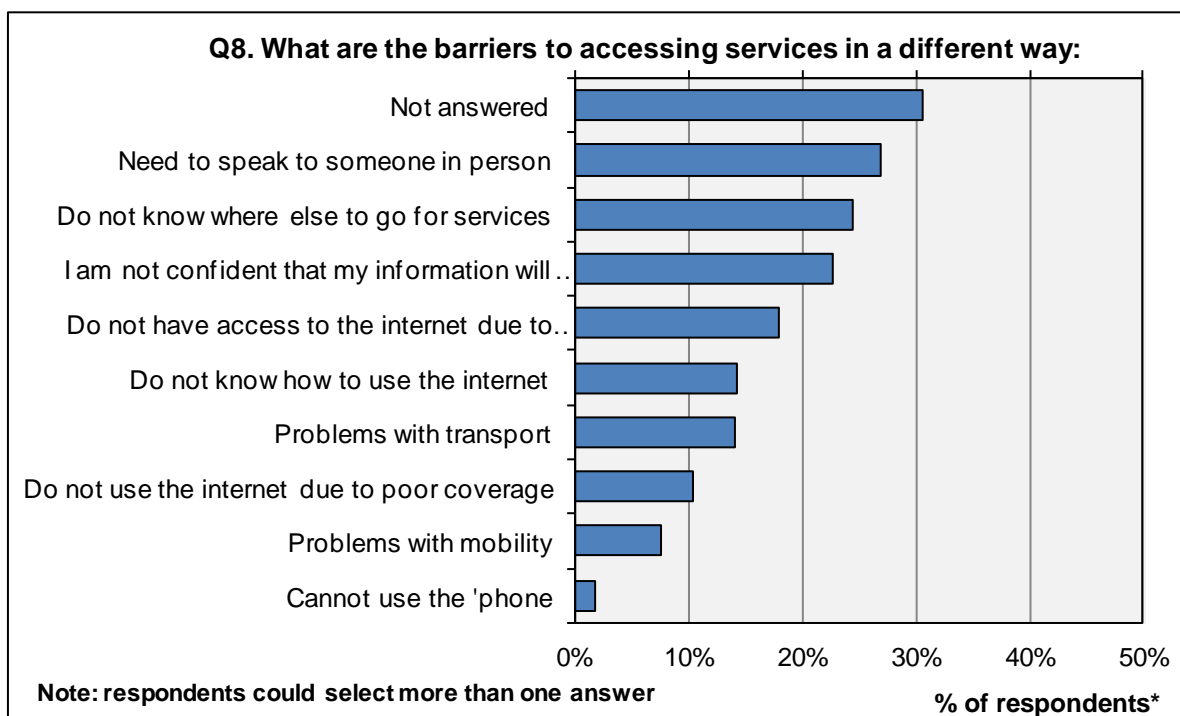
Q8. What are the barriers to accessing services in a different way?

(please tick all that apply)

	Number of respondents	Per cent of respondents
Need to speak to someone in person	928	27%
Do not know where else to go for services	843	24%
I am not confident that my information will be safe on-line	785	23%
Do not have access to the internet due to cost	622	18%
Do not know how to use the internet	491	14%
Problems with transport	487	14%
Do not use the internet due to poor coverage	357	10%
Problems with mobility	262	8%
Cannot use the 'phone	58	2%
Total respondents who gave an answer	2,403	70%
Not answered	1,054	30%
Base*	3,457	100%

*Base=total survey respondents

Note: respondents could select more than one answer.



It is likely that the barriers to accessing services would vary by age and disability, so responses to this question have also been analysed by these characteristics – see Appendix A.

Impacts of reduced / closed services; how these can be addressed; any special needs		No. of comments related to this theme	% of all comments analysed
Impacts: Specific services	Loss of books for borrowing (inc. range)	126	15.2%
	Research / reference library / study area	50	6.0%
	Would lose access to computers/internet	40	4.8%
	Advice/ help with form filling	14	1.7%
	Large print / audio books	9	1.1%
	Scanning/printing/copying	7	0.8%
Transport	Accessibility	81	9.8%
	Cost	17	2.1%
	Environmental impact	4	0.5%
Impacts: general	Would miss face-to-face contact / positive comments about staff	89	10.7%
	Cost of buying books instead	59	7.1%
	Would stop using service - wouldn't travel	30	3.6%
	Quality of life / isolation	24	2.9%
	Knock-on effects on other social/cultural activities (e.g. museum, book groups)	16	1.9%
	Reduction in opening hours would be a problem	14	1.7%
	Increased unemployment	7	0.8%
	Would stop visiting county towns / go out of county	6	0.7%
General comments	Library important for children / families	75	9.0%
	Library is a meeting place / community hub / social interaction	56	6.8%
	Don't close	46	5.5%
	Can't/don't want to use a computer / not got access to internet (cost or coverage)	31	3.7%
	General importance of having books to read - education / quality of life / well-being	25	3.0%
	Library important for disabled people (including housebound)	21	2.5%
	Library important for older people	19	2.3%
	Can't browse for / read / pick up books on internet	13	1.6%
	Importance of rural services	11	1.3%
	Already lost mobile service	8	1.0%
Mitigations / suggestions for addressing impacts	Reduced hours	15	1.8%
	Use building for more / co-locate services	4	0.5%
	Charges (internet / library)	7	0.8%
	Centralise service & deliver out / mobile unit	4	0.5%
	Schemes for donating / swapping books	2	0.2%
	Other suggestions	5	0.6%
Negative comment about Council / Council Tax		8	1.0%
Other comment		10	1.2%
Comment unrelated to question		73	8.8%
Total comments analysed		829	100.0%
Question marked but no answer		19	
Total responses analysed		848	

Will the proposals particularly affect any group of people?		No. of comments related to this theme	% of all comments analysed
Everyone		85	19.2%
Protected characteristics	Age-elderly / pensioners	156	35.3%
	Disability	104	23.5%
	Age-children & families	91	20.6%
	Age-general	35	7.9%
	Age-young people / students	30	6.8%
	Pregnancy / maternity	7	1.6%
	Race	6	1.4%
	Religion	0	-
	Sex	0	-
	Sexual orientation	0	-
Other characteristics	People on low incomes / benefit reliant / unemployed	60	13.6%
	Those not confident using/don't have internet / other methods of communication	43	9.7%
	Working people	9	2.0%
Travel-related comments	Travel-accessibility	47	10.6%
	Travel-cost	10	2.3%
Those who use specific services	Read/borrow books	30	6.8%
	People who need computer access	24	5.4%
	Research / reference library	8	1.8%
	Large print/audio books	6	1.4%
	Doing transactions with Council	5	1.1%
	Print/copy/scan	2	0.5%
Other aspects affected	Newspapers	1	0.2%
	Library: means of education	26	5.9%
	Social impact of closing libraries / social isolation	27	6.1%
	Value of face-to-face contact	14	3.2%
	Rurality	11	2.5%
	Library: positive effect on health (mental or physical)	4	0.9%
There aren't any proposals		13	2.9%
Comment unrelated to question		34	7.7%
Total comments analysed		442	100.0%
Question marked but no answer		26	
Total responses analysed		468	

Q11. Any other comments?

Just over half of the responses (1,800) included some kind of comment in this section, although many related to other questions in the survey. The 'word cloud' illustrates the most common words across all of the comments (the bigger the words the more frequently they appear in the comments). It was possible to analyse 933 of the comments (52%); the themes emerging are presented in the table below.



