

The logo for 'Which?' is a red square with the word 'Which?' in white, bold, sans-serif font. The question mark is black.

Which?

Mobile Contracts

Consumer Research
February 2014

Coming to the end of a contract

- Of those who have a monthly contract phone or PAYG with bundles 6 in 10 (58%) say that they generally go under their minutes allocated, and 63% say they generally go under their texts allocated.
- Half of people (52%) have come to the end of phone contract in the last 5 years, the majority were on a package including tariff and phone.
- The top action when coming to the end of a contract is to sign up to a new monthly phone plan with the same provider (41%), where the person would get a new phone. However a fifth (22%) of people who had come to the end of a contract weren't sure if it was possible to get a pay monthly plan changed to SIM only at the end of the fixed term, and of those who signed up to a monthly phone plan (with new phone), and had phoned their provider to ask about available deals, only 1 in 10 (9%) reported that their provider told them they could keep the phone and get a SIM only contract.
- Considering that a third (33%) of people who had come to end of their contract said one of their main aims was to save money and 3 in 10 (29%) cited getting a cheaper monthly tariff, it is worrying that the majority weren't told that they could keep their phone and get a SIM only contract when they phoned up.

Finding a new deal

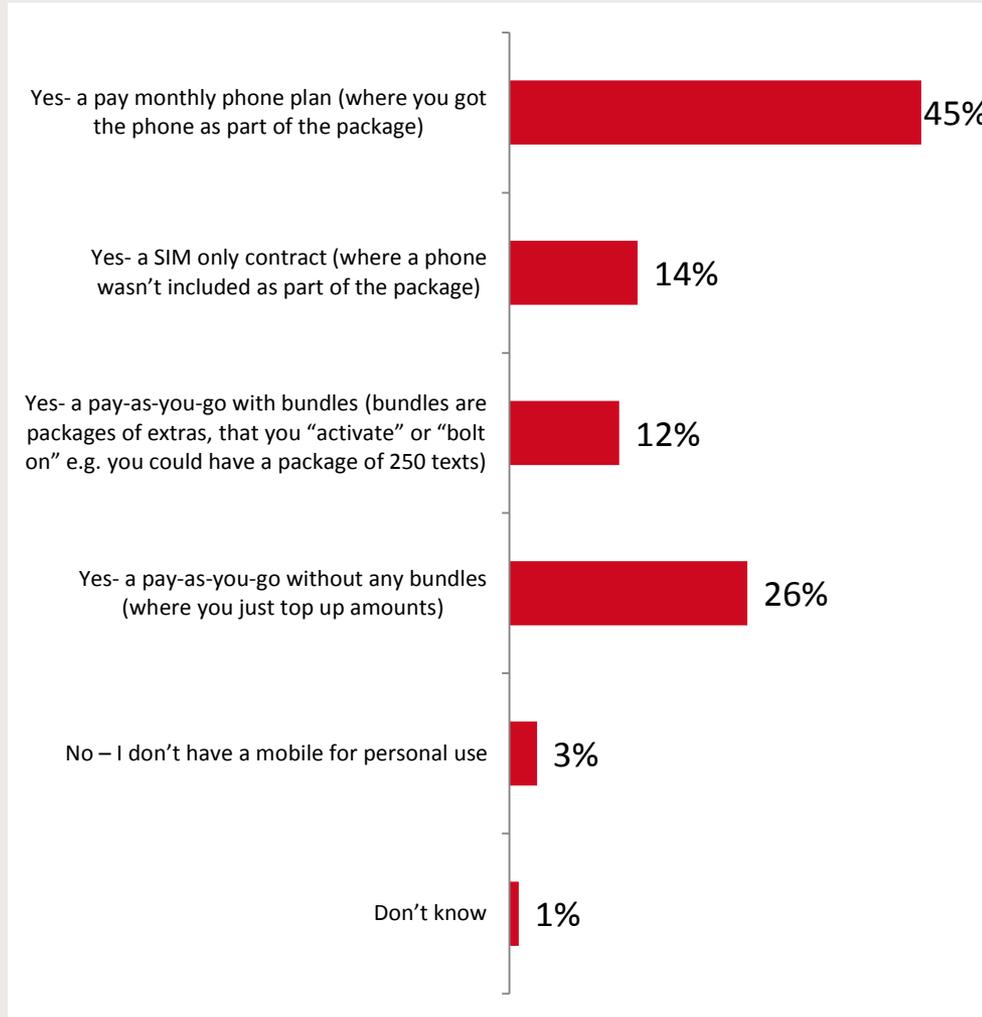
- At the end of their contracts 8 in 10 people (81%) engaged with their provider, either face to face, by phone or online. People are more likely to go online and search what deals are available when dealing with other providers and intermediaries. However when dealing with their own providers, people are more likely to go into their provider's shop or phone them (55%). People were just as likely to phone their provider and ask what deal they could give them (36%) as to search online for what deals are available (38%).
- People who phoned their provider are more likely to report that their provider offered them a deal that they understood was personalised to them (31%) or available to everyone (27%) than reported being told that they could keep their phone and get a SIM only contract (17%). Only 2% of people who phoned their provider said that their provider offered to unlock their phone without them asking, 1 in 10 people (10%) asked their provider if they could.

