

# Affordability of Communications Services Omnibus

Omnibus carried out by Kantar Media  
November 2015

# Methodology and background

# Methodology and notes on analysis



## Methodology

- All interviews conducted using Kantar Face-to-Face Omnibus
- Nationally representative sample of 2,136 UK adults aged 16+
  - All interviews are conducted via the field team and in accordance with strict quality control procedures.
  - The omnibus uses robust sampling ( e.g. a comprehensive address based system cross referenced to the census data. For each wave, 143 sample points are selected and, within these selected primary sampling points, a postcode sector is chosen.) Quotas (by sex, working status and presence of children) are set during interviewing to ensure the sample is as representative as possible
  - Weighting is also then applied to ensure that the sample is fully representative of the UK population
- Fieldwork 23<sup>rd</sup> October – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2015

## Notes on analysis

- Given the focus of the omnibus on affordability of communications, much of the analysis is among the 1719 respondents who have some responsibility for the decisions on what communications to pay for and use. This is 80% of the UK adults aged 16+ who were interviewed as part of Kantar's omnibus.
-  indicates % significantly higher/lower than 2014, all charted data have been tested
- Where bases sizes are low, i.e. less than 100, this is noted on the charts.
- Data tables for the Affordability of Communications Services 2015 research can be found at [http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/statistics/2015dec/Affordability\\_of\\_Communication\\_s\\_services\\_data\\_tables.pdf](http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/statistics/2015dec/Affordability_of_Communication_s_services_data_tables.pdf)

# Key Findings

# Key findings – difficulties paying/ claimed debt



## Any difficulties paying for communications services/claimed debt

- **89% of UK adults with some responsibility for deciding the household's communications services had experienced no difficulties in paying for the services in the last year.** This represents an increase since 2014 (85%).
- **A similar pattern is shown as in 2014 in terms of the types of services that people have experienced difficulties paying for.** Smartphone/mobile phone, TV services with additional channels, and fixed broadband remain the top three services.
- **2% of those who are responsible for deciding their communications services have been behind on their payment for any communications services by one month or more in the last year**
- **2% of UK adults have experienced 'affordability issues'** – defined as those who have been behind on their payment for any communications services by one month or more in the last year, or have sold items/taken out a loan as part of their monthly spending in order to afford communications services

# Key findings – Impact of affordability

## Any impact due to affordability of communications services and difficulties paying for communications services/debt



- **There has been no change since 2014 in how consumers who have difficulties manage their monthly spending:**
  - 54% have spent less on, or have gone without, non-communications items.
  - 25% have sought financial support or taken financial actions e.g. selling items
  - 17% have used communications services less or cancelled services.
- **The majority (88%) of people have not had to go without any of the following services they feel they need but do not have due to cost: smartphone, mobile phone, fixed landline, fixed broadband, mobile broadband, calls using a public smartphone.**
  - 9% do not have 1 communications service they feel they need due to cost
  - 1% do not have 2 services or more services due to cost.

This is not directly comparable to last year, due to changes in the question wording.
- **Of those who don't have a service or cancelled a service due to cost –**
  - Half (50%) say that they have had no negative effect at all and 8% say they have had no negative effect because they have alternatives
  - 13% say they have less entertainment
  - 10% miss out on contact with family/friends

This is not directly comparable to last year, due to changes in the question wording.
- **Overall, out of those responsible for paying for communications services, 3% have not got a service because of cost and it has had a negative effect.**

# Key findings – Use of universal services

## Use of universal communications services in the last 12 months



- **16% of all adults in the UK have used any directory enquiries in the last 12 months –**
  - 10% have used directory enquiries via internet
  - 6% have used directory enquiries via phone
  - 3% have used directory enquiries via the BT phonebook
- **6% have used itemised billing that they paid extra for**
- **3% have used a payphone**
- This represents no change in consumer use of communications services since 2014

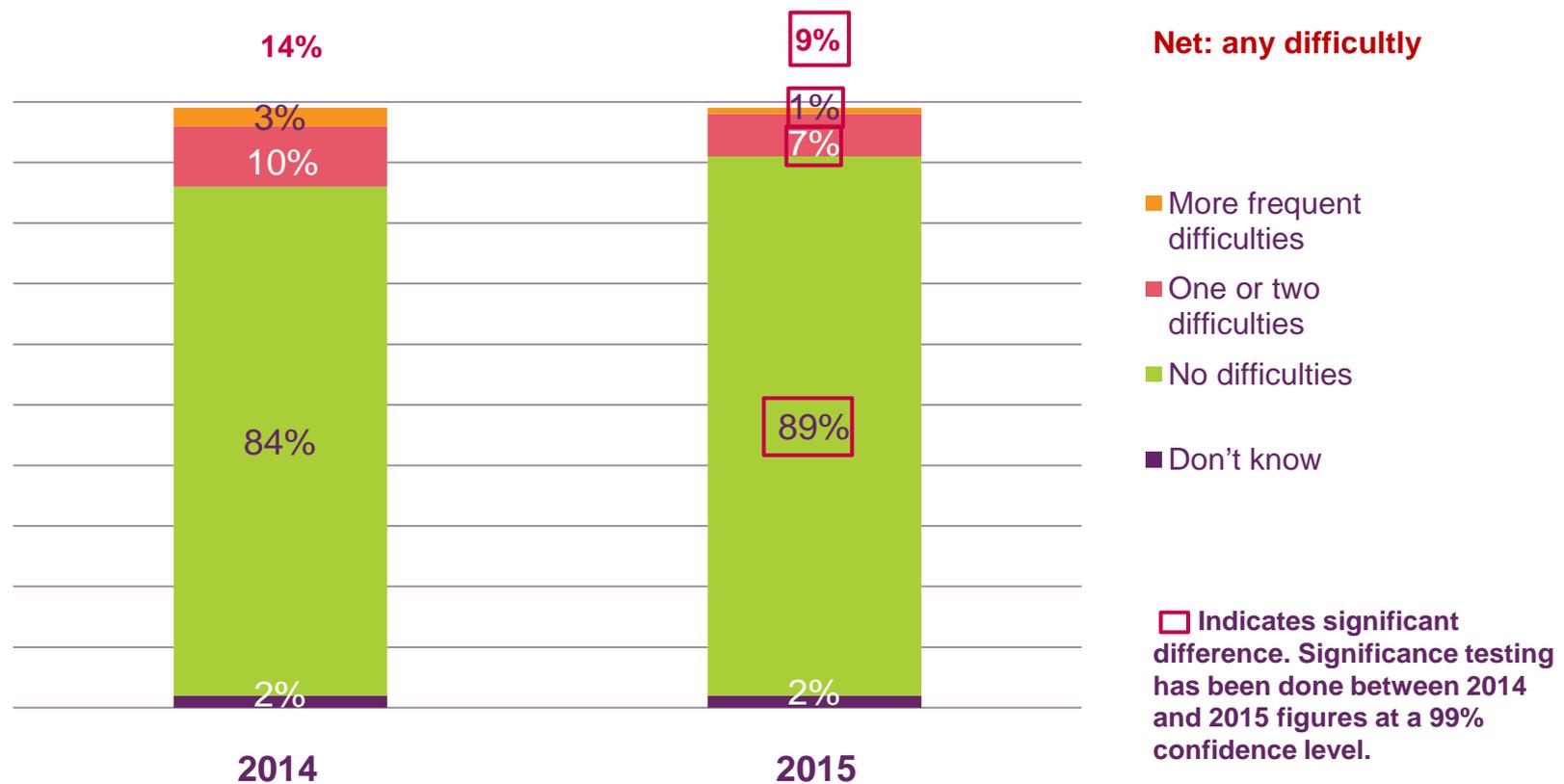
# Claimed difficulties paying for communications services

# 89% of UK adults with some responsibility for deciding the household's communications services had experienced no difficulties in paying for the services in the last year.