Copyright 2013

tagxedo.com

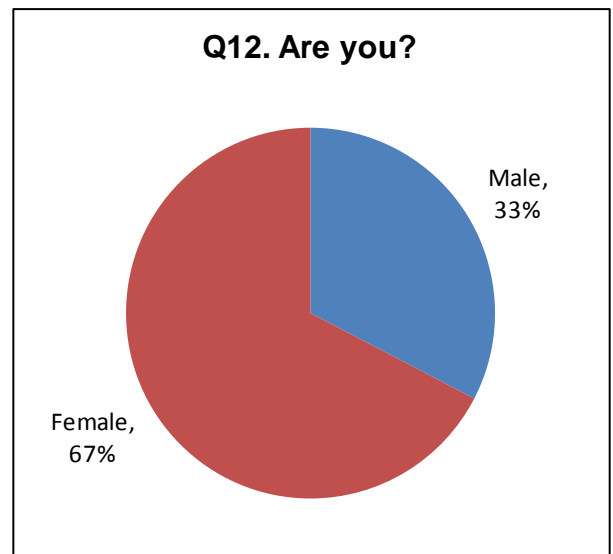
Any other comments?		No. of comments related to this theme	% of all comments analysed
General statements	Don't close library	120	13.4%
	Negative comment about council management/decisions / Council Tax	80	8.9%
	Negative about survey	54	6.0%
	Don't close service (general)	33	3.7%
	Keep customer services	7	0.8%
	Don't make people redundant	4	0.4%
Compliments about current service	Positive about staff	41	4.6%
	Positive about library service	35	3.9%
	Positive about customer service	12	1.3%
General comments in relation to proposals to change the service	Importance of libraries (education, sense of community, interaction)	218	24.3%
	Can't provide library service online / phone	55	6.1%
	Travel-related comment	44	4.9%
	Library good for child development	35	3.9%
	Need / prefer face-to-face interaction	32	3.6%
	Rural / small town sustainability	24	2.7%
	Financial comment	24	2.7%
	Technological barriers	21	2.3%
	Closing would be short-sighted / irreversible	14	1.6%
	Would stop using library / other service - wouldn't travel	11	1.2%
Impacts on specific groups	Need out of work hours	11	1.2%
	Impact on elderly	19	2.1%
	Would affect everyone	18	2.0%
Comments about specific services currently available	Impact on other specific groups	5	0.6%
	Computer / internet	19	2.1%
	Printing / scanning / copying	7	0.8%
	Help in job hunting	5	0.6%
	Mobile library	4	0.4%
Suggestions about alternatives	Advice	3	0.3%
	Make better / more use of buildings	26	2.9%
	Introduce fees	14	1.6%
	Use community / volunteers	6	0.7%
	It wouldn't work to use volunteers	5	0.6%
	Reduce opening of larger libraries to enable smaller ones to open	3	0.3%
	Negative about council service via phone	3	0.3%
Other suggestion to save money	12	1.3%	
Other - general	8	0.9%	
Comment related to non-comment questions in survey	99	11.0%	
Total comments analysed	898	100.0%	
Question marked but no answer (e.g. stated 'none')	35		
Total responses analysed	933		

About you

Respondents were asked to provide some demographic information so that a profile of respondents could be produced, and also so that responses could be analysed by different characteristics to see if they vary, for example by age.

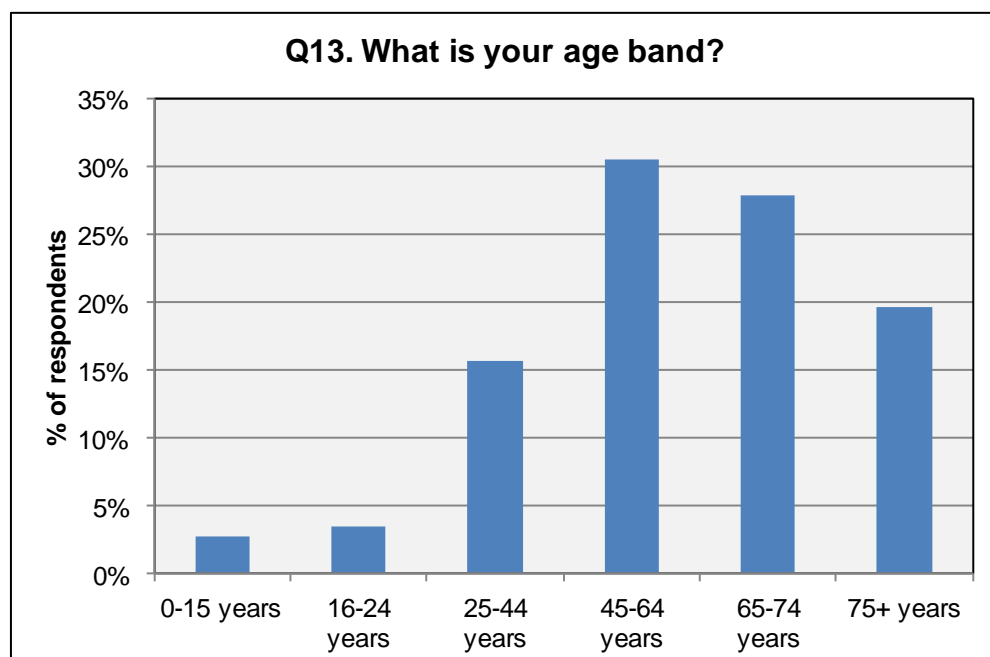
Q12. Sex - Are you?

	Number of respondents	Per cent of respondents
Male	1,093	33%
Female	2,254	67%
Total respondents	3,347	100%
Not answered	110	



Q13. What is your age band?

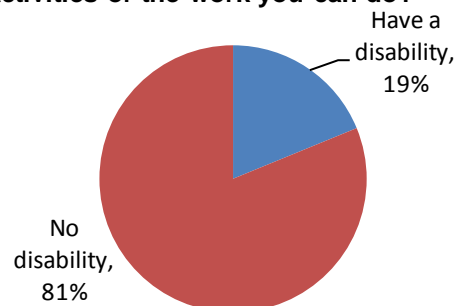
	Number of respondents	Per cent of respondents
0-15 years	91	3%
16-24 years	116	3%
25-44 years	526	16%
45-64 years	1,021	31%
65-74 years	935	28%
75+ years	657	20%
Total respondents	3,346	100%
Not answered	111	



Q14. Do you have a disability, long-term illness or health problem (12 months or more) which limits daily activities or the work you can do?

	Number of respondents	Per cent of respondents
Yes	602	19%
No	2,599	81%
Total respondents	3,201	100%
Not answered	256	

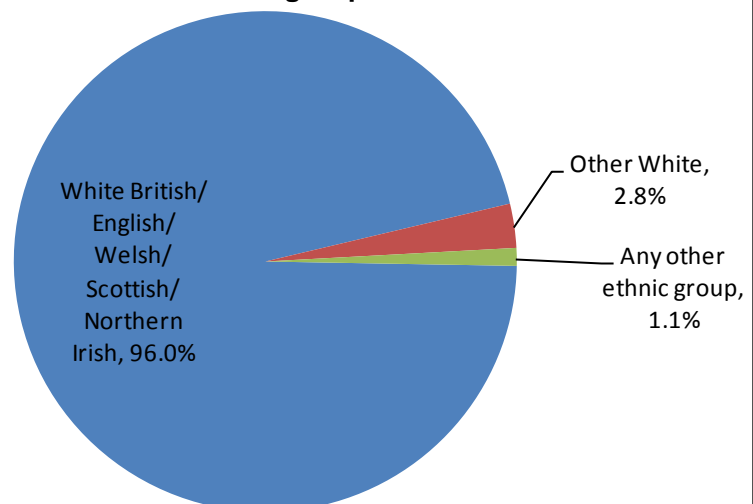
Q14. Do you have a disability, long-term illness or health problem (12 months or more) which limits daily activities or the work you can do?



Q15. How would you describe your ethnic group? (Please tick one box only)

	Number of respondents	Per cent of respondents
White British/English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish	3,111	96.0%
Other White	92	2.8%
<i>Irish</i>	8	0.2%
<i>Eastern European (Polish / Lithuanian / Romanian / Bulgarian)</i>	18	0.5%
<i>Other European (inc. Spanish, German & unspecified)</i>	25	0.7%
<i>Mixed white</i>	9	0.3%
<i>Australian / NZ / USA / S. African</i>	9	0.3%
<i>Other</i>	9	0.3%
<i>Not specified</i>	14	0.4%
Any other ethnic group	37	1.1%
<i>Asian or Asian British</i>	12	0.3%
<i>Black or Black British</i>	7	0.2%
<i>Mixed</i>	7	0.2%
<i>Other/not specified</i>	8	0.2%
Total respondents	3,239	100%
Not answered	218	

Q15. How would you describe your ethnic group?



Did you know?