Experience of unlocking phones

- A quarter (25%) of people who currently own a mobile have wanted to unlock a phone in the last 2 years, a fifth (20%) actually did. Roughly the same percentage got it unlocked by their provider (7%) as went to a service on the high street (9%).
- 7 in 10 (71%) who got their phone unlocked on the high street had it unlocked within a couple of days, only 4 in 10 (39%) who had it unlocked by their provider had the same speed of service.
- However, unlocking phones on the high street is more costly than both online and from a provider. A third (34%) of those who unlocked their phone with their provider paid under £1; similarly one in five (19%) paid the same when unlocking their phone online. In comparison, just 3% paid under £1 when getting their phone unlocked on the high street
- Of those that unlocked their phone on the high street, three in ten (29%) paid between £10-15.

Nearly half of people have a pay monthly phone plan.

Have a current mobile phone?

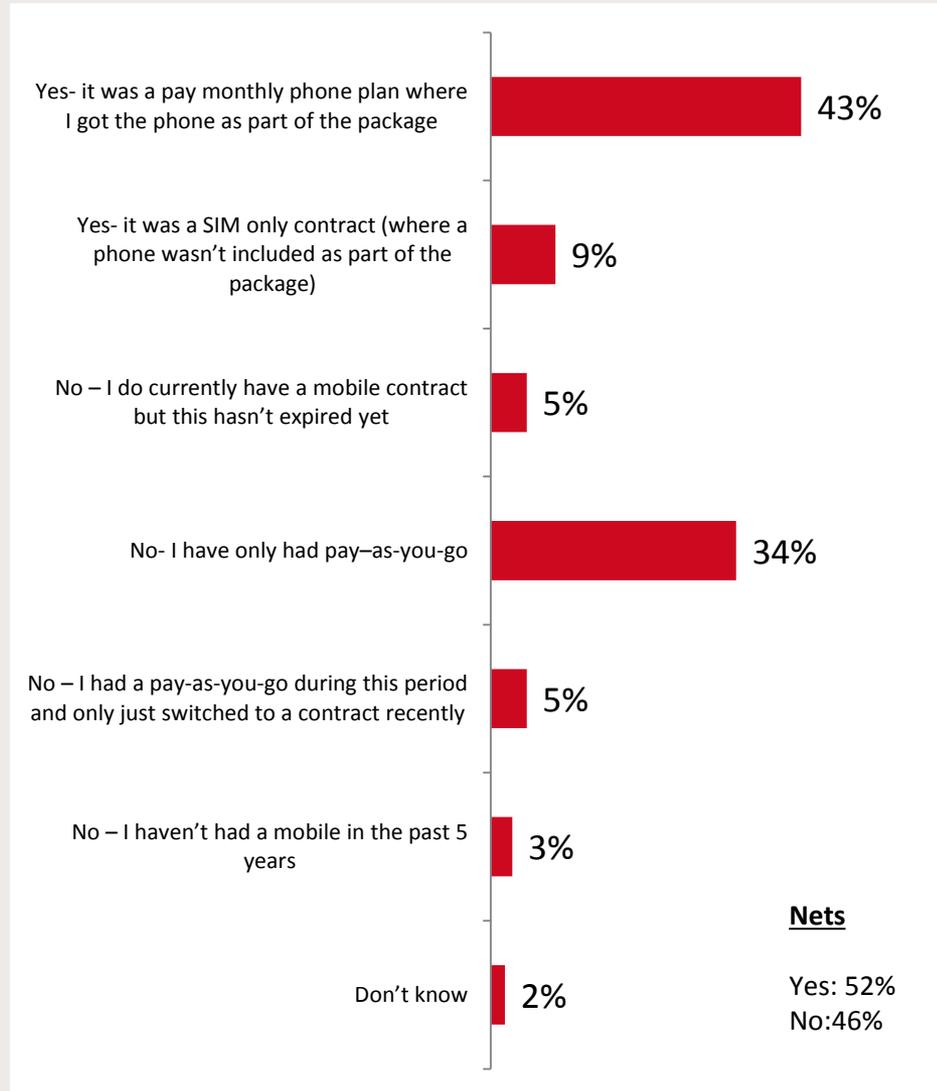


Nets

Monthly contract: 59%
PAYG: 37%%

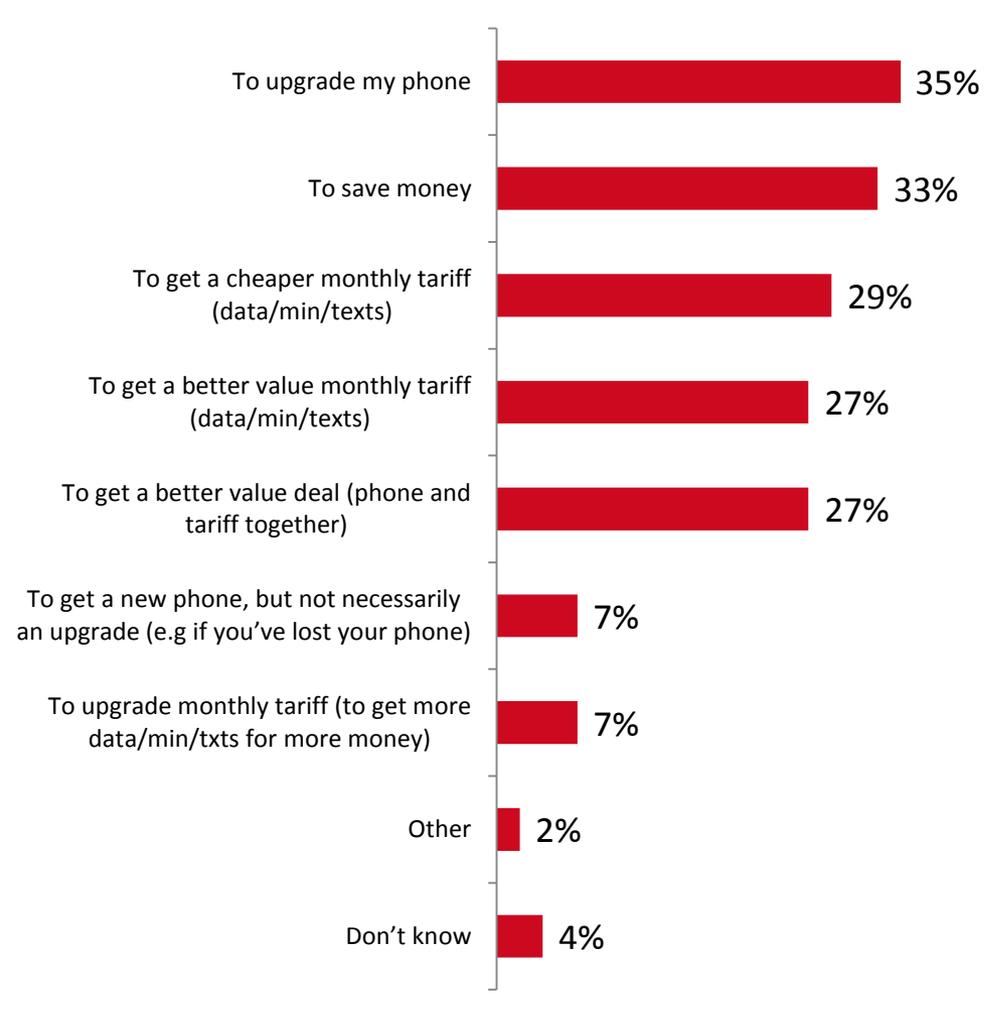
4 in 10 people have come to the end of a pay monthly phone plan in the last 5 years.

Which?



Q2. In the last 5 years have you come to the end of a mobile phone contract (even if you chose to stay with the same provider)? If this has happened more than once, please think of the most recent contract that ended. Base: all respondents (2064)

Half of people, who've come to the end of their contract in the last 5 years, say their main aim was to get a cheaper/ better value monthly tariff at the end of the contract.



Nets

Upgrade phone/ get new phone: 40%

Get a better value deal/ save money/ cheaper monthly tariff/ better value monthly tariff: 74%

To get a cheaper monthly tariff/ better value monthly tariff: 46%

Q4. Thinking about when you came to the end of your last mobile phone contract, what were your main aims? Base: all who came to the end of a contract in the last 5 years (985)

Nearly 8 in 10 people who came to the end of their contract in the last 5 years say they stayed with their provider at the time.

Which?

Nets		
Kept phone and went SIM only contract/ PAYG with...	Same provider	17%
	With different provider	4%
	Same/ different provider	20%
Went Sim only with..	Same/ diff provider	13%
Got new pay monthly plan with...	Same/diff provider	42%
Bought new phone outright & went SIM only/ PAYG with	Same provider	3%
	Diff provider	6%
	Same/ diff	6%
Stayed with...	same provider	77%
	Different provider	19%

Q8. And what did you end up doing when your minimum contract period came to an end (i.e. if you originally signed up for an 18 month contract, once this period has expired)? Base: all who came to the end of a contract in last 5 yrs (859)