## Difficulties paying for communications services in the last year

% of adults with some responsibility for communications services

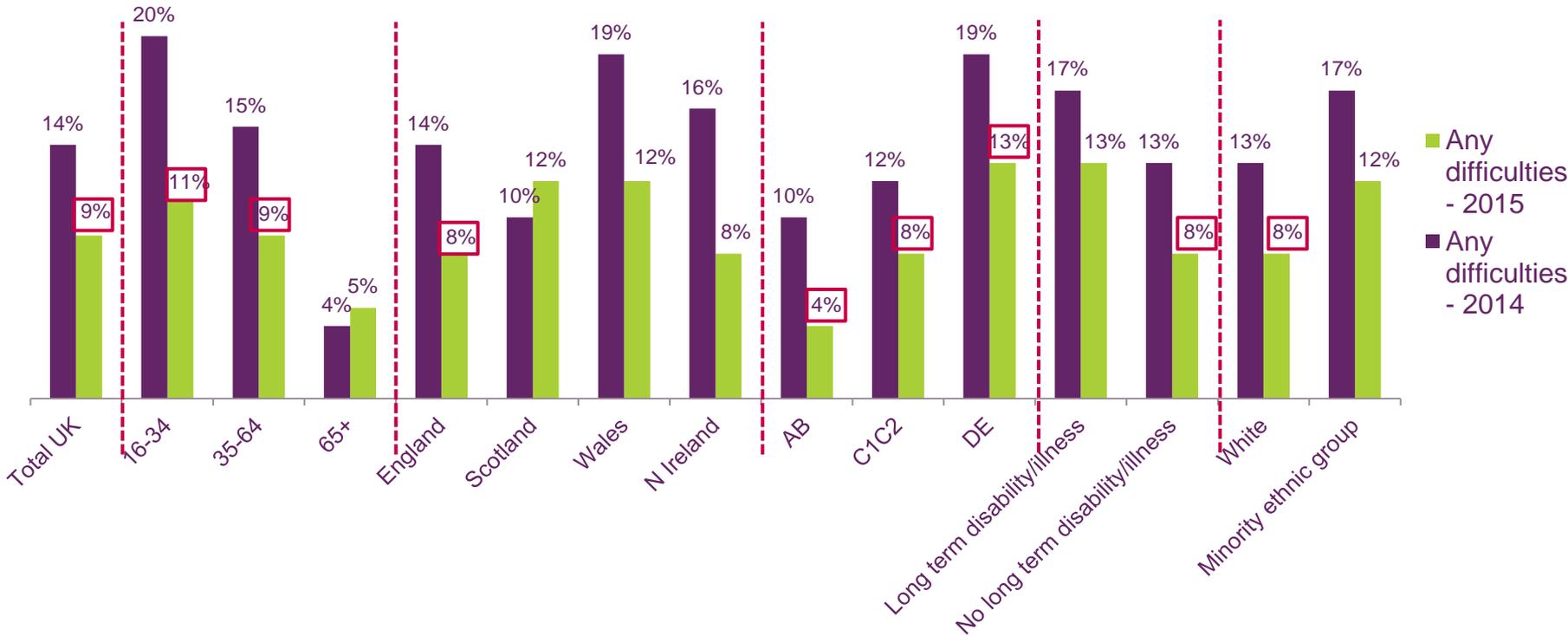


Source: Kantar Media Omnibus  
Base: All with some responsibility for communications services (N=1562 in 2014, N=1719 in 2015)  
Question: Q.5 The next questions are about your experiences of paying for communications services and if you have had any difficulties paying for the services in the last year. Communications services in this questionnaire means a mobile phone (including a smartphone), any sort of internet, landline phone at home, public payphones or a TV service with additional channels you pay to receive (e.g. Sky, BT Vision or Virgin Media). Which, if any, of the following apply to you?



# Any difficulties paying for communications services in the last year

% with some responsibility for communications services, by demographics



Source: Kantar Media Omnibus

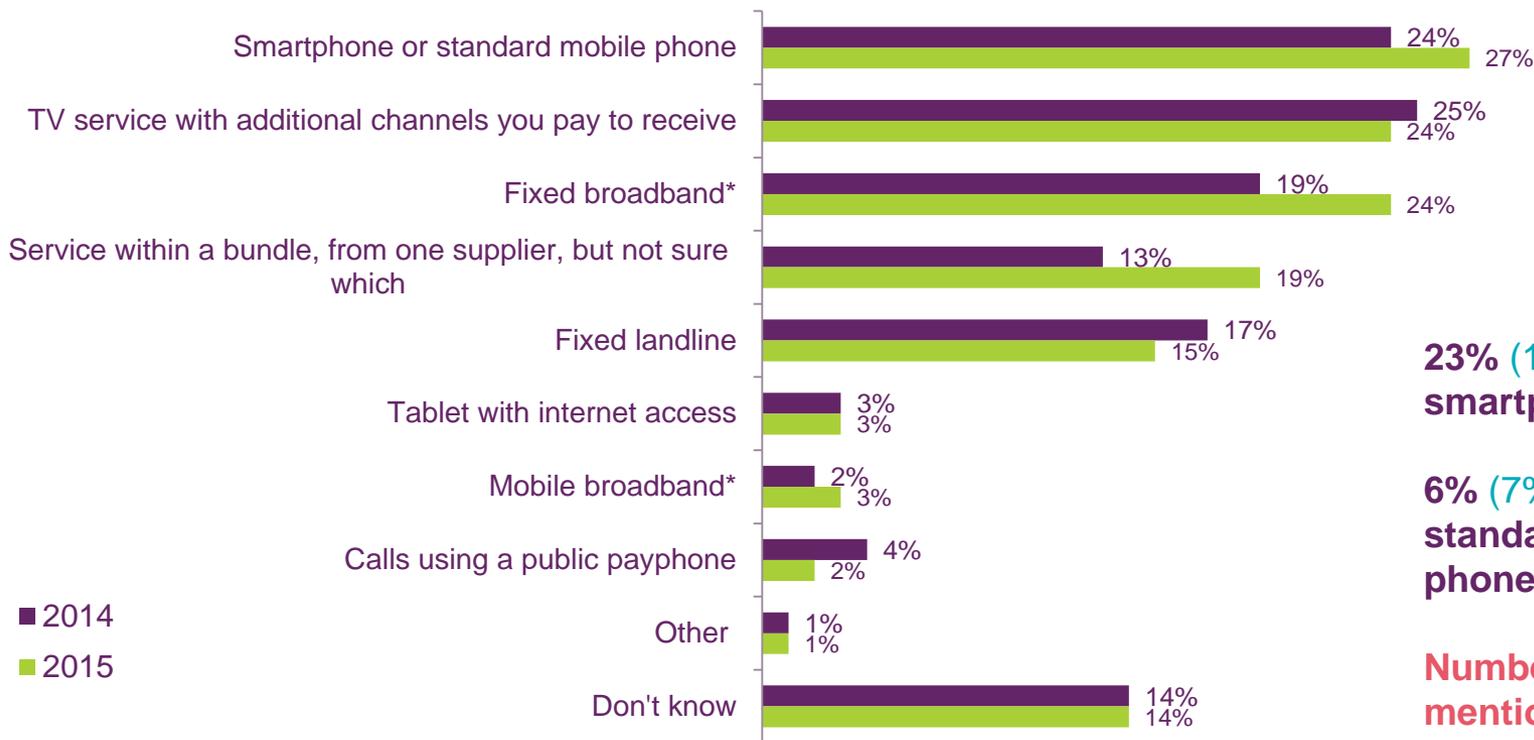
Base: All with some responsibility for communications services (2015 sample sizes - N=1719, 16-34 (439), 35-64 (758), 65+ (522), England (1440), Scotland (133), Wales (85), Northern Ireland (61), AB (306), C1C2 (826), DE (587), Any long term disability/illness (361), No long term disability/illness (1318), White ethnic group (1561), Minority ethnic group (147) \*Please note low base size

Question: Q.5 The next questions are about your experiences of paying for communications services and if you have had any difficulties paying for the services in the last year. Communications services in this questionnaire means a mobile phone (including a smartphone), any sort of internet, landline phone at home, public payphones or a TV service with additional channels you pay to receive (e.g. Sky, BT Vision or Virgin Media). Which, if any, of the following apply to you?



