

Research Paper

Acas website evaluation

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Ipsos MORI

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Summary

Employees and employers were positive about the Acas website across all elements of the study. The quantitative surveys revealed high satisfaction levels, and the qualitative research highlighted the value both employers and employees place on the availability of online information from Acas. Overall, the Acas website was seen as a high quality and useful resource, and viewed even more positively as a free source of information.

In the qualitative research, website users often described having relatively low expectations of finding a service which would be able to answer their question when they first encountered the Acas website, for example when using a search engine to explore a specific issue at work. As such, the provision of this type of website already exceeded expectations, and the comprehensive nature of the information available simply added to positive perceptions. However, given that satisfaction remains high among repeat users, it seems that the Acas website continues to be an important resource for users beyond their initial visit. These positive perceptions of the Acas website made it difficult for both employers and employees to suggest significant improvements.

Usage of the Acas website was slightly higher among employers than employees, with 14 per cent of employers and 11 per cent of employees who had at least heard of Acas saying that they had used the website in the last 12 months. The top reason for not having used the website among both employers and employees was not having had an employment issue to resolve.

Most website users were multiple users, with around a third of employers and a fifth of employee users¹ having visited on one occasion only. The modal number of visits per year was two to five, for both groups, with a mean number of five visits for employees and six for employers.

Employees were much more likely to have also used other Acas services (66 per cent had), most of these being as a result of using the Acas website (91 per cent of other service users). Employers were much less likely to say that they had used other services (only eight per cent had), and those that had were less likely to have used them because of visiting the website (62 per cent of other service users). The qualitative work suggests that this could be partly driven by the fact that employers are more comfortable using the site for general guidance on an issue and combining this with help from other non-Acas sources, whereas employees often have a specific question to which they are trying to find the answer. The most commonly used other Acas service was the telephone helpline, used by 27 per cent of employees and four per cent of employers.

Overall satisfaction with the Acas website was high among both employers (90 per cent satisfied) and employees (80 per cent satisfied). Similarly, almost all users found all or some of what they were looking for, and the usefulness of the information provided by the Acas website was also rated highly (72 per cent of employers and 50 per cent of employees who found at least some of the information they were looking for said it was very useful).

Looking at satisfaction with different aspects of the website, the quality of information and the clarity and style of writing were rated higher than the search facility and the design and layout by both employers and employees, although satisfaction scores for all aspects of the website were above 80 per cent.

¹ NB employee user data is taken from the online employee survey due to small base sizes in the general public omnibus survey. It should be remembered that these results are not representative and therefore not directly comparable with the employer survey, and any differences should be treated as indicative only.

The Acas website was considered to be accurate and up-to-date by employers and employees alike, with the impartiality of the information also highly rated. Over eight in ten employees agreed that the language and terminology used was easy to understand, with just under this proportion of employers saying that the website helped them feel more confident about the day-to-day decisions they made in their jobs.

A smaller proportion of employers and employees agreed that the Acas website provided enough depth (although this was still over seven in ten of each group). Some participants in the qualitative interviews gave examples of difficulties finding answers to specific questions when exploring particular employment relations issues, and pointed to this as a trigger for feeling that the website could provide more in-depth information. However, they also did not expect to find the level of tailored information required on a website and were comfortable using the website in conjunction with the telephone helpline to answer these specific queries. The most commonly mentioned improvement to the website was around providing more information, although both survey respondents and qualitative participants were unclear what exactly this additional information should be.

Most employees had visited the website in order to deal with a specific problem at work (48 per cent), with employers more likely to say that it was for general information on employment relations (42 per cent). The two most frequently mentioned topic areas for both employers and employees were discipline, dismissal and grievance and redundancy, lay-offs and business transfers.

Although employers were more likely to say that they had visited the website for general information, both employers and employees cited seeking advice or information about how to deal with a specific problem at work as the key use of the information they had taken from the Acas website (67 per cent and 73 per cent respectively), with general information the next most mentioned usage for both audiences.

A third of employees and around half of employers had downloaded guidance publications and booklets from the Acas website, with satisfaction high with all aspects of the guidance publications and booklets downloaded (above 80 per cent from employees and above 90 per cent from employers for all aspects). As with information from the website in general, employees most often used guidance publications and booklets to seek advice or information on how to deal with a specific problem (78 per cent) followed by using these for general information (40 per cent).

Background and methodology

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas) commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct an evaluation of its website (<http://www.acas.org.uk>) among employers and employees in Great Britain. This report details the findings of the study, which used qualitative and quantitative research to understand how Acas' two key audiences, employers and employees, use and perceive the Acas website.

This research had two main components: one part explored views of the Acas website amongst members of the general public and employees, whilst the other focussed on the opinions of employers.

Employees and the general public

Acas wanted to find out the size and profile of their website users among the general public, as well as finding out how those who use the website as employees perceive it. Due to the anticipation of relatively low numbers of employee users among the general public, this research was undertaken in two parts, with a general public omnibus survey providing the website market size and profile, and an online panel survey of employees providing in depth insight into user views and experiences.

Survey of employees and the general public

The Capibus survey was conducted with a representative sample of the general public to provide a robust reading of levels of usage of the Acas website. In order to focus on the key website user groups respondents took part in the survey if they were currently in employment or had left employment within the last three months. Students were also included in the sample in order to capture those who may have used the Acas website for academic purposes.

Based on the number of Acas website hits per year (4.5 million) and data from the 2002 DTI survey² we assumed the level of usage among employees to be c. two to five per cent. As this would only be around 20–50 respondents in the Capibus survey of 2,000 adults (allowing for the exclusion of respondents who were not working) follow up questions to explore in depth views of the website were not asked of this sample, as it would be difficult to generate a robust level of findings from so few interviews. An in-depth employee website user survey was conducted as an online panel survey, with a detailed methodology given below.

Ipsos MORI conducted 1,063 interviews in-home, face-to-face on the Ipsos MORI omnibus survey (Capibus) between the 11th and 17th January 2013. Interviews were with GB adults aged 15+, and respondents were screened to ensure that those in employment, education or who had been in employment within the last three months were included. Employees, students and those who have recently been in employment formed Acas' target group (excluding employers with whom a separate survey was conducted).

The data was weighted by age, gender and social grade to ensure it was representative of the GB adult population using the most recently available Census data.