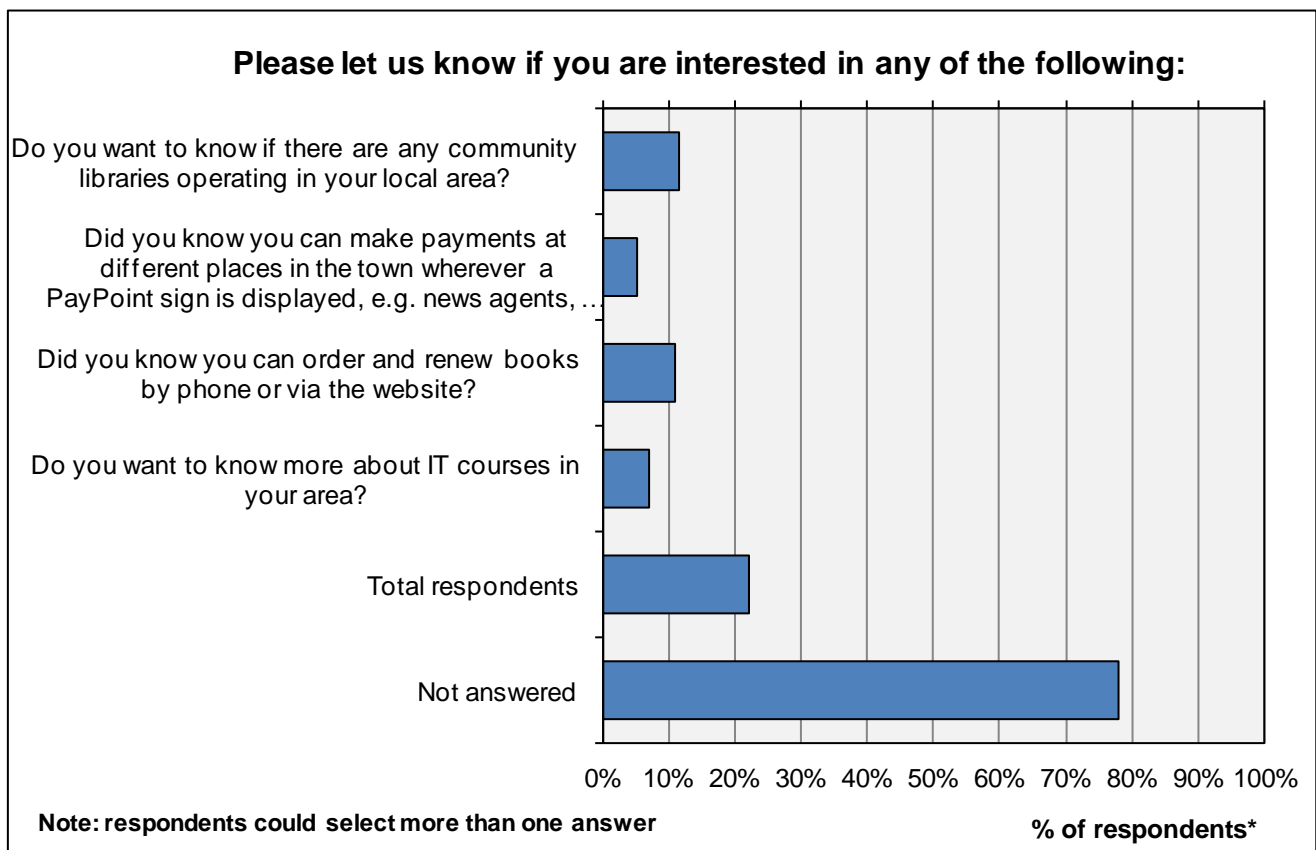
If you provide your email or postal address below we can tell you different ways to help access services. We will not use this information for any other purpose or share it with anyone else. Please let us know if you are interested in any of the following.

The table below shows the number of respondents who indicated they would like to know more about the options provided. A total of 765 respondents said they would like to be contacted about at least one of the options, and all but 39 of these provided either an e-mail or postal address.

Tell me more about...	Number of respondents	Per cent of respondents
Do you want to know if there are any community libraries operating in your local area?	397	11%
Did you know you can make payments at different places in the town wherever a PayPoint sign is displayed, e.g. news agents, post offices and garages?	176	5%
Did you know you can order and renew books by phone or via the website?	373	11%
Do you want to know more about IT courses in your area?	242	7%
Total respondents	765	22%
Not answered	2,692	78%
Base*	3,457	100%

*Base=total survey respondents

Note: respondents could select more than one answer



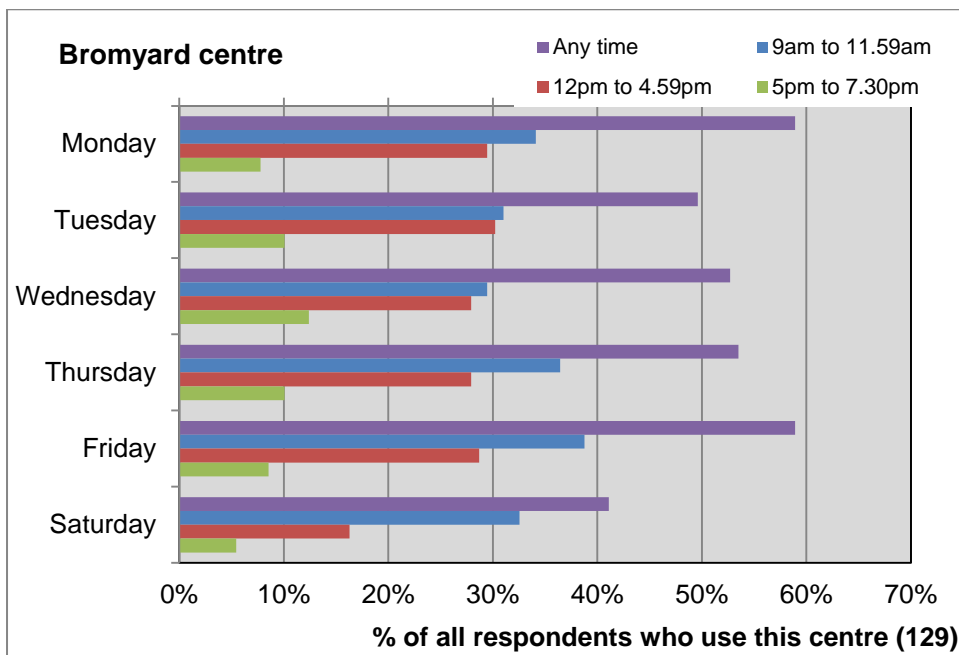
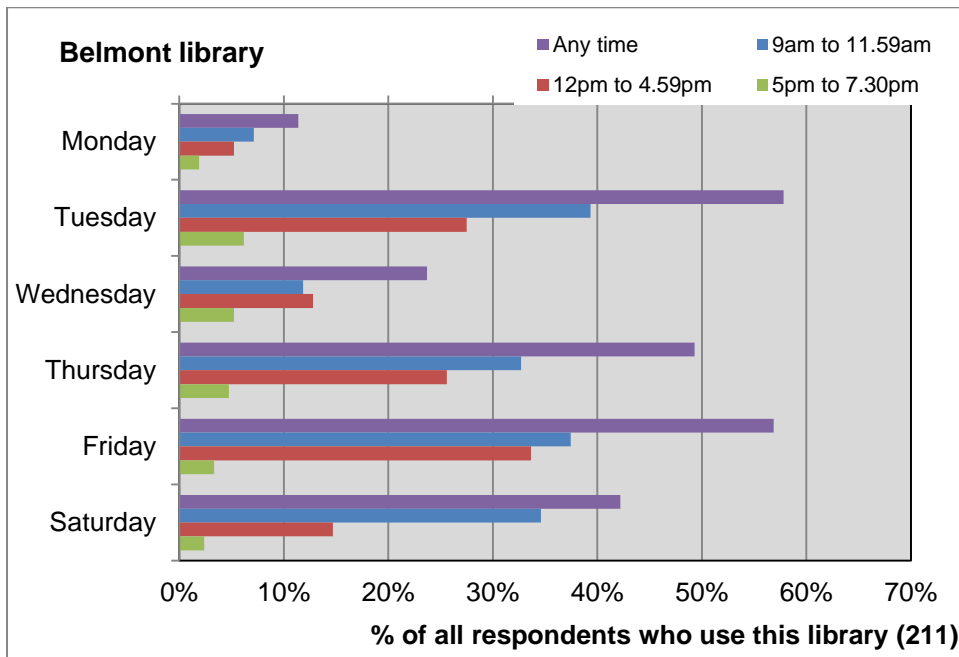
Appendix A: Cross-tabulations