## Services had any difficulties paying for in the last year

% of adults with any difficulties paying for communications services in the last year



**23% (18%)** said a **smartphone** in particular

**6% (7%)** said a **standard mobile phone** in particular

**Number of services mentioned:**  
**61% (68%)** – 1 service  
**17% (14%)** – 2 services  
**9% (4%)** – 3+ service

\* 'Fixed broadband' and 'Mobile broadband' now asked as 'Fixed broadband internet access' and 'Mobile broadband internet access'

Source: Kantar Media Omnibus

Base: All with any difficulties paying for communications services in the last year (N=208 in 2014, N=150 in 2015).

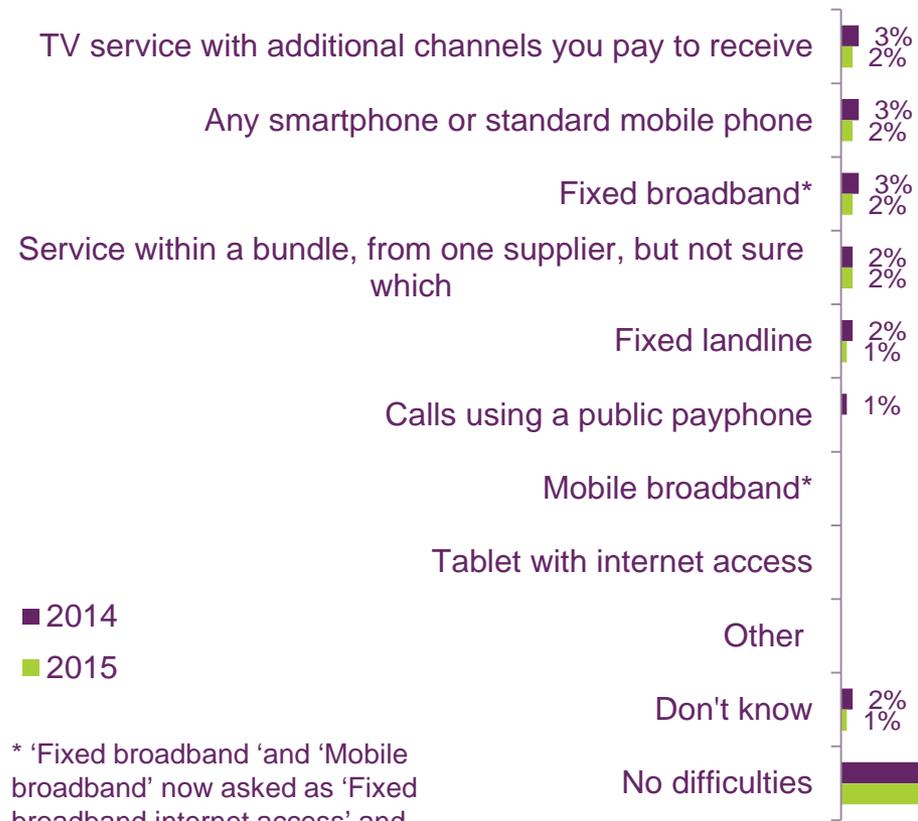
Question: Q.6 Which of the following services have you had any difficulties paying for in the last year?

(2014 figures in brackets)



## Services had any difficulties paying for in the last year

% of adults with some responsibility for communications services



2% (2%) said a **smartphone** in particular

1% (1%) said a **standard mobile phone** in particular

**Number of services mentioned**  
 5% (9%) - 1 service  
 2% (2%) - 2 or more services

\* 'Fixed broadband' and 'Mobile broadband' now asked as 'Fixed broadband internet access' and 'Mobile broadband internet access'

Source: Kantar Media Omnibus  
 Base: All with some responsibility for communications services (N=1562 in 2014; N=1719 in 2015)  
 Question: Q.6 Which of the following services have you had any difficulties paying for in the last year?

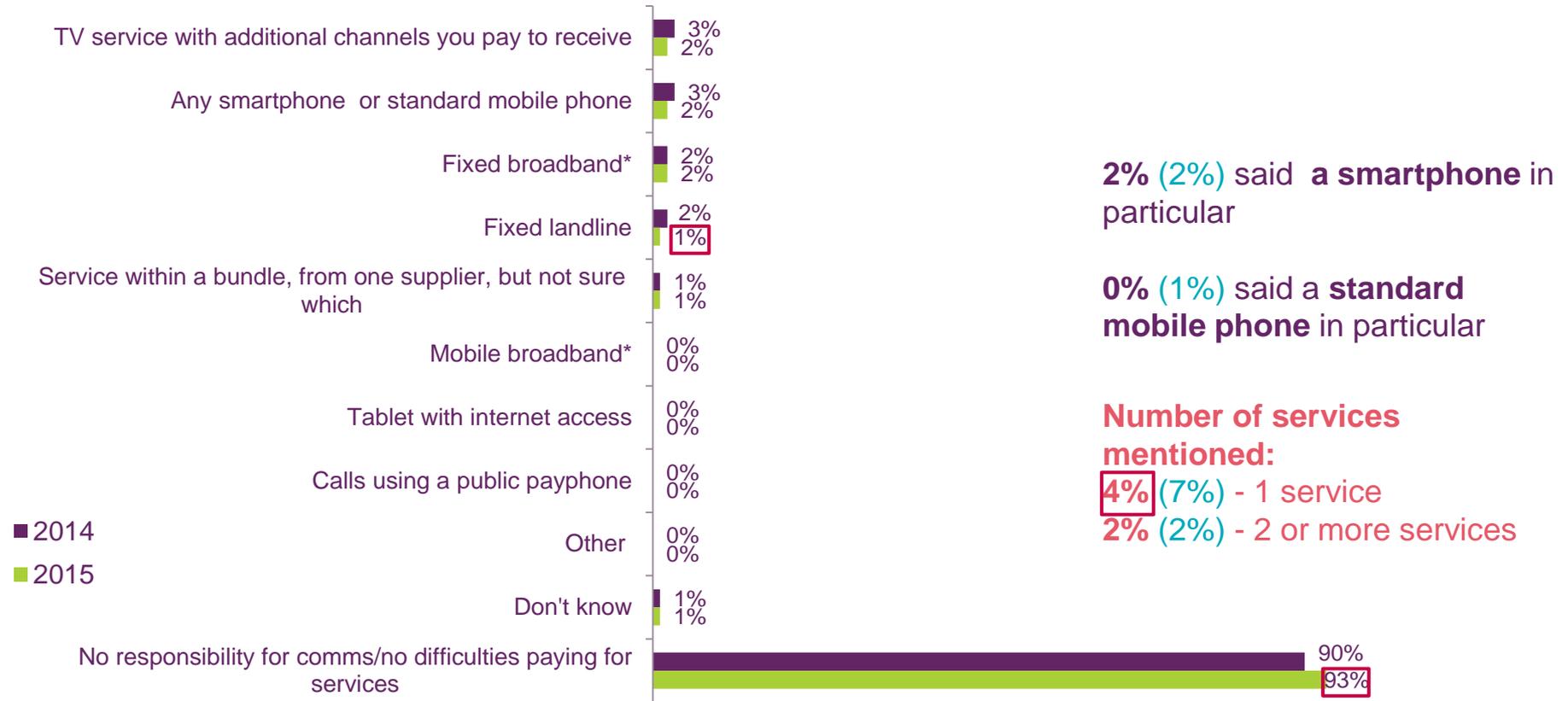
(2014 figures in brackets)

# Since 2014, there has been a net increase in those who claim that they have had no difficulties paying for services



## Services had any difficulties paying for in the last year

% of all adults 16+ in the UK



2% (2%) said a **smartphone** in particular

0% (1%) said a **standard mobile phone** in particular

**Number of services mentioned:**  
 4% (7%) - 1 service  
 2% (2%) - 2 or more services

\* 'Fixed broadband' and 'Mobile broadband' now asked as 'Fixed broadband internet access' and 'Mobile broadband internet access'

Source: Kantar Media Omnibus

Base: All adults 16+ in the UK (N=2045 in 2014; N=2136 in 2015)

Question: Q.6 Which of the following services have you had any difficulties paying for in the last year?