² <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.dti.gov.uk/er/emar/ies.pdf>

Online panel survey of employees

In order to explore more in depth views and opinions of the Acas website from employee users an online survey was conducted using the Ipsos MORI online panel. Online survey invitations were sent out in several waves to GB adults (aged 16+) with participants accessing the survey if they had used the Acas website as an employee in the last 12 months. Fieldwork took place between 4th February–1st March 2013 and 761 interviews were completed.

Data is unweighted as there is no profile of Acas website users to which the data can be weighted. As such the data is not representative of the profile of all employee users of the Acas website, but provides indicative findings. Differences noted between subgroups are again indicative and not statistically significant. Further information on statistical significance can be found in Appendix A.

Employee qualitative research

In order to explore the experience of website users in more depth, follow-up qualitative interviews were conducted with 15 respondents to the online panel survey. Interviews were conducted by telephone and lasted around 30 minutes. Participants for the qualitative phase were selected at random from those who agreed to be re-contacted at the online survey stage. The qualitative findings are presented alongside the quantitative findings in the following report in order to provide greater depth and understanding of the quantitative responses.

Employer telephone survey

Telephone survey

The second key group of Acas website users is employers. As employers are more likely to be website users than the general public, the profiling and in-depth website questions were completed within the same survey.

A random probability telephone survey was conducted with employers to ensure robust profiling of Acas website users. Sampling was based on IDBR³ counts of establishment level businesses within GB including all businesses with two or more employees (this ensured no sole traders were included in the sample as there is often confusion between zero and one employees).

The sample was procured from the Experian business database, due to the relatively high level of telephone coverage it provides, with businesses stratified by size (excluding those with 0–1 employees), broad SIC⁴ category and region. Large businesses were over-sampled in order to ensure a sufficient number of interviews were conducted with this group to allow analysis by employer size. Where possible contacts were for the Director of Human Resources (HR), with the owner or senior decision-maker where these contacts were not available.

Interviews were conducted by telephone using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI), with an average interview length of 15 minutes. Fieldwork was conducted 18th February–12th April 2013. All telephone numbers in the sample were called a minimum of 12 times or until a final outcome was reached. In total, 1,000 interviews were completed from 5,800 pieces of sample, with a final eligibility for the survey of 57 per cent (screened on size of business and whether the employer had heard

³ The Inter-Departmental Business Register is a register which contains information on all businesses in the UK which are VAT registered or operating a PAYE scheme and is maintained by the Office for National Statistics.

⁴ Standard Industry Classification; the 2007 codes were used throughout.

of Acas). This gives an unadjusted response rate of 35 per cent and an adjusted response⁵ rate of 42 per cent.

Data was RIM weighted⁶ by number of employees and then by broad SIC category based on the IDBR profile data. As is usual with business surveys, the relatively heavy weighting to correct for the over sampling of large businesses means that the *effective base size* for website users in this group is relatively low (73). This limits the subgroup analysis included in the report for questions based on employer users of the website. Where possible this data has been supplemented by qualitative findings.

It should be remembered that a sample and not the entire population of the business community has taken part in the research. Consequently, all results are subject to sampling tolerances, which means that not all differences are significant.

Qualitative approach

Again, to explore the experience of website users in more depth, follow-up qualitative interviews were conducted with 15 respondents to the telephone survey. Interviews were conducted by telephone and lasted around 30 minutes. Participants were selected at random from those who agreed to be re-contacted at the telephone survey stage.

Interpreting the data

Where percentages do not sum up to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of “don’t know / not stated” response categories, or multiple-response answers. Where * per cent is shown, this indicates a percentage of less than 0.5 but greater than 0.

For open ended questions responses have been coded as accurately as possible to the verbatim responses and net codes have also been provided to group responses into broader topics. These net codes are presented in the charts in uppercase letters (e.g. INFORMATION (NET)) and are the sum of the codes below up to the next net code.

Unlike quantitative surveys, qualitative research is designed to be illustrative, detailed and exploratory, providing insight into the perceptions, feelings and intended behaviours of people rather than conclusions from a quantifiable valid sample. Therefore, these interviews do not allow statistical conclusions to be drawn about the extent to which views are held across the wider public.

Throughout this report, verbatim comments from participants are used. Where this is the case, it is important to remember that the views expressed do not always represent the views of other participants, but are illustrative of the issues raised in that interview.

Copies of the questionnaires and the topic guides used for each stage of the research can be found in Appendix C.

Acknowledgements

Ipsos MORI would like to thank Emma Dibb, Jonathan Cooper and Nicholas Wainwright from Acas for their help in developing the study. We would also like to thank all those who gave their time to be interviewed for this research.

⁵ The adjusted response rate removes all bad number, incorrect and unobtainable numbers from the total sample used to calculate response rate.

⁶ RIM weighting is designed to attempt to weight all of the weighting characteristics at the same time, while not interlocking them. As the RIM weighting process runs, it tries to distort each variable as little as possible while still trying to attain all of the desired proportions among the characteristics.

1. Setting the scene by speaking to the general public

The first chapter of this report covers findings from the omnibus survey conducted with the general public. This was a representative survey of members of the public who are either employed, have been in recent employment, or are currently in education and provides a profile of employees who are aware of the Acas website and those who have used the Acas website. This employee user profile provides context for the detailed employee website user findings presented in Chapter 2 of this report.