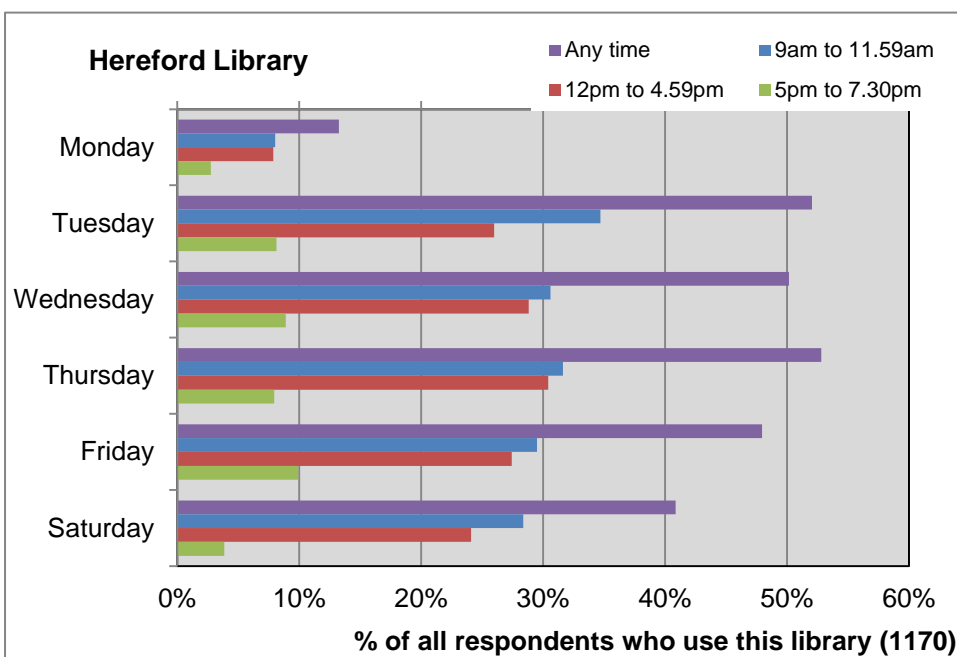
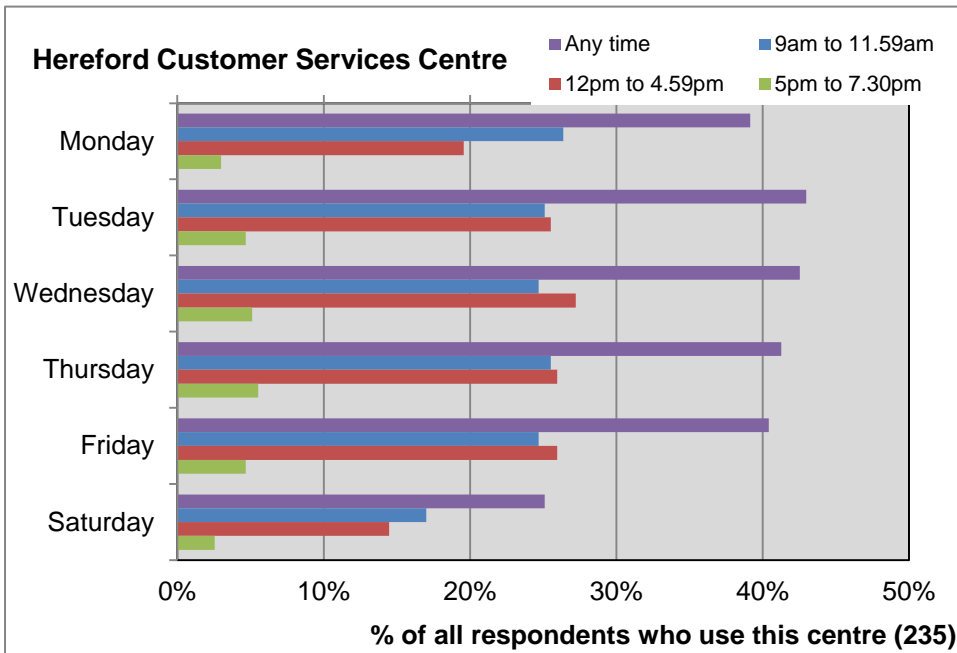
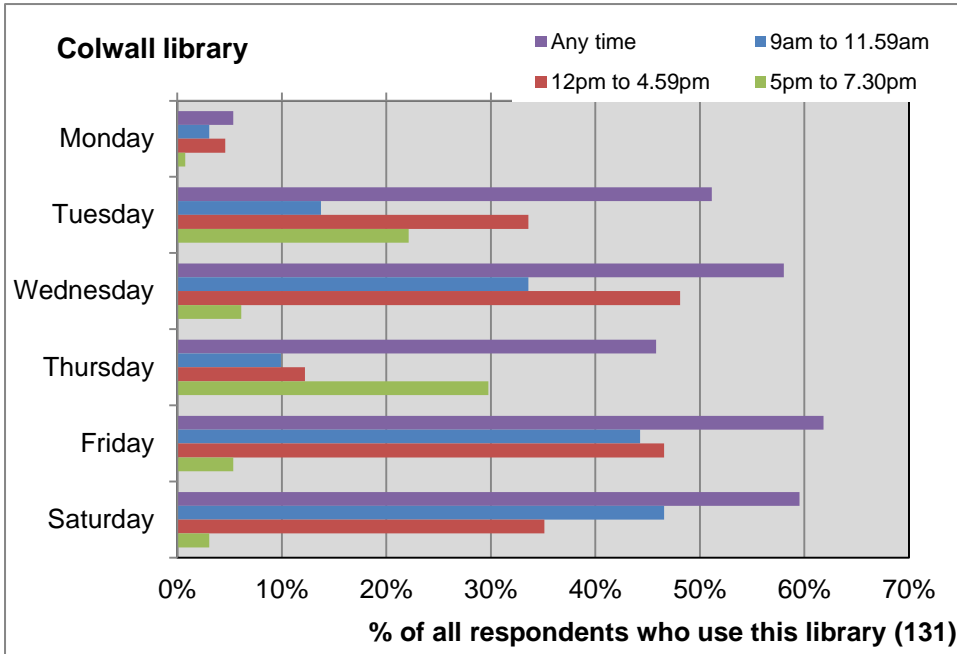
Days and times visited by centre (Q5 by Q1)