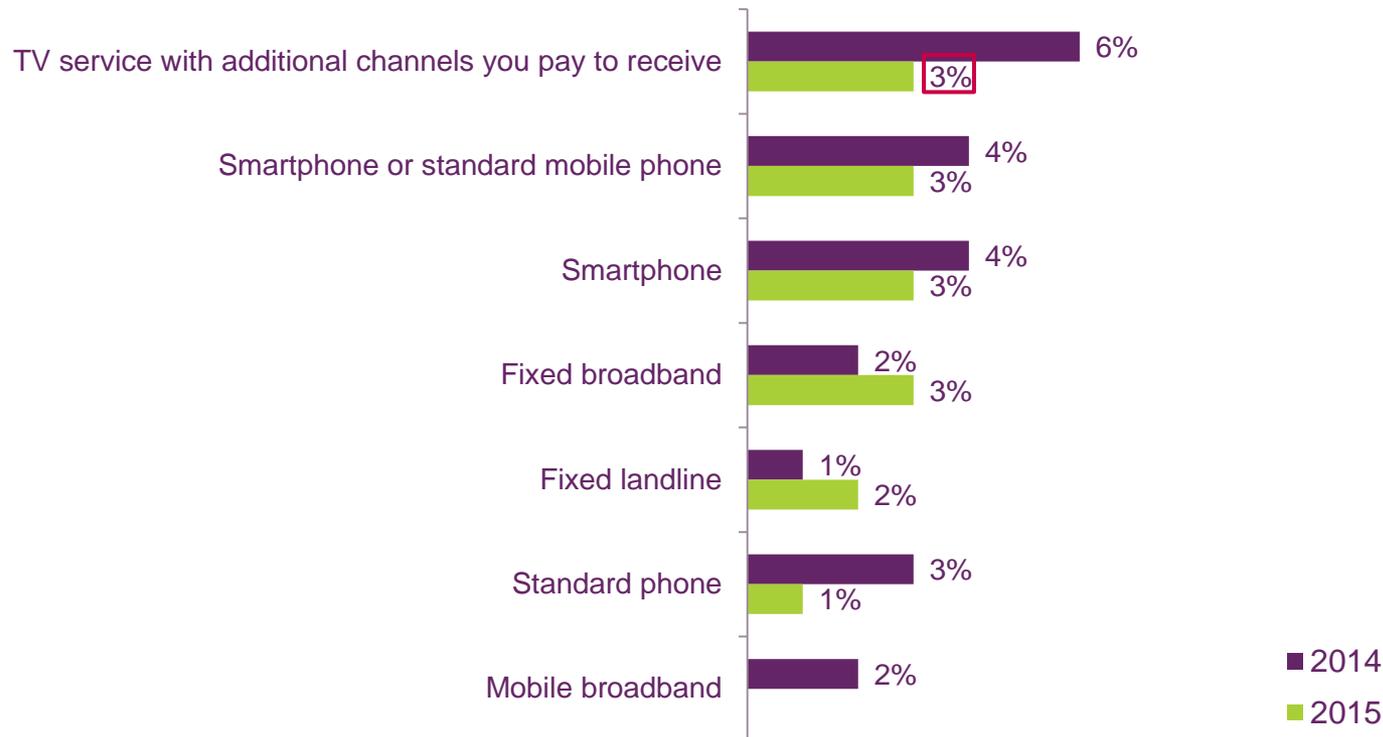
(2014 figures in brackets)

There has been little change in the proportion who have each service and have had difficulties paying for the service. The only significant change is amongst those paying for TV services (6% in 2014 down to 3% in 2015)



## Services had any difficulties paying for in the last year

% of adults with some responsibility for communications services and who have the service/device being reported



Source: Kantar Media Omnibus

Base: All with some responsibility for communications services with each service type, pay TV (621 2014, 688 in 2015), smartphone/ standard phone (1285 in 2014, 1402 2015), smartphone (889 2014, 1053 2015), standard mobile phone (388 2014; 410 2015), fixed broadband (869 2014, 1050 2015), mobile broadband (114 2014, 157 2015), fixed landline (1048 2014, 1204 2015)

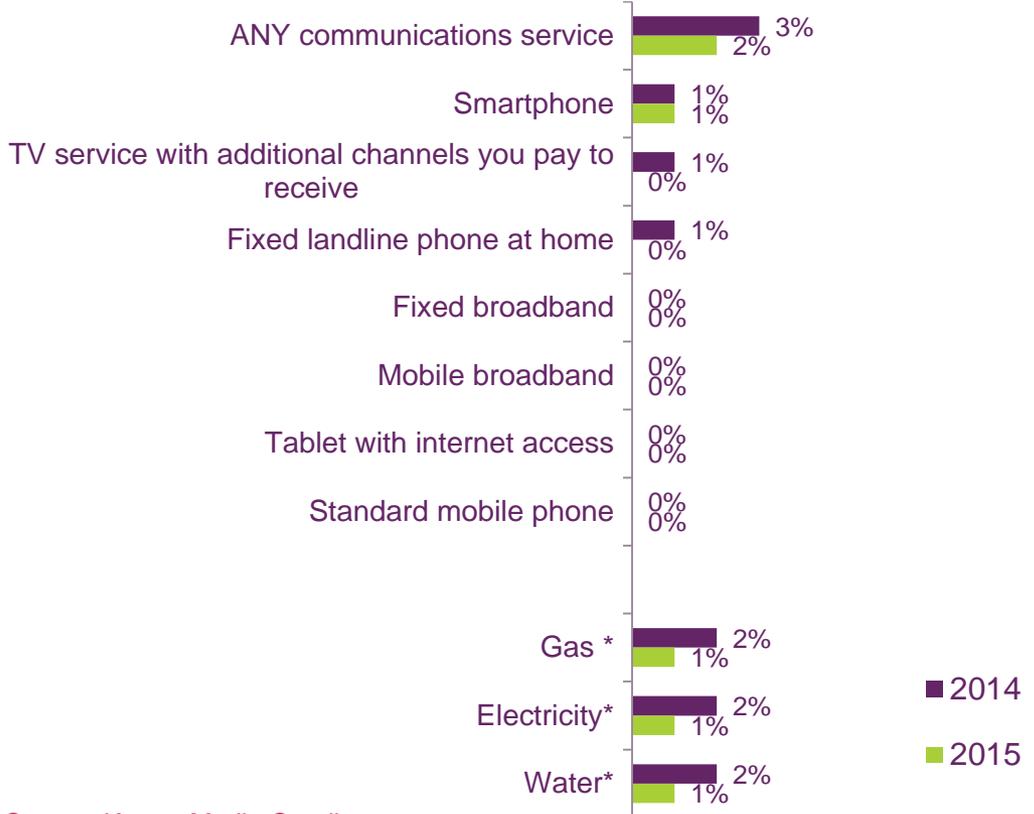
Question: Q.6 Which of the following services have you had any difficulties paying for in the last year?

# Claimed debt



## Debt on communications services in the last year

% of adults with some responsibility for communications services



This means that across all adults in the UK 1% (2%) claim to have some sort of communications debt in the last year.

Of the 32 respondents who said they had a communications debt:

- 22 said this was a 'manageable' debt,
- 9 said this was a 'unmanageable' debt.
- 1 said they didn't know.