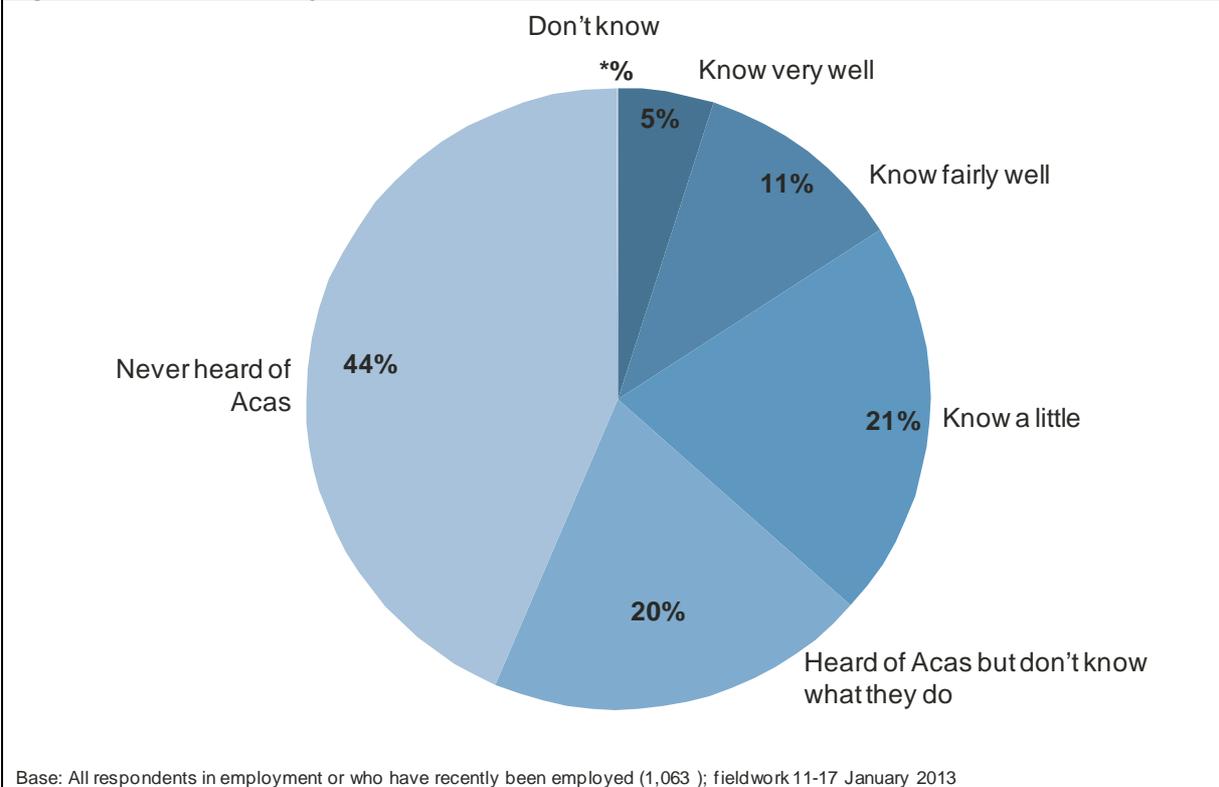
1.1 Profile of Acas users

Familiarity with Acas

Before asking about the website specifically, respondents were asked about their familiarity with Acas (the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service). Of those currently in employment, in full-time education or who have been employed within the last three months, over half (56 per cent) said that they have at least heard of Acas, while just over two fifths (44 per cent) said that they had never heard of Acas.

One in twenty (five per cent) claimed to know Acas very well, with one in nine (11 per cent) saying they know them fairly well and around a fifth saying they know a little (21 per cent) or have heard of Acas but do not know what they do (20 per cent).

Figure 1.1 Familiarity with Acas



Those not currently working (students and those who have left employment within the last three months) were more likely to say that they have never heard of Acas (73 per cent compared with 38 per cent of full-time employees and 46 per cent of part time

employees). This suggests that those more connected with the employment market are more likely to have heard of Acas.

Acas was a more familiar organisation to older rather than younger respondents, with four fifths of 15–24 year olds (80 per cent) and three fifths of 25–34 year olds (62 per cent) saying that they had never heard of Acas, compared with just 19 per cent of those aged 55–64 and 13 per cent of those aged over 65. This age difference was reflected in the qualitative work with employees. Several participants recalled the Acas brand from the organisation's involvement in large scale industrial disputes in the 1970s and 1980s.

Men were more likely than women to say they had heard of Acas (59 per cent compared with 52 per cent), as were those of high social grade (63 per cent of ABC1s compared with 46 per cent of C2DEs). White respondents were also significantly more likely than ethnic minority respondents to say that they had heard of Acas (60 per cent compared with 29 per cent), as were those with a disability (79 per cent compared with 55 per cent among those who did not).

Awareness of Acas was lowest in London, with almost two thirds (63 per cent) saying they had never heard of the organisation. This compared with only half of respondents in the north (51 per cent), a fifth (38 per cent) in the midlands and 31 per cent in the south who had never heard of Acas.

There were also some differences noted in awareness of Acas as a body by the type of business respondents were employed by⁷. Those employed in the public sector were more likely to say that they had heard of Acas (66 per cent compared with 57 per cent of private sector employees). By contrast, those working in wholesale and retail (57 per cent) or in hotels and restaurants (57 per cent) were most likely to say they had not heard of Acas, compared with 44 per cent overall.

Usage of the website

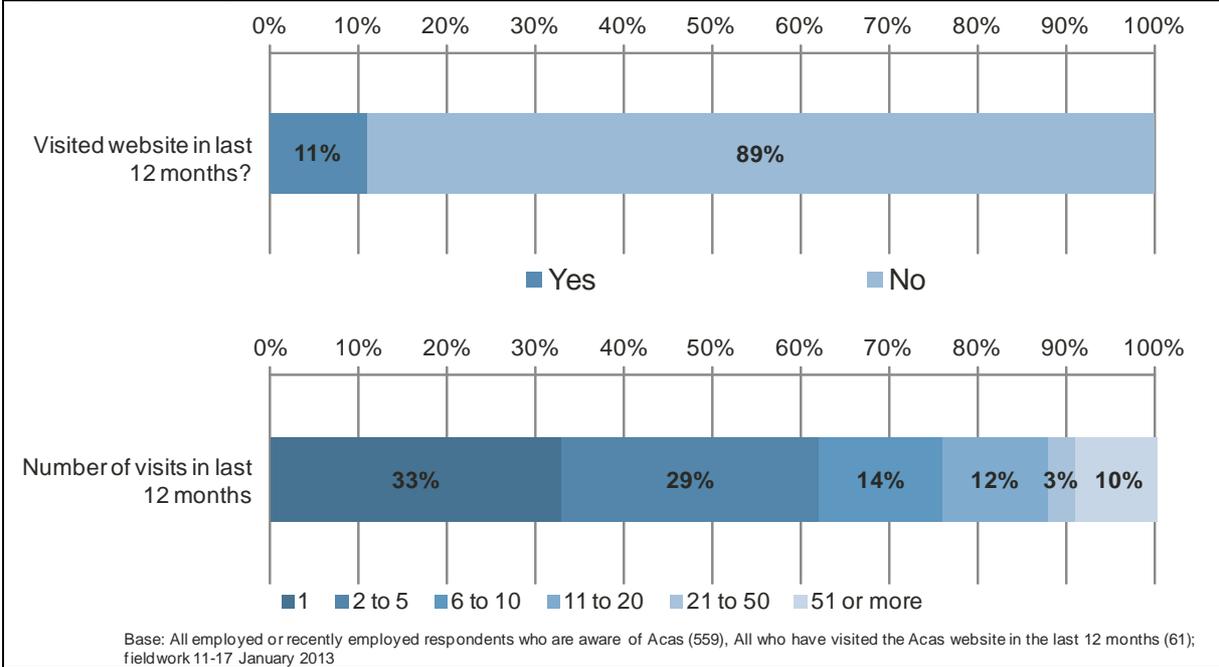
Of those general public respondents who had heard of Acas, around one in nine (11 per cent) said that they had visited the Acas website in the last 12 months (89 per cent had not).