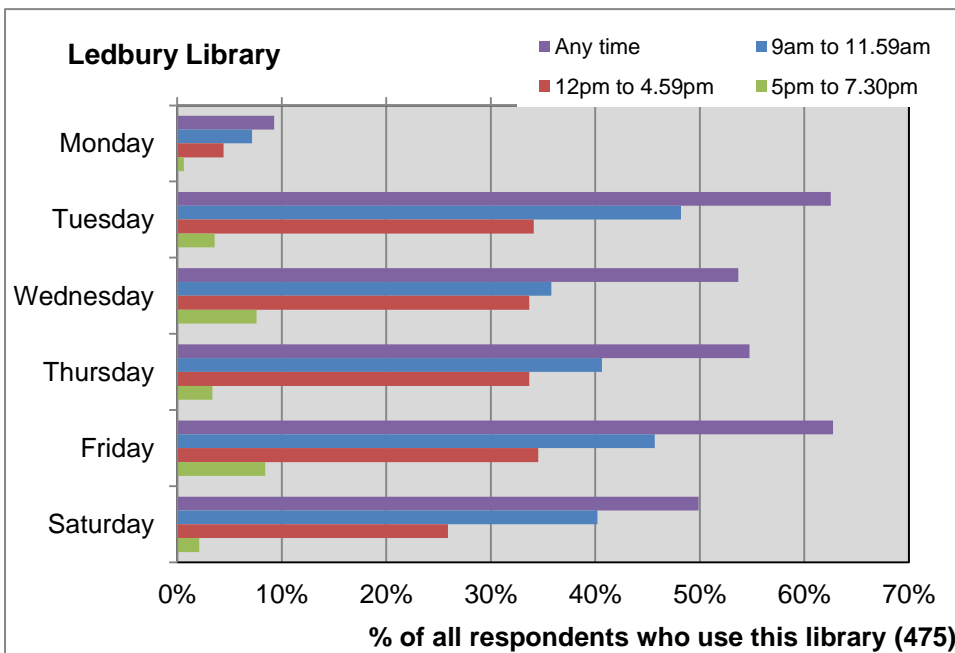
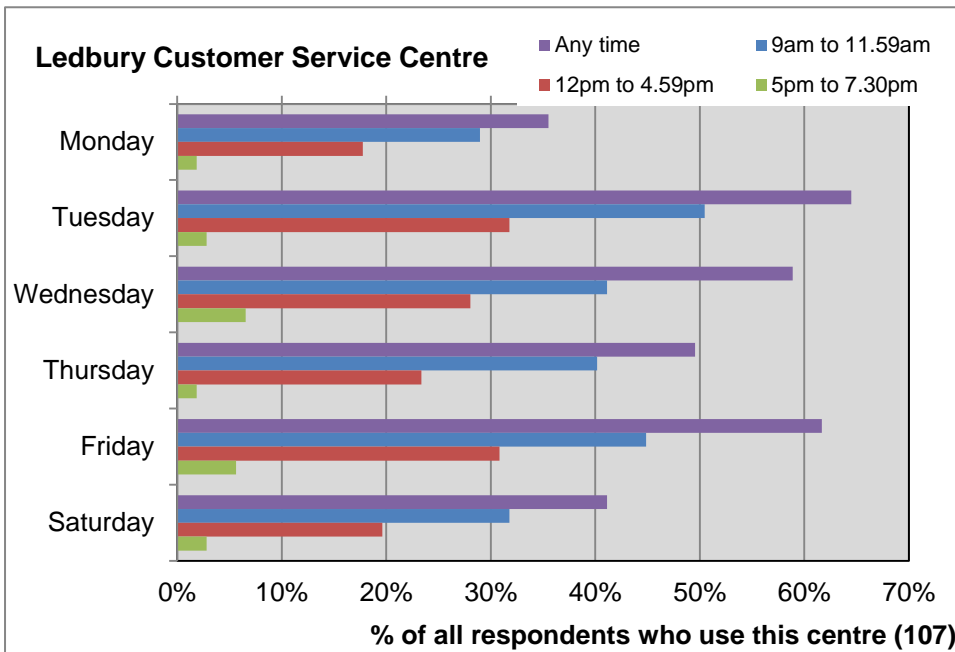
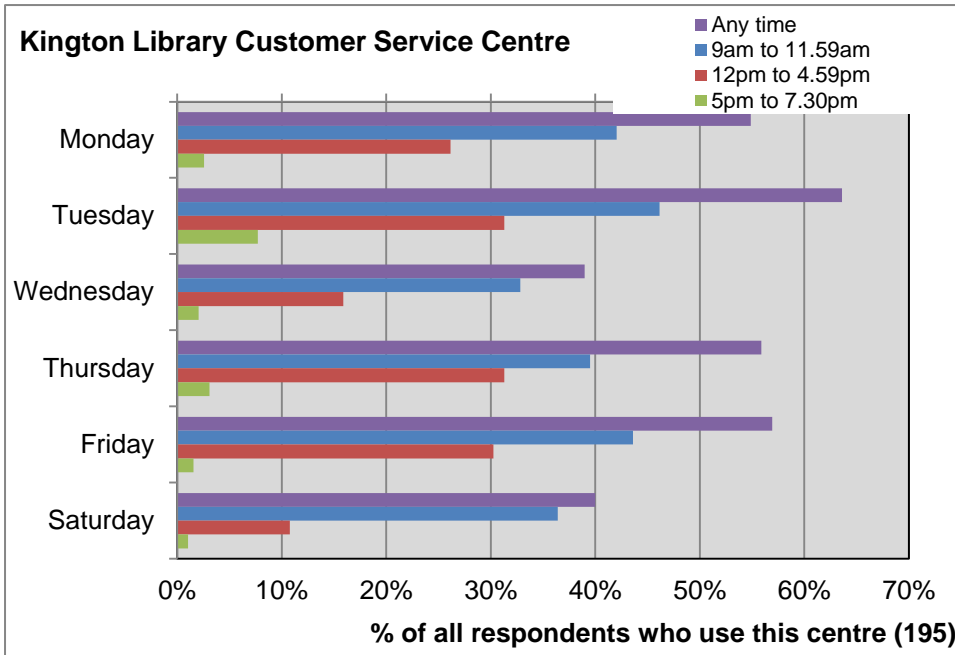
Each of the charts below shows the days and times that respondents said that they usually use each of the libraries or customer service centres. Percentages are based on the total number of respondents who said they use each centre.

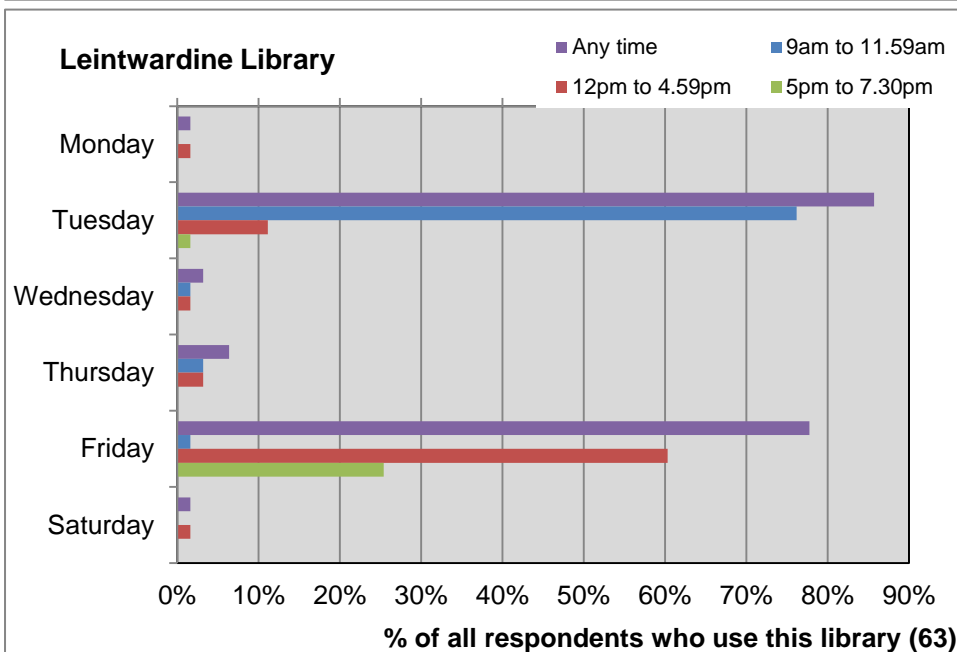
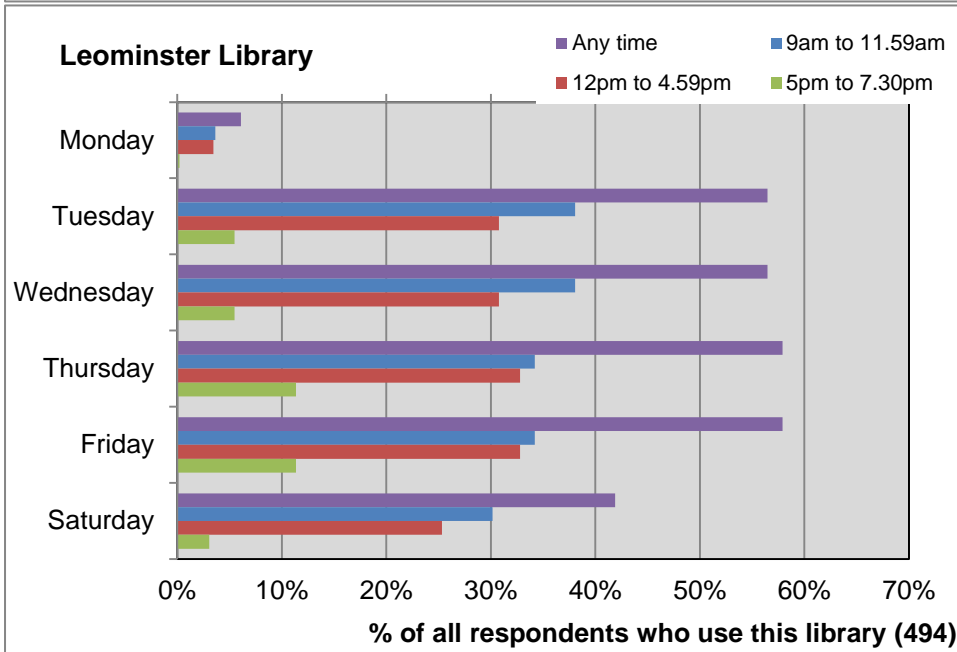
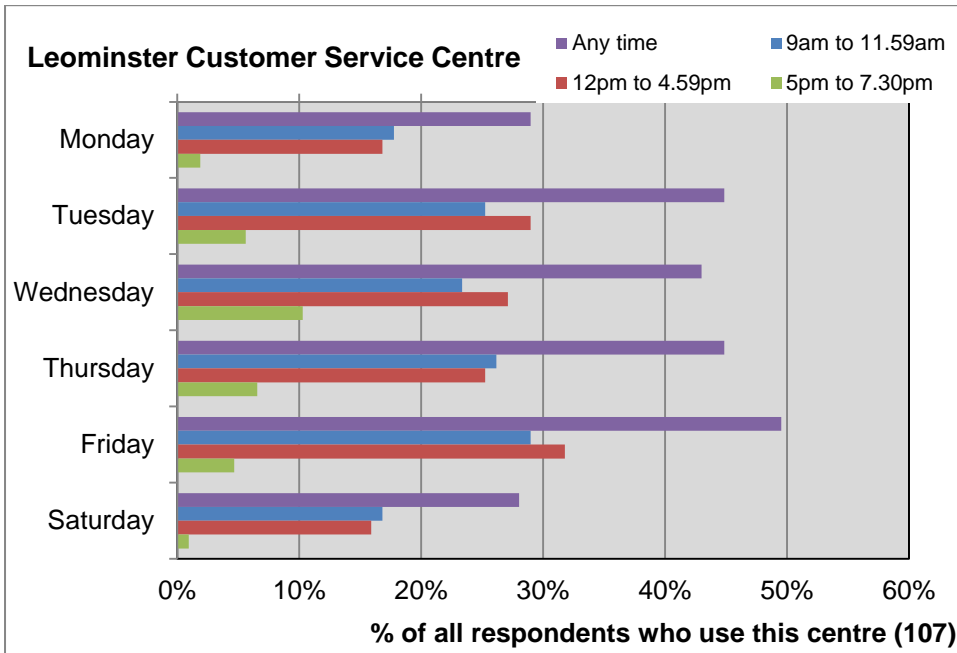
Please note that responses have not been validated against actual opening times. Also some respondents ticked more than one library or customer service centre; their responses have been counted for all the centres they ticked which could have resulted in ticks against times when a particular centre isn't open.