(2014 figures in brackets)

Source: Kantar Media Omnibus

Base: All with some responsibility for communications services (N=1562 in 2014; N=1719 in 2015). Those with communications debt (N=44 unweighted, 45 weighted in 2014; N=32 unweighted/weighted in 2015), all UK adults (N=2045 in 2014; N=2136 in 2015)

Question: Q.7 Have you been behind in your payment for any of the following services or products by one month or more in the last year? Question: Q.8 Which of these applies to you?

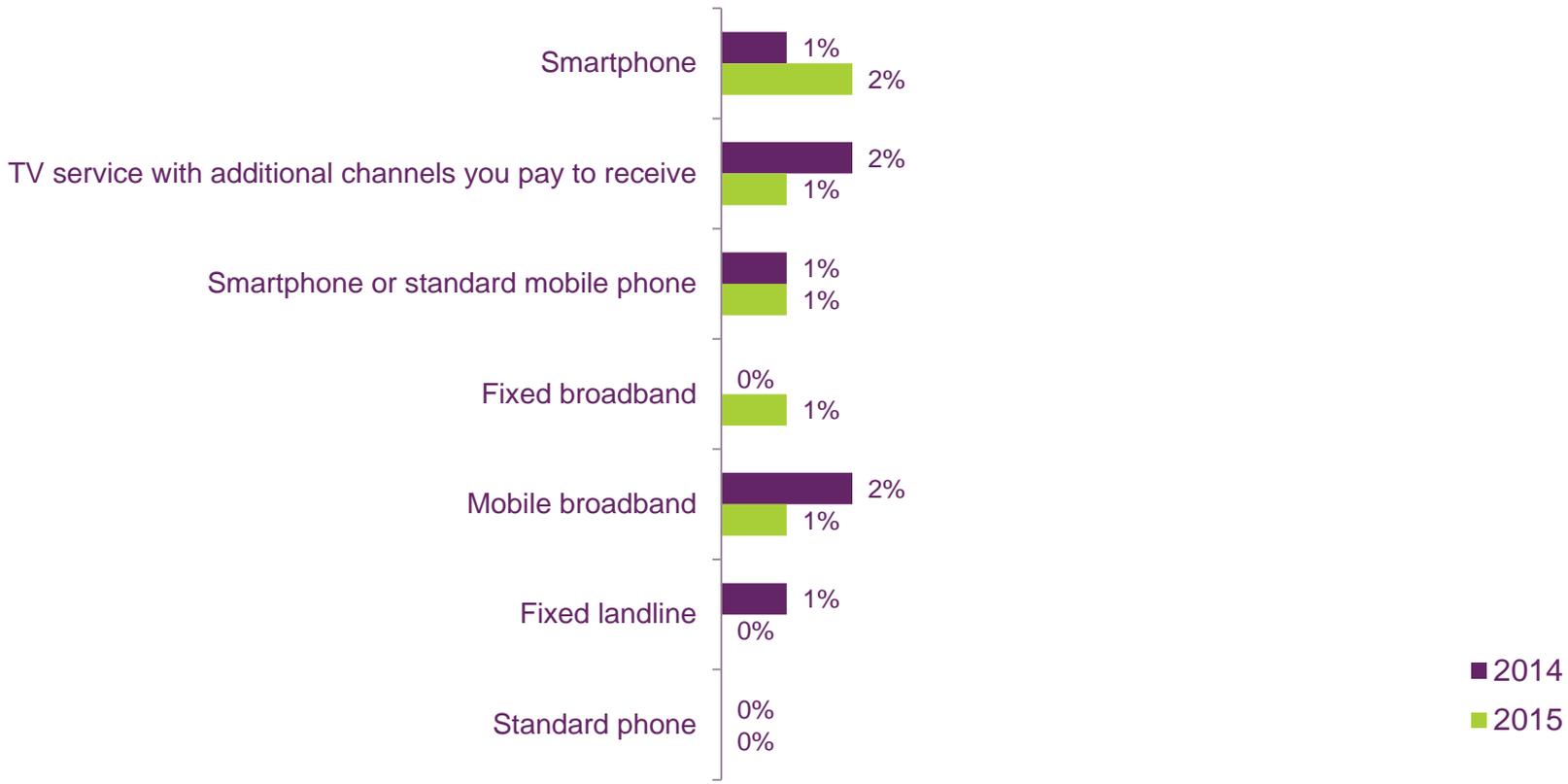
Note: Any communications service is a summary code. \*The data for gas, electricity and water is based of those with responsibility for decisions on communications rather than those with responsibility for each of the utilities – this data is therefore primarily useful as context to the communications debt, rather than a measure of the utilities themselves.

# Amongst those who have the service/device, the proportion claiming debt for each service has also remained stable



## Debt on communications services in the last year

% of adults with some responsibility for communications services and who have the service/device being reported



Source: Kantar Media Omnibus

Base: All with some responsibility for communications services with each service type, pay TV (621 2014, 688 in 2015), smartphone/ standard phone (1285 in 2014, 1402 2015), smartphone (889 2014, 1053 2015), standard mobile phone (388 2014; 410 2015), fixed broadband (869 2014, 1050 2015), mobile broadband (114 2014, 157 2015), fixed landline (1048 2014, 1204 2015)

Question: Q.7 Have you been behind in your payment for any of the following services or products by one month or more in the last year?



# Debt on communications services in the last year

% of adults with some responsibility for communications services, by demographics

## Any communications debt



Source: Kantar Media Omnibus

Base: All with some responsibility for communications services (N=1562 in 2014; N=1719 in 2015), 16-34 (370 2014; 439 2015), 35-64 (717 2014; 758 2015), 65+ (475 2014; 522 2015), AB (292 2014; 306 2015), C1C2 (705 2014; 826 2015), DE (565 2014; 587 2015), White ethnic group (1379 2014; 1561 2015), Minority ethnic group (179 2014; 147 2015), Any long term disability/illness (305 2014; 361 2015), No long term disability/illness (1206 2014; 1318 2015), England (1311 2014; 1440 2015), Scotland (129 2014; 133 2015), Wales (69 2014; 85 2015), Northern Ireland (53 2014; 61 2015), \*Please note low base size

Question: Q.7 Have you been behind in your payment for any of the following services or products by one month or more in the last year?

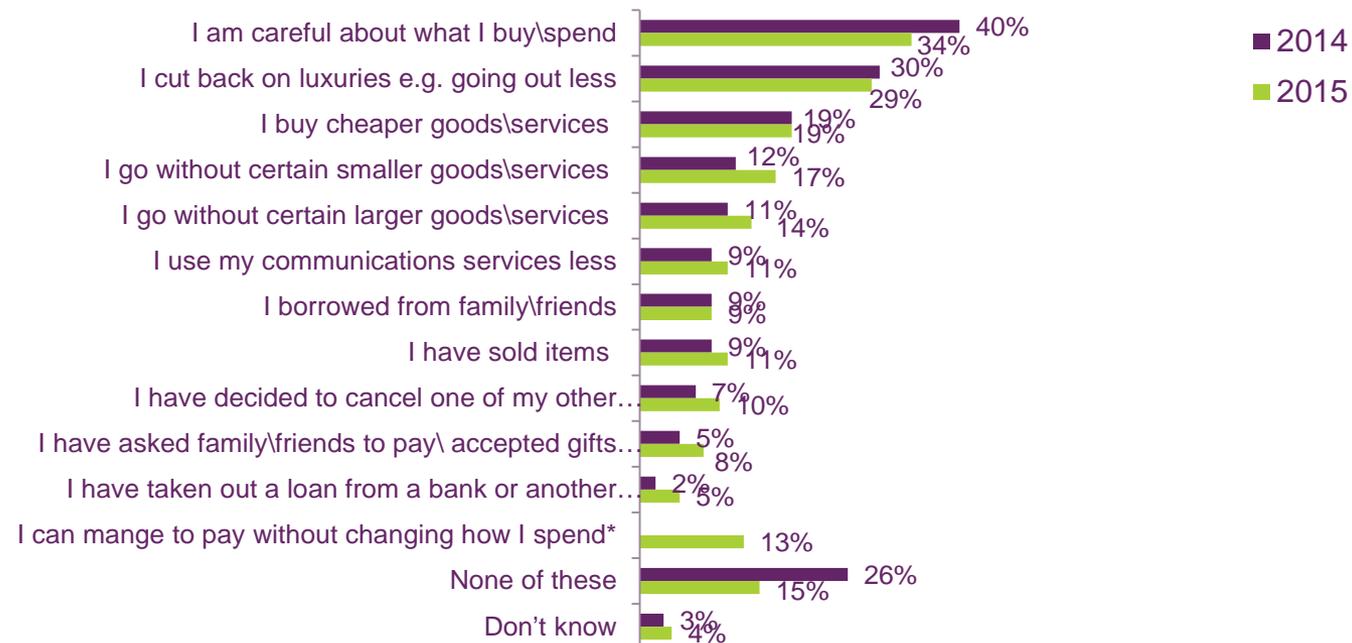
Note: Any communications service is a summary code.