The number of visits varied, with a third of website users (33 per cent) having visited once in the last 12 months, and a similar proportion (29 per cent) having made between two and five visits to the website. Around one in seven (14 per cent) said they had used the website six to ten times, 12 per cent had made 11–20 visits and three per cent had made 21–50 visits. One in ten website users (10 per cent) said that they had visited the Acas website more than 51 times (i.e. around once a week) over the last 12 months. It should be noted that these figures represent a percentage of the number of Acas website users in the survey, not the general public. As this is a small base (61) the numbers referred to are small and findings should be treated as indicative.

The mean number of visits made by website users in any capacity was 10, with the mean number of visits made by those who visited the website in their role as an employee specifically was nine.

⁷ It is important to remember that, as the demographic profile of employees in businesses differ, it is not possible to tell whether demographic differences in familiarity are driven by differences in business type or vice versa.

Figure 1.2 Usage of the Acas website



Website users were more likely to be those who said that they were very or fairly familiar with Acas (27 per cent) compared with those who have little or no knowledge of Acas, or are only aware of the name (four per cent). It is very likely that website visits are driving levels of familiarity with the Acas brand, and this was certainly suggested by findings in the qualitative work.

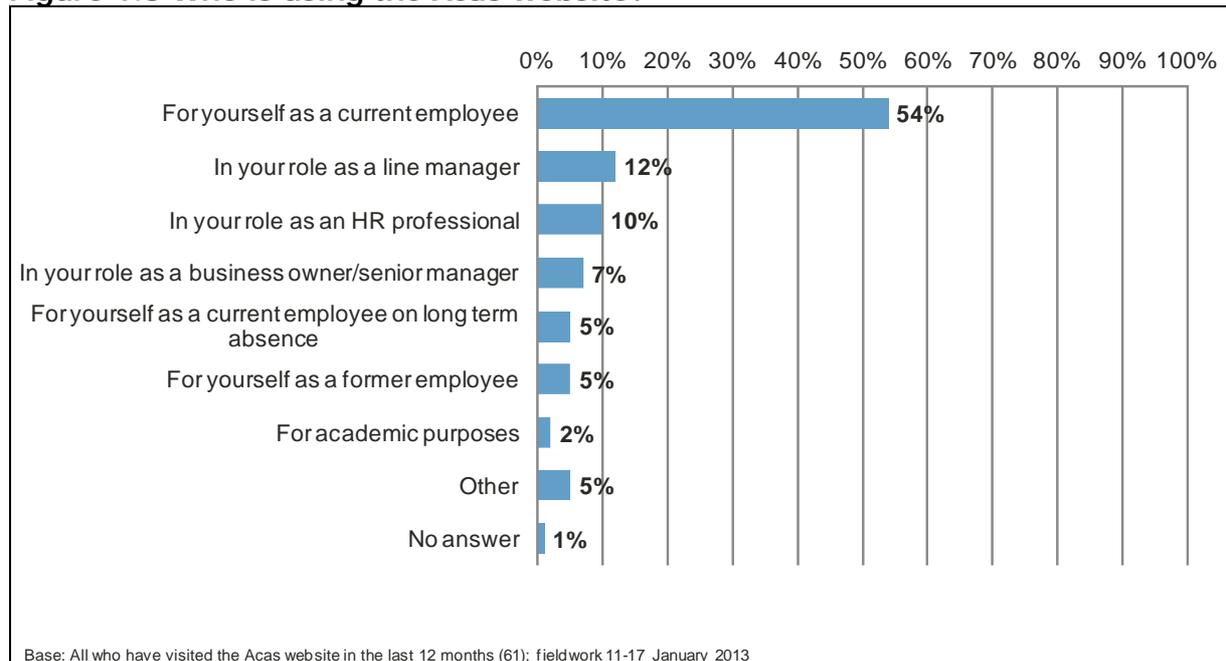
Employees in small businesses (with 10-49 employees) were more likely to have used the website than those in micro (fewer than 10 employees) or large businesses (250+ employees) (17 per cent compared with eight per cent of both).

Who is the website used for?

Overall, 63 per cent of employee website users had visited the website in their role as an employee and 29 per cent in their role as an employer. Respondents were able to give more than one answer to this question if they had used the website in different capacities within the last 12 months.

Of those respondents who had visited the website, around half (54 per cent) said that they had visited the website for themselves as a current employee, with one in twenty having visited as an employee on long term absence, and the same proportion for themselves as a former employee (both five per cent). Those who had used the website in their role as employers had done so as line managers (12 per cent of website users), HR professionals (10 per cent) and as business owners or senior managers (seven per cent).

Figure 1.3 Who is using the Acas website?