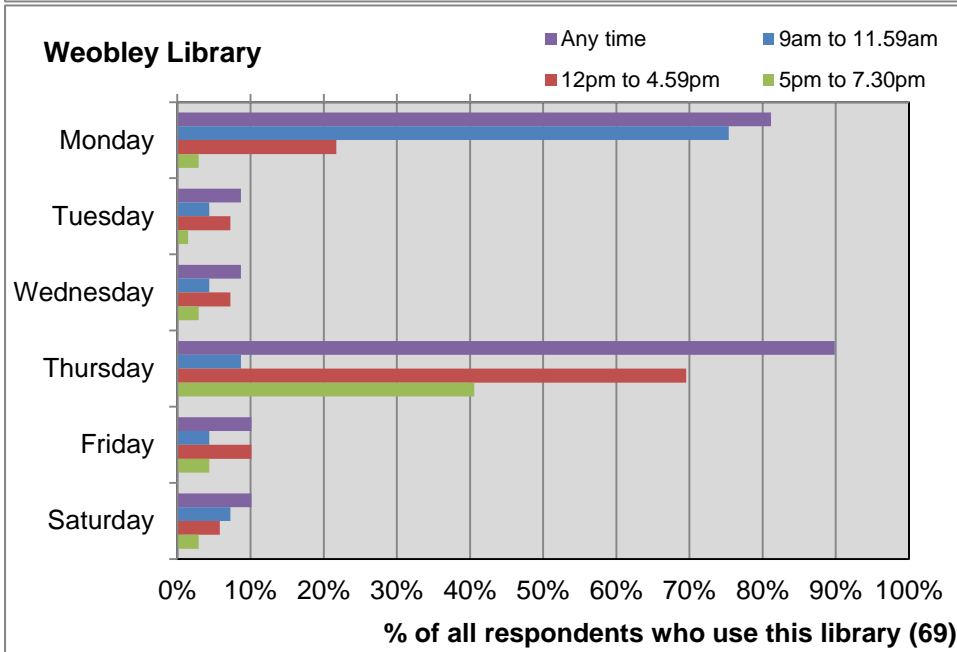
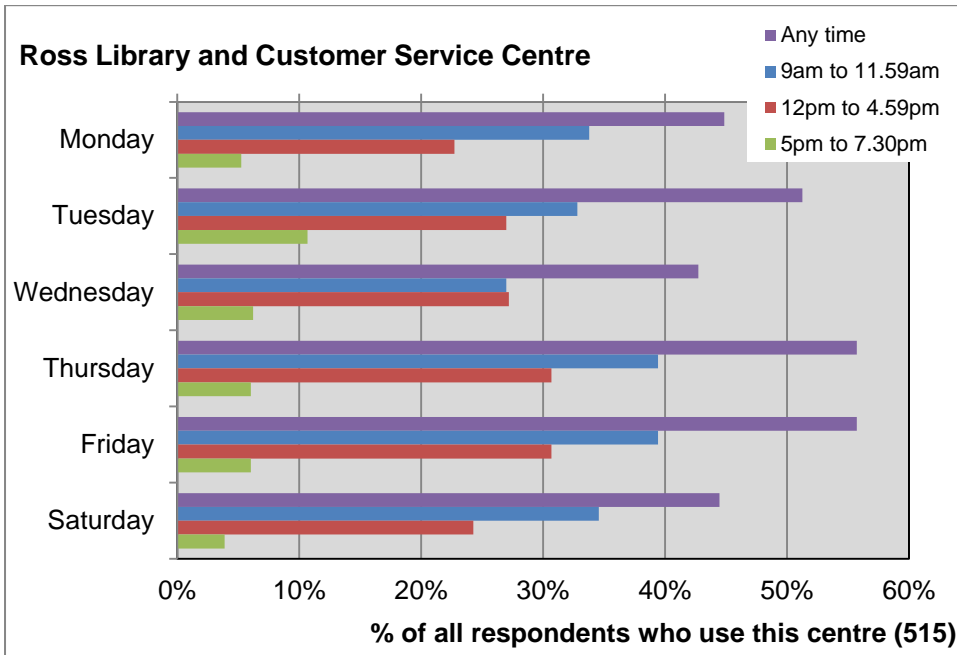
Only nine respondents said they visited Peterchurch library, so a chart has not been produced. Only one of these nine only ticked Peterchurch; the rest ticked Hereford, Belmont or Kington as well.