# Impact of affordability of communications services and any difficulties paying or debt

# How consumers afford communications services as part of monthly spend



% of adults with any difficulties paying for communication services in the last year



## Summary codes



\* Added new in 2015: 'I can manage to pay my communications services without making changes to the way I spend my money.' This will have likely impacted response to 'None of these.'

Source: Kantar Media Omnibus

Base: All with any difficulties paying for communications services in the last year (N=208 in 2014, N=150 in 2015). Note: Only responses of 1% or more are shown

Question: Q.9 When thinking about how you afford your communications services as part of your monthly spending, which, if any, of the following apply to you?

Note: The following are summary codes: Used communications services less or cancelled service, Financial support or actions

**28% of consumers who've had difficulty affording comms services have been impacted by affordability issues. This equates to 2% of UK adults, a similar proportion to last year (3% in 2014)**



## Communications affordability issues

In order to provide a measure of those impacted by affordability issues, we have identified the portion of respondents who:

- Have been in debt in the last year with any communications service (i.e. behind in the payment by at least a month) (at Q7)

OR,

- Who say they have taken a loan or sold items as a way to afford communications service as part of their monthly spending (at Q9)

- This equates to:

- **28% (28%)** of those who have had any difficulty affording communications services
- **3% (4%)** of those who have some responsibility for decision or paying for communications services
- **2% (3%)** of the adult population

(2014 figures in brackets)

Source: Kantar Media Omnibus

Base: All adults 16+ in the UK (N=2045 in 2014; N=2136 in 2015), All with some responsibility for communications services (N=1562 in 2014; N=1719 in 2015), All with any difficulties paying for communications services in the last year (N=208 in 2014, N=150 in 2015).

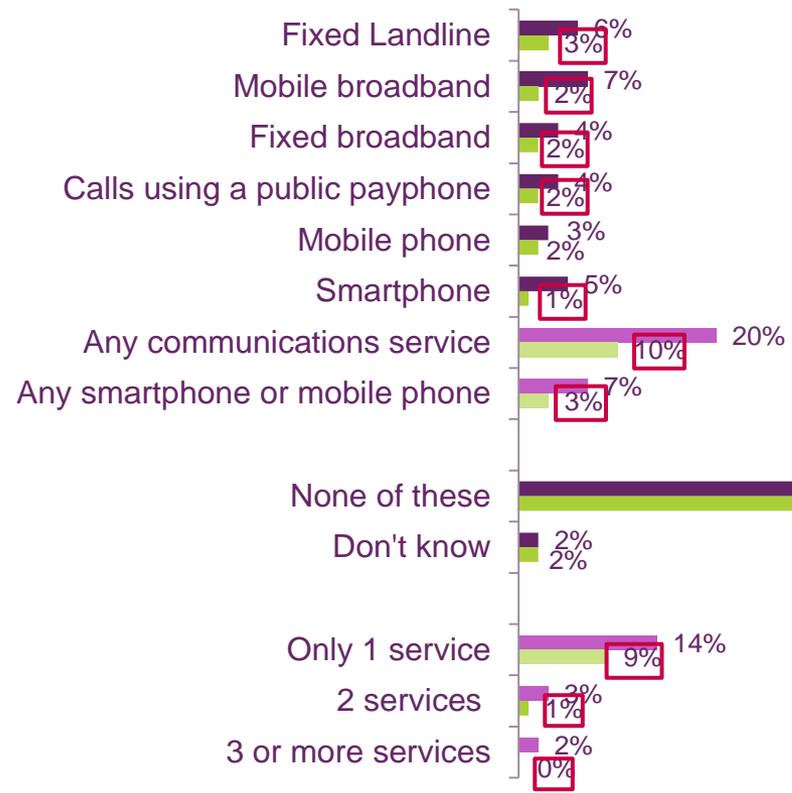
Question: Q.7 Have you been behind in your payment for any of the following services or products by one month or more in the last year? Q.9 When thinking about how you afford your communications services as part of your monthly spending, which, if any, of the following apply to you?

Note: The following are summary codes: Used communications services less or cancelled service, Spend less or going without non communications items, Financial support or actions

# Affordability: communications services do not have due to 'cost'



% of adults with some responsibility for communications services



This year respondents were asked about services they feel they need but do not have due to cost – last year the wording was ‘And which, if any, of the following do you not have because of cost’. This change is likely to have impacted on response, and might explain some of these differences.

It is worth noting that the question on cost as a reason for not having a service is relatively broad in that it does not specify that they cannot ‘afford’ the service (there may have been other factors that influenced their decision or ability to take up the service).

Source: Kantar Media Omnibus

Base: All with some responsibility for communications services (N=1562 in 2014; N=1719 in 2015).

Question: Q.10 And which, if any, of the following do you feel you need but do not have because of cost?

Note: Any communications service, Any mobile/smartphone, Only 1 service, 2 services, 3 or more services are all summary codes

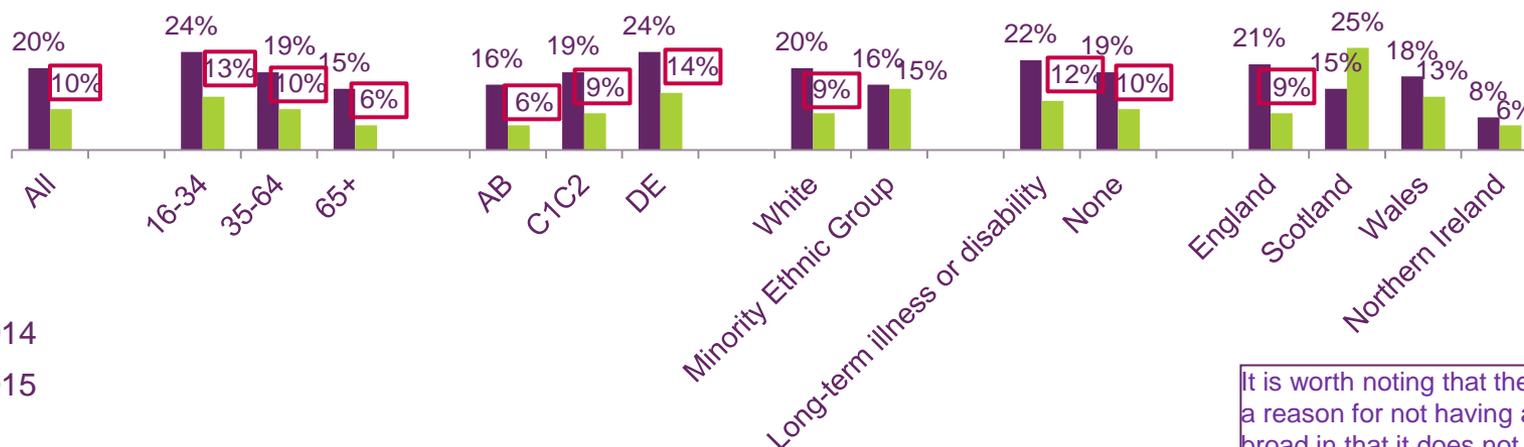
By demographic group, there is little variation in the proportion saying they don't own a service due to cost, which averages to 10% of all consumers responsible for comms



## Affordability: if any communications services are not owned due to 'cost', by demographics

% of adults with some responsibility for communications services

This year respondents were asked about services they feel they need but do not have due to cost – last year the wording was 'And which, if any, of the following do you not have because of cost'. This change is likely to have impacted on response, and might explain some of these differences.