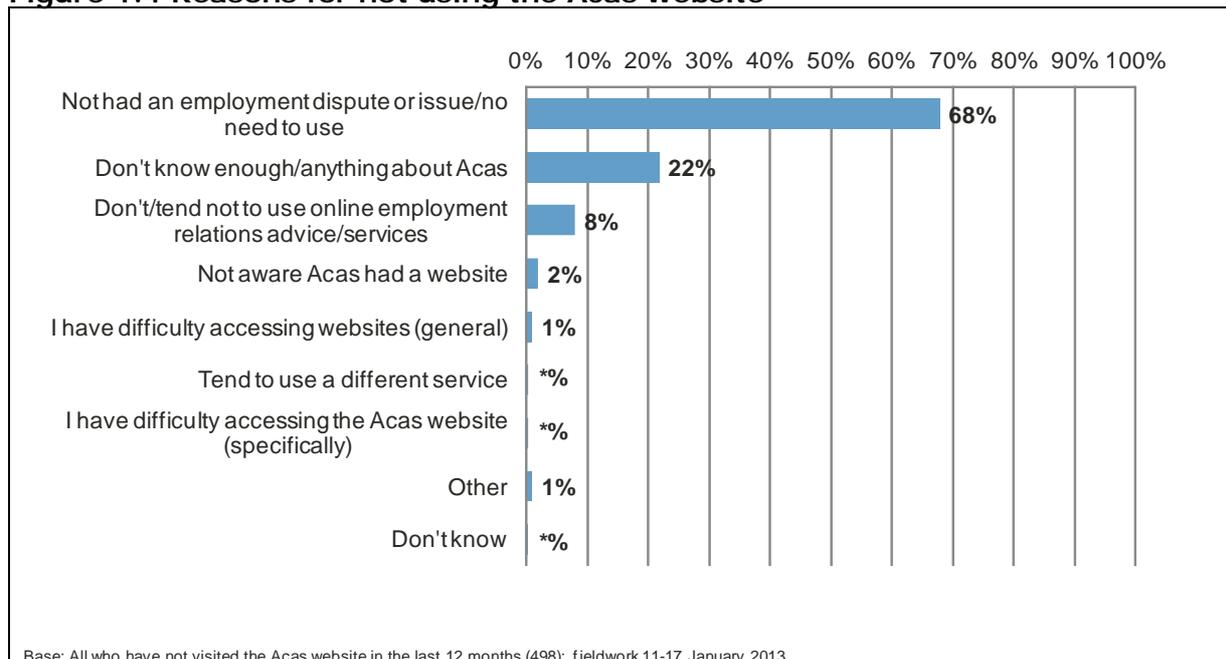


1.2 Reasons for non-usage of the website

Why are employees not using the Acas website?

Of those respondents aware of Acas but who had not used the website in the past 12 months, over two thirds (68 per cent) said that this was because they had not had an employment dispute or issue and had no need to use it. Around a fifth (22 per cent) said they had not used the website because they did not know enough about Acas, with one in twelve (eight per cent) saying that they tend not to use online employment relations services. Just two per cent were unaware that Acas had a website.

Figure 1.4 Reasons for not using the Acas website



Older respondents were more likely to say that they had not had an employment issue to resolve (73 per cent of those aged 55–64) compared with around half of those aged 15–24 (51 per cent). Younger respondents were most likely to say they had not used the website because they did not know enough about Acas and the service it provides (48 per cent of 15–24 year olds said this compared to 13 per cent of 55–64 year olds).

Those with no access to the internet at home or work were most likely to say that they did not use the Acas website because of difficulty in accessing websites. In all cases this was because they did not have a computer or did not use the internet. None reported problems accessing the Acas website specifically.

2. Employee findings

This chapter covers findings from an online panel survey of employee users of the Acas website. Members of the panel – who have opted in to participate in research – were screened to find those who had used the Acas website in the past 12 months. This approach enabled larger numbers of users to be surveyed than was possible through the nationally representative omnibus survey. However, as the sample was self selecting the results from this survey are indicative rather than robustly representative of the population of employee users of the Acas website. For this reason, while sub-group differences are noted, they are indicative only and not statistically significant, and should be treated with caution.

This chapter examines the overall satisfaction of those who have used the Acas website in their role as employees, as well as the information that they were looking for and what they did with it on their last visit to the website.

2.1 Selecting the Acas website

This section covers some similar themes to those covered in section 1.1 on familiarity with Acas, website usage and other sources of employment relations information. However, in this case questions were asked in a survey conducted of the Ipsos MORI online panel only of those who said that they had used the Acas website in the last 12 months. This does not therefore provide the penetration of those using the website within the general population, but does give some more detailed information from the sample of website users who completed the survey.