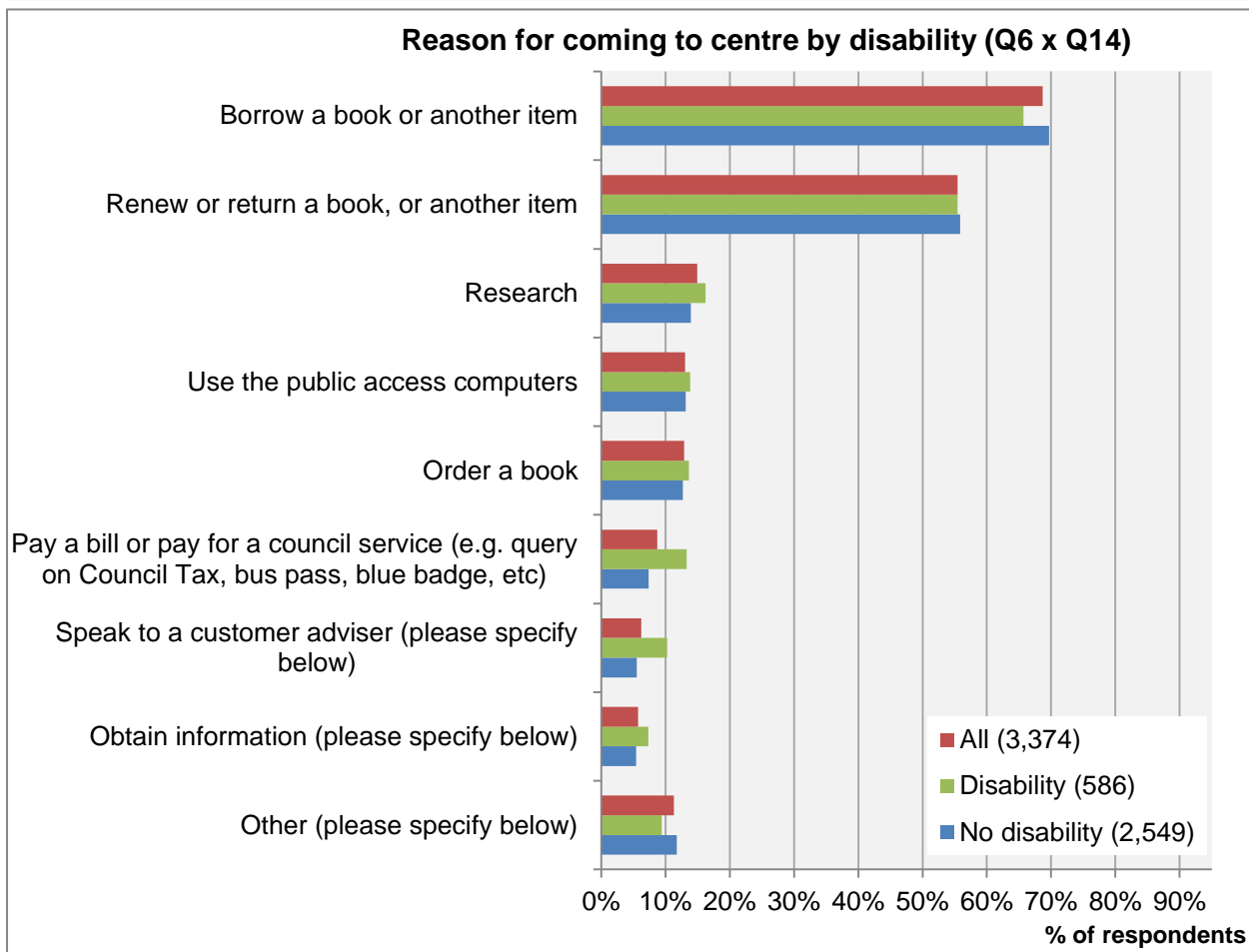
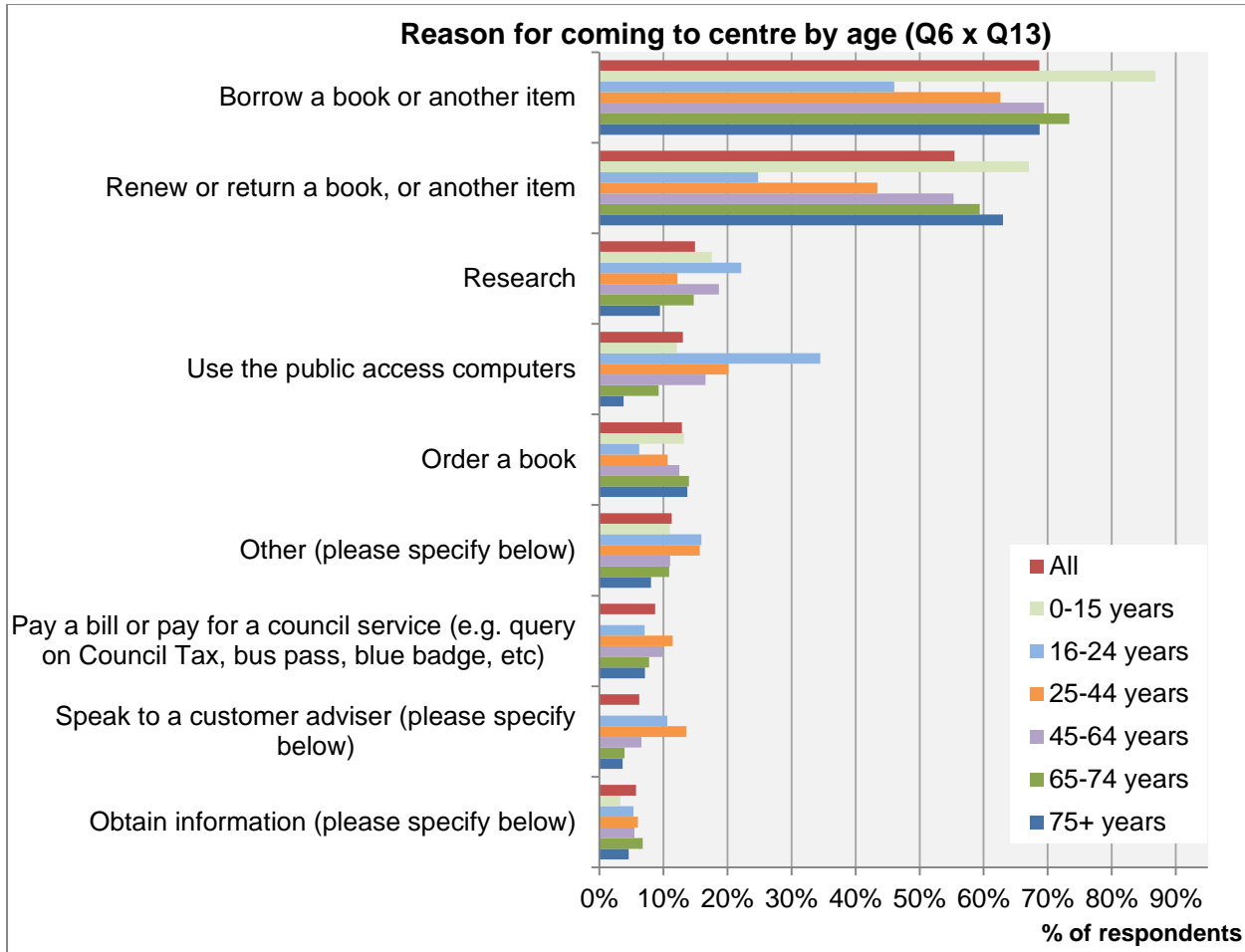




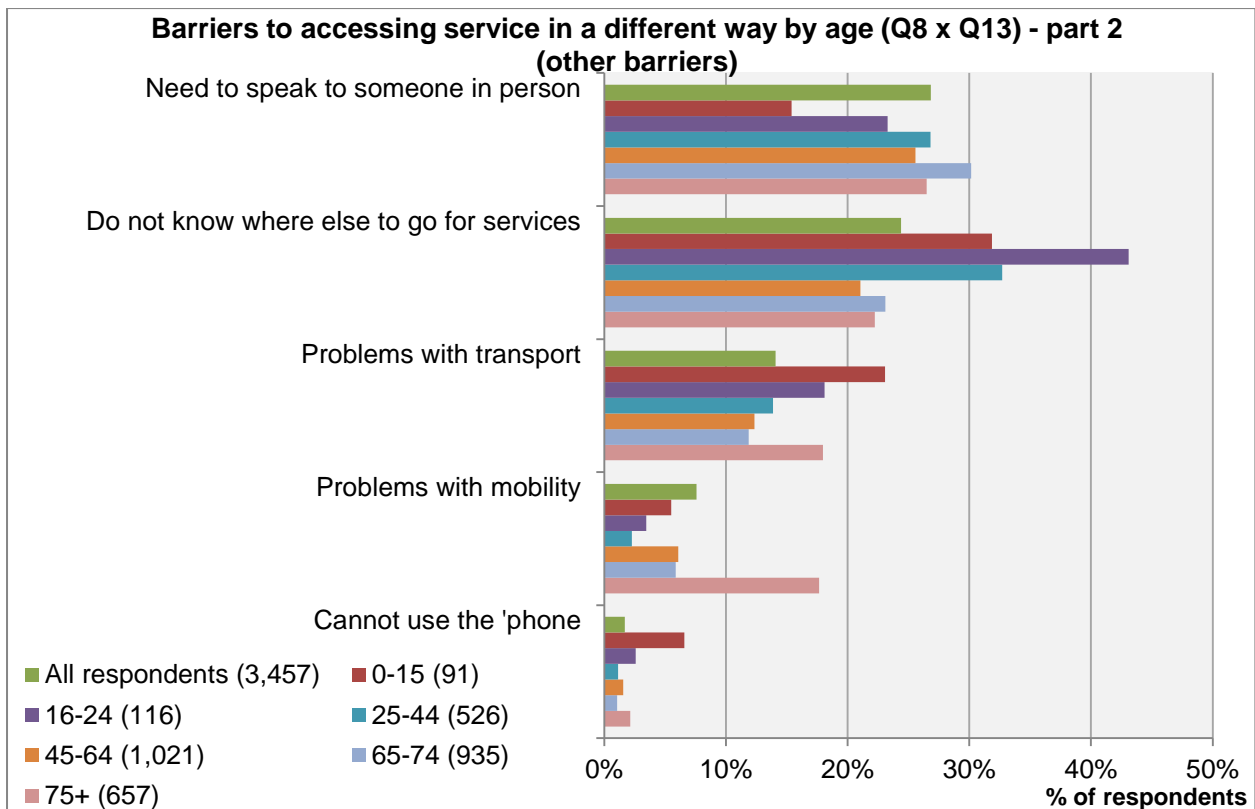
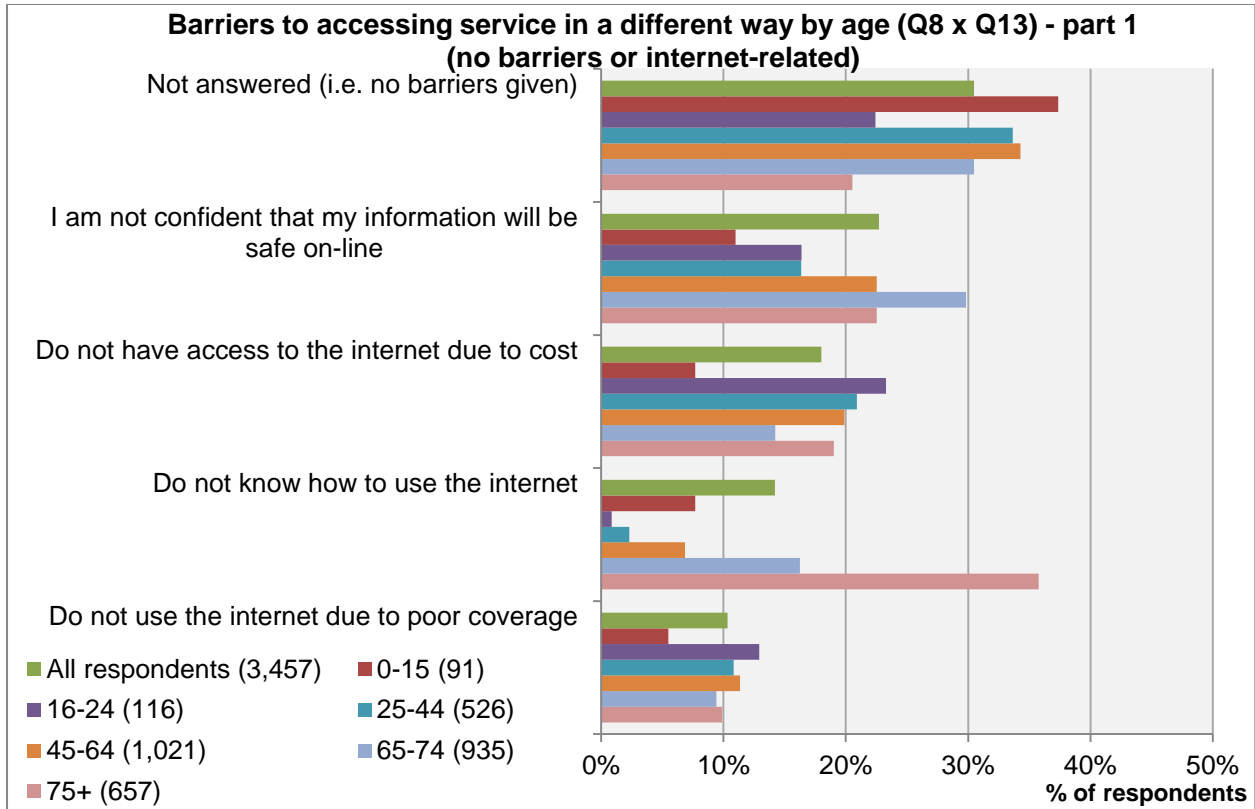