It is worth noting that the question on cost as a reason for not having a service is relatively broad in that it does not specify that they cannot 'afford' the service (there may have been other factors that influenced their decision or ability to take up the service).

Source: Kantar Media Omnibus

Base: All with some responsibility for communications services (N=1562 in 2014; N=1719 in 2015), 16-34 (370 2014; 439 2015), 35-64 (717 2014; 758 2015), 65+ (475 2014; 522 2015), England (1311 2014; 1440 2015), Scotland (129 2014; 133 2015), Wales (69 2014; 85 2015), Northern Ireland (53 2014; 61 2015), AB (292 2014; 306 2015), C1C2 (705 2014; 826 2015), DE (565 2014; 587 2015), Any long term disability/illness (305 2014; 361 2015), No long term disability/illness (1206 2014; 1318 2015), White ethnic group (1379 2014; 1561 2015), Minority ethnic group (179 2014; 147 2015) \*Please note low base size  
Question: Q.10 And which, if any, of the following do you feel you need but do not have because of cost?

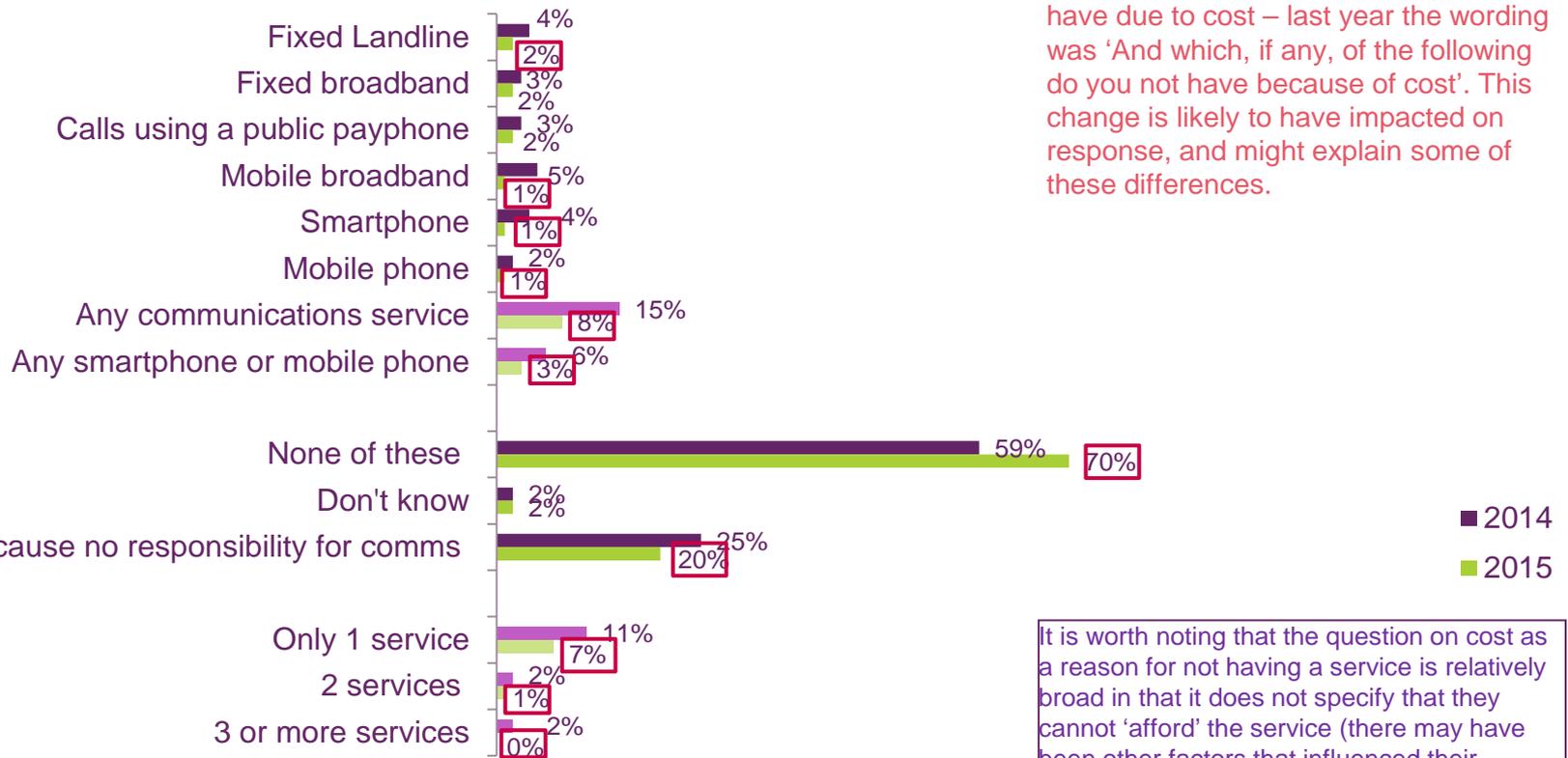
Note: Any communications service is a summary code

**At the level of all adults in the UK, 70% say they have not had to go without a service because of cost**



**Affordability: communications services do not have due to 'cost'**

% of all adults 16+ in the UK



This year respondents were asked about services they feel they need but do not have due to cost – last year the wording was ‘And which, if any, of the following do you not have because of cost’. This change is likely to have impacted on response, and might explain some of these differences.