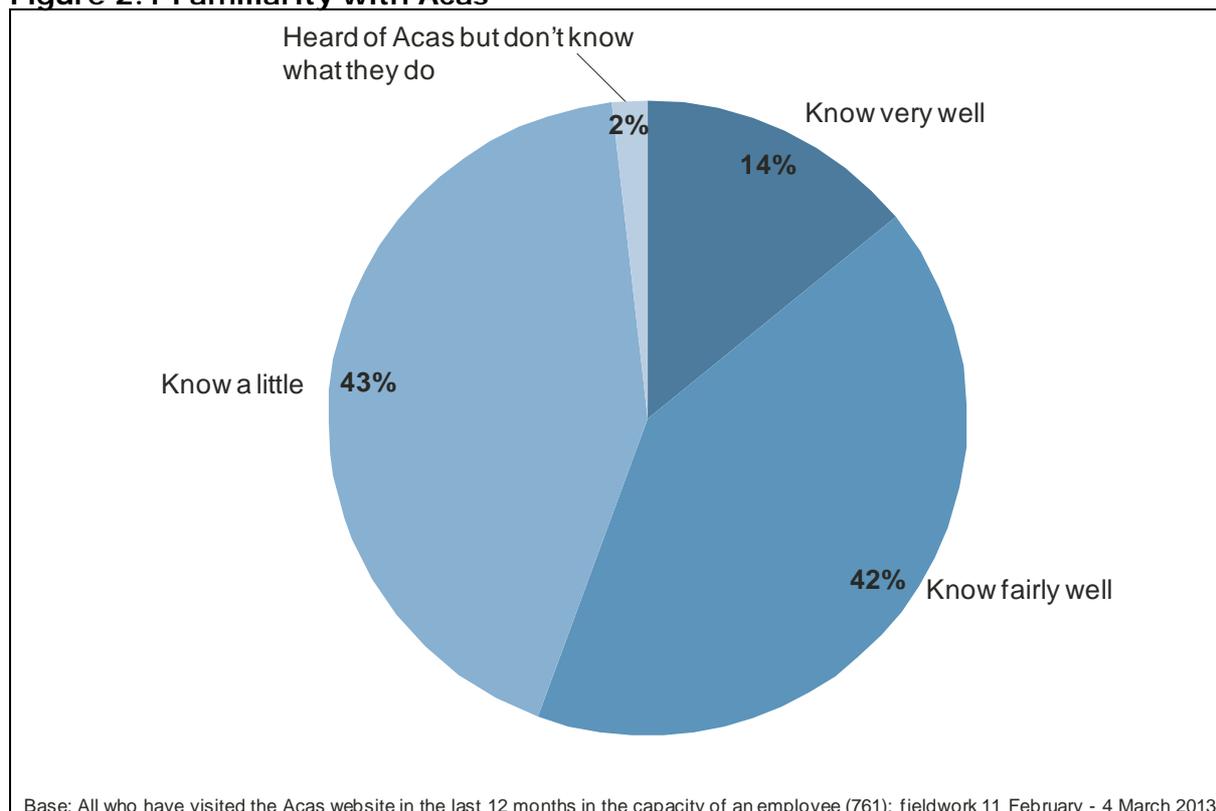
Familiarity with Acas

As expected, this sample of website users⁸ shows a greater level of familiarity with Acas as an organisation than found among the general public who have heard of Acas⁹. One in seven (14 per cent) respondents said that they know Acas very well (compared with eight per cent of the general public) and around two fifths (42 per cent) know Acas fairly well, compared with one fifth (19 per cent) of the general public. Two fifths (43 per cent) said that they know a little about Acas, compared with a similar proportion of the general public (37 per cent). However only two per cent of respondents say that they have heard of Acas but do not know what they do, compared with around a third (35 per cent) of the general public.

⁸ Only Acas website users were able to complete the survey.

⁹ Please note, the general public figures are based only on those who have heard of Acas to ensure comparability with those who responded to the online panel survey.

Figure 2.1 Familiarity with Acas



As the sample was not representative any differences between subgroups cannot be considered statistically significant. However, there were some indicative differences in results between different groups. Respondents aged 25–34 were more likely than their older counterparts to say that they know Acas very well (21 per cent compared with 13 per cent of 35–54 year olds and eight per cent of over 55s).

Ethnic minority respondents were also more likely than White respondents to say they know Acas very well (24 per cent compared with 13 per cent).

This pattern of responses differs somewhat from the employee and general public omnibus survey. However this level of familiarity should be understood as reflecting the different profile of respondents to this survey, rather than being representative of the level of knowledge of Acas users overall.

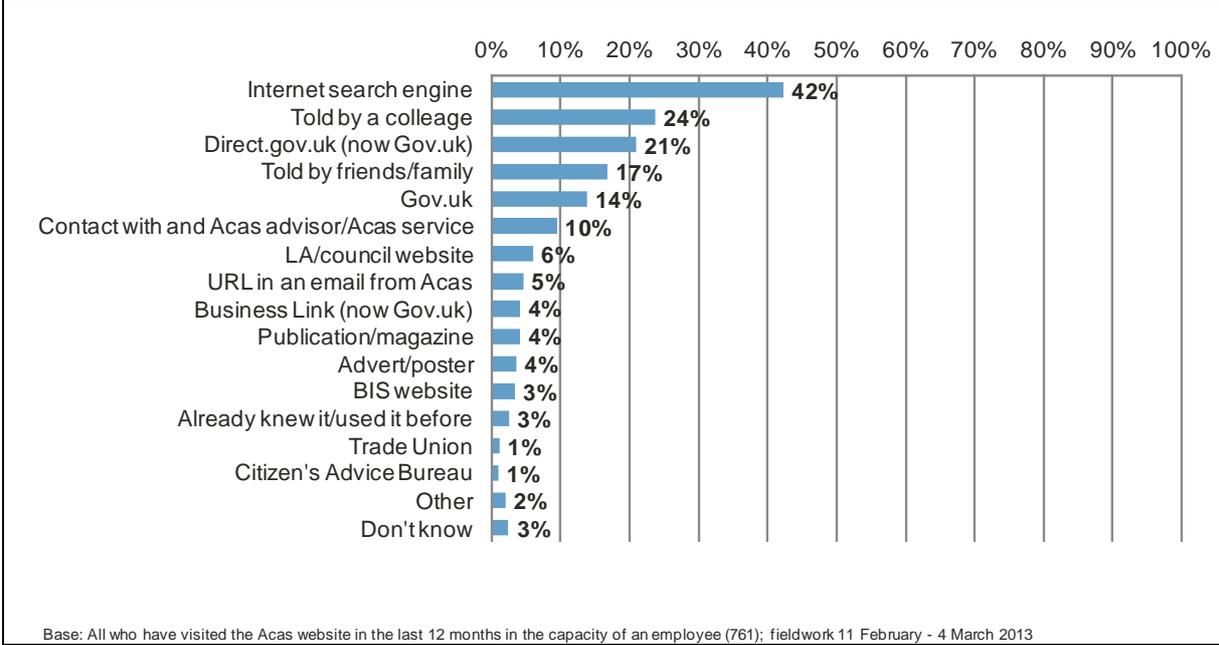
Sources used to find the Acas website

Two fifths (42 per cent) of respondents came to the Acas website through using an internet search engine, with a quarter (24 per cent) being told about it by a colleague. One in five (21 per cent) said that they were directed there from direct.gov.uk (now gov.uk), with around one in six (17 per cent) told about Acas by friends or family. One in seven (14 per cent) found the website through gov.uk and one in ten (10 per cent) came to the website through contact with another Acas service or an Acas advisor.

Overall, the relatively new gov.uk website¹⁰ and its predecessors direct.gov.uk and Business Link account for around a third (34 per cent) of respondents¹¹ using the Acas website. This may change as a result of the new website address.

¹⁰ Gov.uk officially replaced Directgov and Business link on 17 October 2012
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/launch-of-gov-uk-a-key-milestone-in-making-public-service-delivery-digital-by-default>

Figure 2.2 Sources used to find the Acas website



Those employees working in medium (50-249 employees) and large (250+ employees) workplaces were more likely to say that they had come to use the Acas website through being told by a colleague (29 per cent and 30 per cent respectively, compared with 18 per cent of those based in small workplaces). Those in small workplaces were more likely to say that they had used direct.gov.uk (26 per cent) compared with 17 per cent of those based in large workplaces.

Ethnic minority respondents were more likely than their White counterparts to say that they found the Acas website through direct.gov.uk (33 per cent compared with 20 per cent) and that they used gov.uk (29 per cent compared with 12 per cent). They were, in fact, more likely to have sourced the Acas website through all the official organisation websites or publications listed, but less likely to use internet search engines (34 per cent of ethnic minority respondents said they used an internet search engine compared with 43 per cent of White respondents).

As throughout this section, these differences should be treated as indicative only and are not statistically significant.