What did you come in to do by age and disability (Q6 by Q13 and Q14)

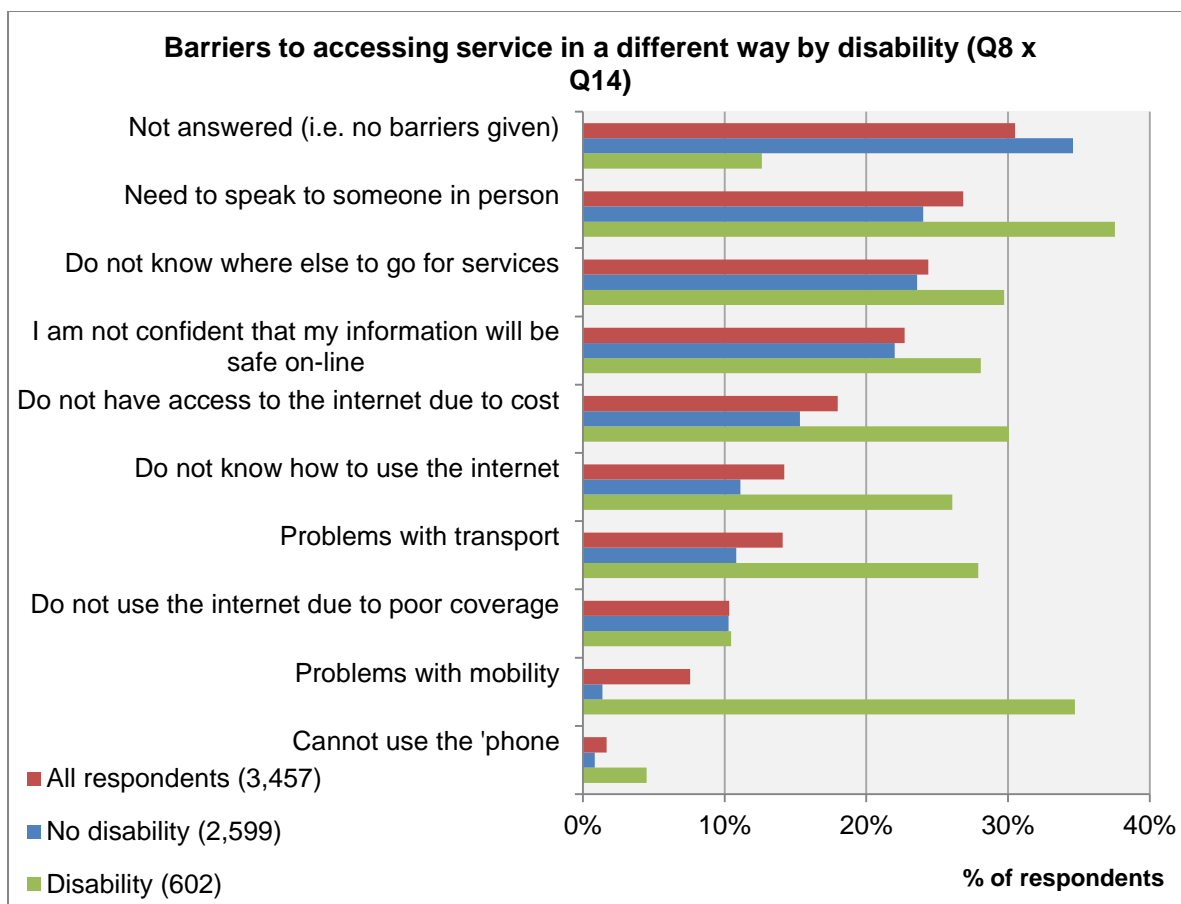


Barriers to accessing services in a different way by age (Q8 by Q13)



Barrier to accessing service in a different way (number of respondents)	Age-group (years)						
	All	0-15	16-24	25-44	45-64	65-74	75+
Need to speak to someone in person	928	14	27	141	261	282	174
Do not know where else to go for services	843	29	50	172	215	216	146
I am not confident that my information will be safe on-line	785	10	19	86	230	279	148
Do not have access to the internet due to cost	622	7	27	110	203	133	125
Do not know how to use the internet	491	7	1	12	70	152	235
Problems with transport	487	21	21	73	126	111	118
Do not use the internet due to poor coverage	357	5	15	57	116	88	65
Problems with mobility	262	5	4	12	62	55	116
Cannot use the 'phone	58	6	3	6	16	10	14
Total respondents who gave an answer	2,403	57	90	349	671	650	522
Not answered (i.e. no barriers given)	1,054	34	26	177	350	285	135
Base (total respondents)	3,457	91	116	526	1021	935	657

Barriers to accessing services in a different way by disability (Q8 by Q14)



Barrier to accessing service in a different way	Number of respondents			Per cent of respondents		
	All	Disability	No disability	All	Disability	No disability
Need to speak to someone in person	928	226	624	27%	38%	24%
Do not know where else to go for services	843	179	613	24%	30%	24%
I am not confident that my information will be safe on-line	785	169	572	23%	28%	22%
Do not have access to the internet due to cost	622	181	398	18%	30%	15%
Do not know how to use the internet	491	157	289	14%	26%	11%
Problems with transport	487	168	281	14%	28%	11%
Do not use the internet due to poor coverage	357	63	267	10%	10%	10%
Problems with mobility	262	209	36	8%	35%	1%
Cannot use the 'phone	58	27	22	2%	4%	1%
Total respondents who gave an answer	2,403	526	1,700	70%	87%	65%
Not answered (i.e. no barriers given)	1,054	76	899	30%	13%	35%
Base	3,457	602	2,599	100%	100%	100%

Appendix B: The questionnaire