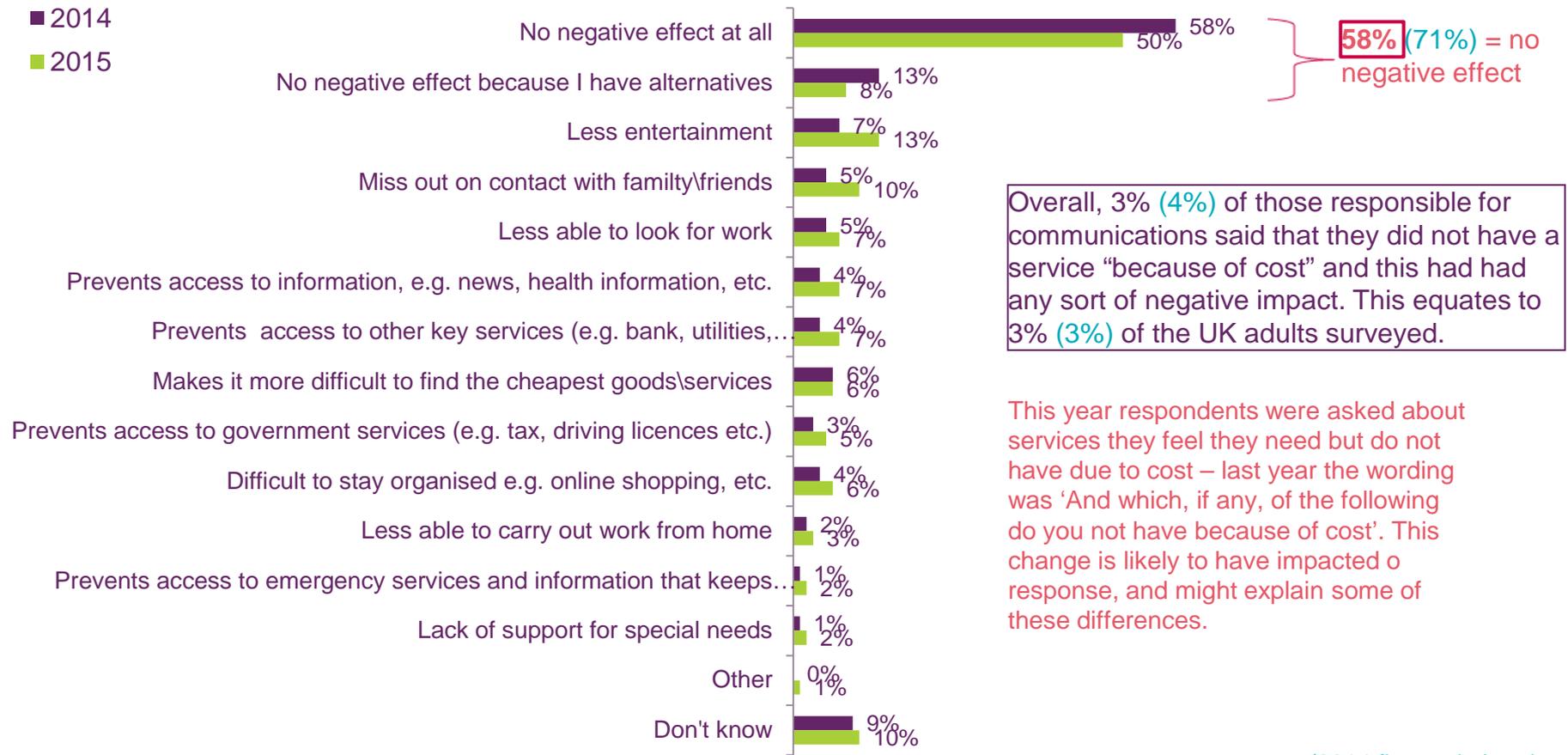
It is worth noting that the question on cost as a reason for not having a service is relatively broad in that it does not specify that they cannot ‘afford’ the service (there may have been other factors that influenced their decision or ability to take up the service).

Source: Kantar Media Omnibus  
 Base: All adults 16+ in the UK (N=2045 in 2014; N=2136 in 2015)  
 Question: Q.10 And which, if any, of the following do you feel you need but do not have because of cost?  
 Note: Any communications service, Any mobile/smartphone, Only 1 service, 2 services, 3 or more services are all summary codes



## Affordability: Impact of not having communications services

% of all who don't have service\cancelled a service due to cost



Source: Kantar Media Omnibus

Base: All who don't have service\cancelled a service due to cost (N=314 in 2014; N=179 in 2015).

Question: Q.11 You mentioned that you don't have these services because of cost, or you have cancelled a service because of cost. How does NOT having this service affect you?

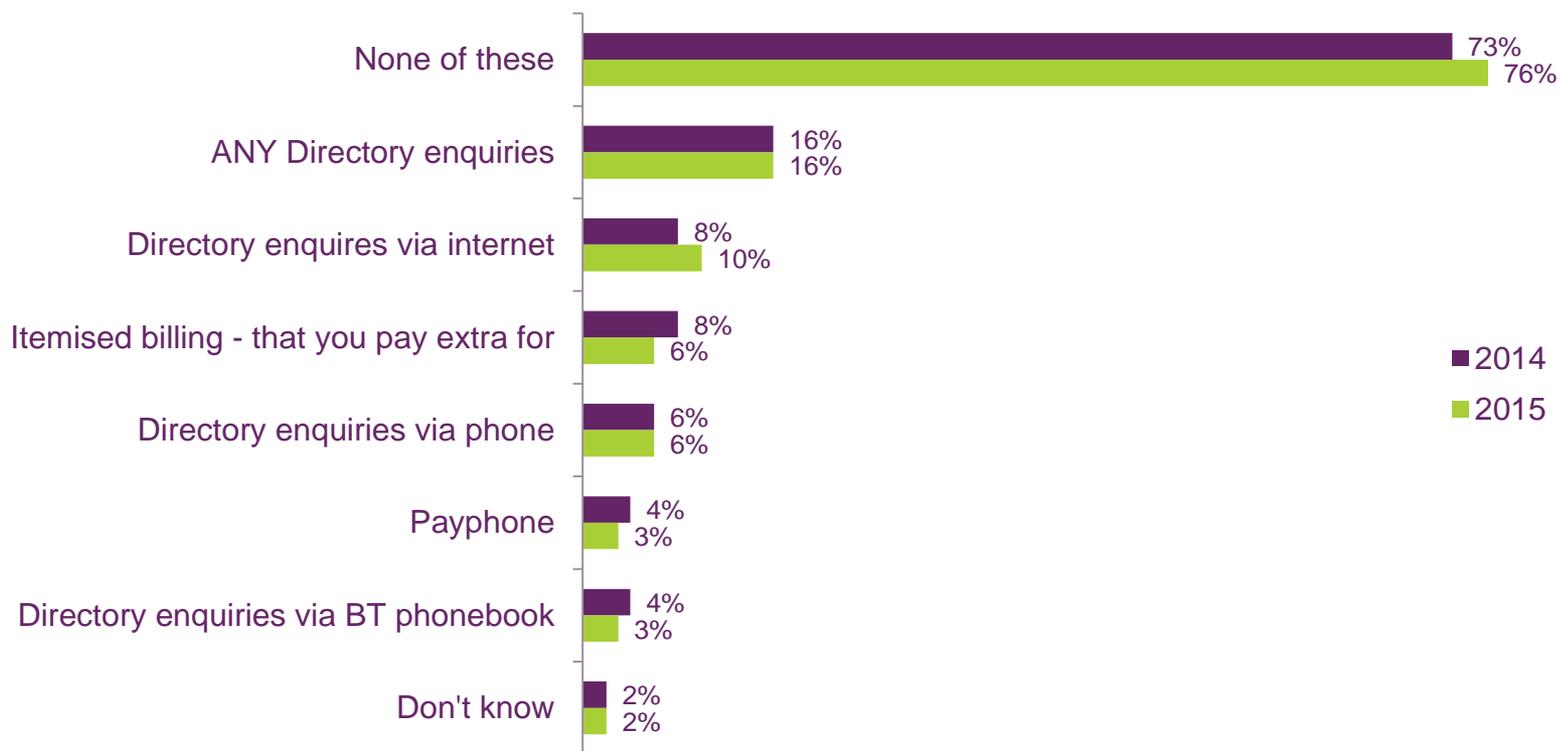
## Use of universal communications services

Universal comms services are used by a similar proportion to last year, with 76% of all adults claiming not to have used any of the services in the last year



## Universal communications services used

% of all adults 16+ in the UK



Source: Kantar Media Omnibus

Base: All adults 16+ in the UK (N=2045; N=2136 in 2015)

Question: Q.12 Which, if any, of the following communications services have you used in the last 12 months?

Note: Any Directory enquiries is a summary code

## Universal communications services used

Subgroup / %	Base size	Payphone	Directory enquiries vis BT Phonebook	Directory enquiries via phone	Directory enquiries via internet	Itemised bill – that you pay extra for
<b>Total</b>	<b>2136</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
16-34	664	3	1	4	11	4
35-64	891	3	4	7	12	8
65+	581	2	7	7	6	5
AB	363	2	5	6	17	9
C1C2	1016	2	3	7	11	6
DE	757	4	3	4	5	3
Minority Ethnic Group	229	2	2	4	8	4
Has a disability or long term illness	422	3	5	6	7	6
England	1782	3	3	5	10	5
Scotland	180	1	4	7	13	12
Wales	106	5	10	8	15	13
Northern Ireland	68*	8	14	13	17	6

Source: Kantar media Omnibus

Base: All adults 16+ in the UK 2136 \* Caution low base size.

Question: Q.12 Which, if any, of the following communications services have you used in the last 12 months?