Among participants in the qualitative interviews, levels of awareness of Acas and the Acas website varied. Consequently not all participants said they went directly to the Acas website. Many initially used a search engine to look up their particular issue and followed the link to Acas as it was one of, if not *the*, first site to show up. The name Acas was also often familiar to them, attracting attention and ensuring that they selected it over other sites that were listed. In other cases, employees were referred to Acas and its website by a colleague who had used it previously, their own experience of using it under other circumstances or via a trade union in a few cases. Some employees were aware of Acas services in general for employers (and some may have used it as employers themselves under different circumstances) and were surprised to find that the Acas website was also for employees.

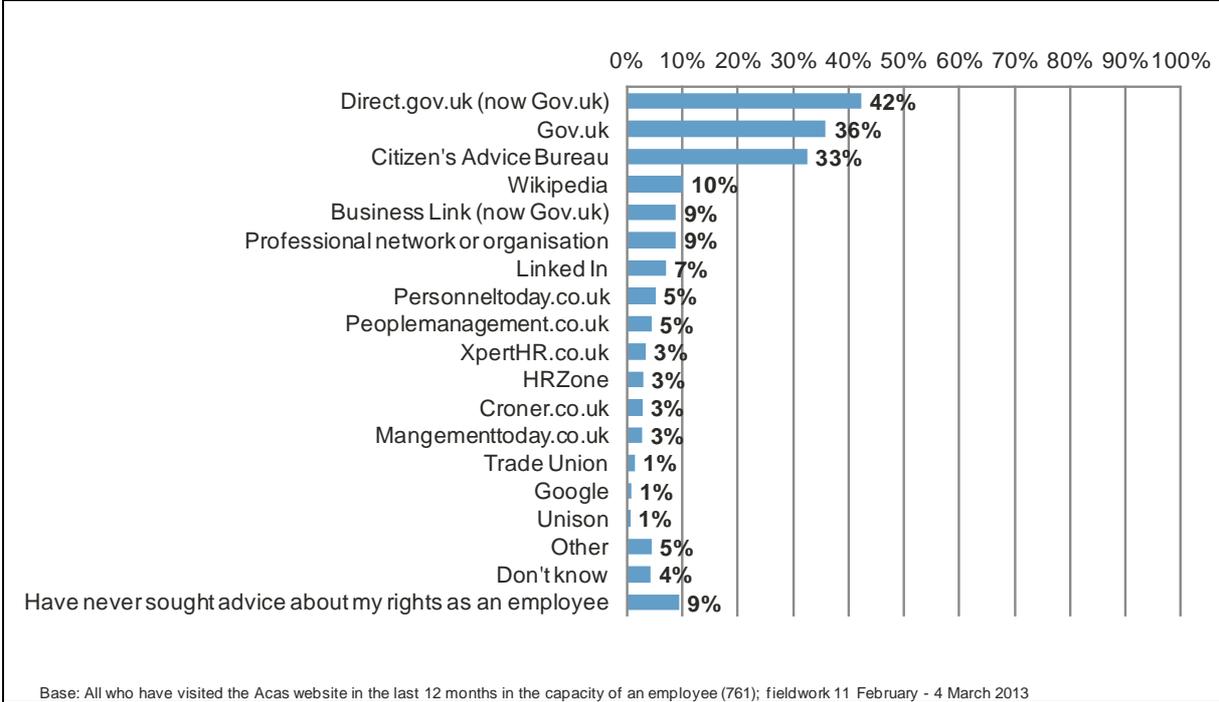
¹¹ This figure is the proportion who said they found the Acas website through any of these channels.

Other sources of employee relations information

Direct.gov.uk (42 per cent) and gov.uk (36 per cent) were the most frequently mentioned alternative sources of information on rights as an employee. A third of respondents (33 per cent) also said they had used the Citizen's Advice Bureau. Although a significant number of website users had been referred to the Acas website through direct.gov.uk and gov.uk, only one per cent of respondents' website referrals came from the Citizen's Advice Bureau.

Around one in ten respondents said that they get information on their rights as an employee from Wikipedia (10 per cent), Business Link (nine per cent) and professional networks or organisations, such as CIPD (nine per cent). The same proportion (nine per cent) reported that they have never sought information about their rights as an employee (despite all having visited the Acas website).

Figure 2.3 Other sources of employment relations information

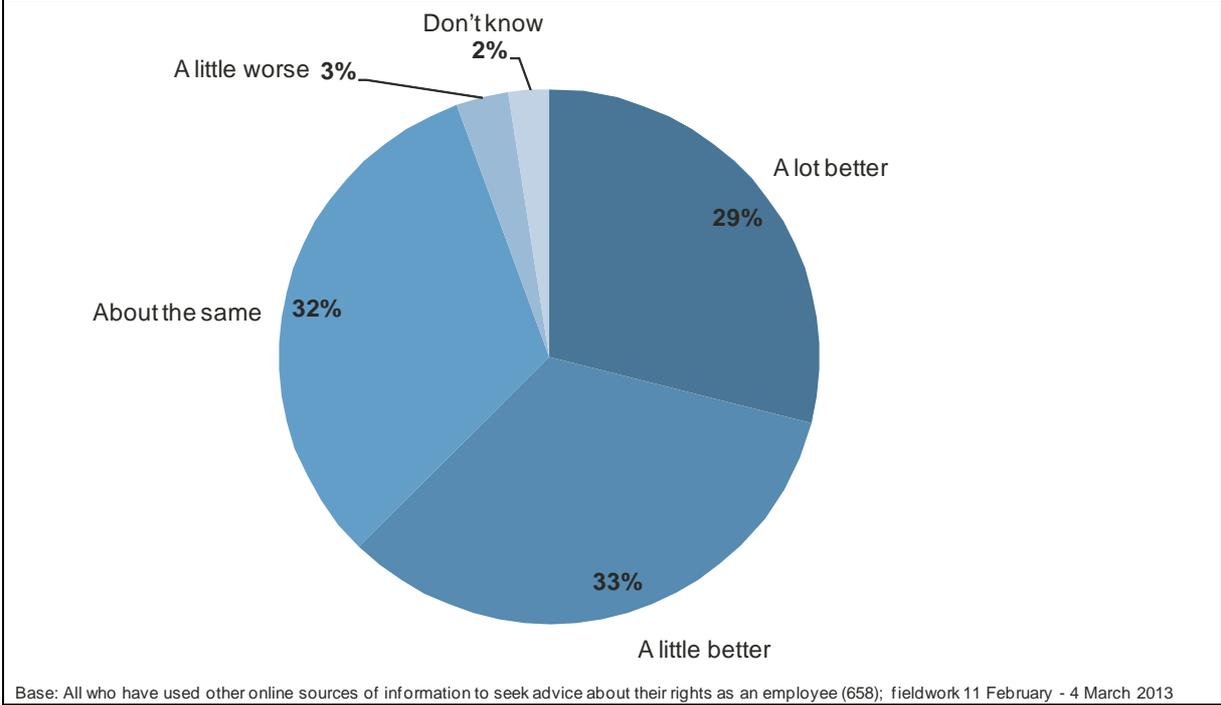


Employees of large workplaces were more likely to say that they used gov.uk (42 per cent), professional networks and organisations (15 per cent) and Linked In (12 per cent), compared with small workplaces (29 per cent, seven per cent and four per cent respectively).

There were also some differences by industry sector, with those working in the transport sector more likely to say that they had sought advice on their rights as an employee from the Citizen's Advice Bureau (53 per cent compared with 33 per cent in total) and those working in the category known as other business services most likely to say they had used gov.uk (50 per cent compared with 36 per cent overall).

Around three fifths (63 per cent) of respondents who have used alternative sources of information to provide advice about their rights as an employee said that the Acas website was better than the other sources, with three in ten (29 per cent) saying that it was a lot better. Around a third (32 per cent) said the Acas website is the same as other sources, with only three per cent saying that it is a little worse. No respondents felt that it was much worse than other sources they have used.

Figure 2.4 Comparison between the Acas website and other sources



One in ten (10 per cent) of those who do not have English as their first language felt that the Acas website as a source was worse than other websites, compared with three per cent of those whose first language is English. Similarly 10 per cent of those who visited the website as an employee on long term absence from the workplace felt that the Acas website was worse than other sources they had visited, compared to two per cent of current and three per cent of former employees. This may imply that there is some content relating to these groups that they have found better alternatives for elsewhere, however it should be noted that these are indicative findings only and do not represent a statistically significant difference.

2.2 How is the Acas website being used?

This section covers how the website is being used, including in what role respondents are visiting the website, how frequently they visit, and what devices they use to access the website. This section also explores the link between the website and other Acas services, looking at which other services respondents have used, and where this has been driven specifically by visiting the website.

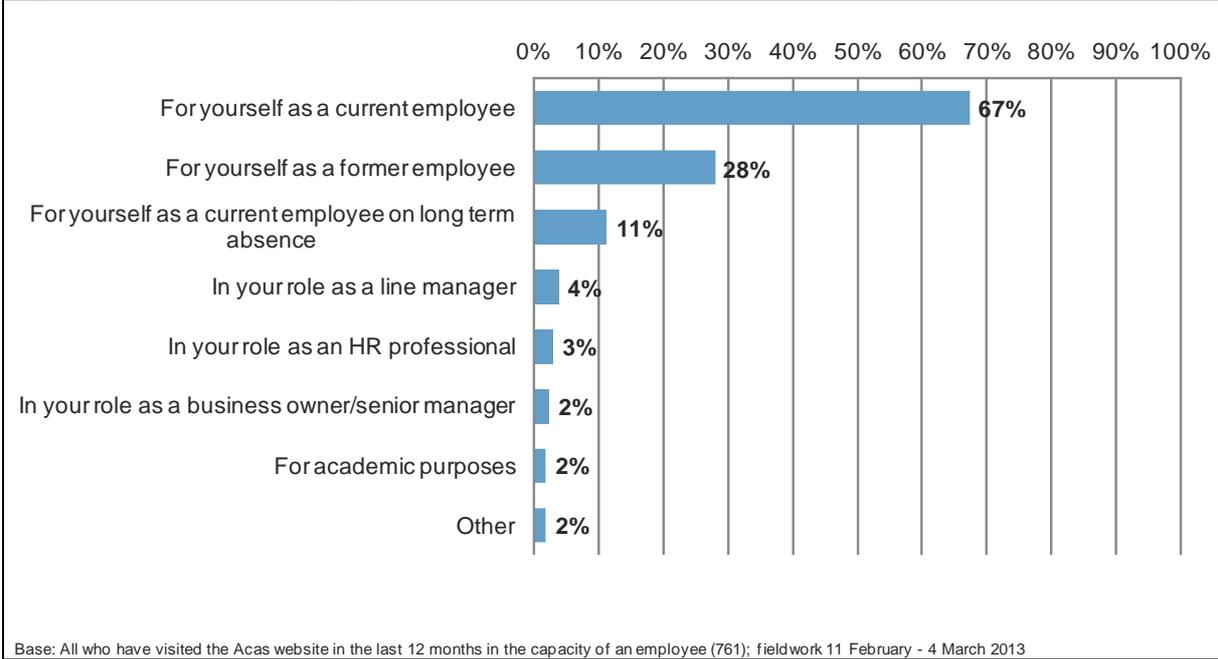
Again, this section is based on website users responding to the panel survey, and therefore does not provide results that can be extrapolated to the general public, or even to website users as a whole. However, it does give indicative findings about the way the website is being used.

Who is using the Acas website?

Two thirds (67 per cent) of respondents accessed the website for themselves as a current employee, with just under three in ten (28 per cent) having accessed the Acas website for themselves as a former employee. One in nine (11 per cent) have visited the website as a current employee on long term absence from the workplace.

Fewer than one in twenty said they have visited the Acas website in their role as a line manager (four per cent), an HR professional (three per cent), as a business manager or owner (two per cent) or for academic purposes (two per cent). Each of these groups will also have visited the website in the capacity of an employee within the last 12 months, as those who had not were not included in the survey. However multiple responses were permitted to allow for those who had visited the website in different roles.

Figure 2.5 Who is using the Acas website?



Those working in manufacturing were more likely to say that they had visited the website as a current employee (81 per cent compared with 67 per cent in total), while those based in micro workplaces were most likely to say that they had accessed the site in the capacity of a former employee (35 per cent compared with 28 per cent in total).

Those respondents who have a long standing disability are most likely to have accessed the site for themselves as a current employee on long term absence, with 26 per cent saying this compared with seven per cent of those with no disability.

Usage of the website

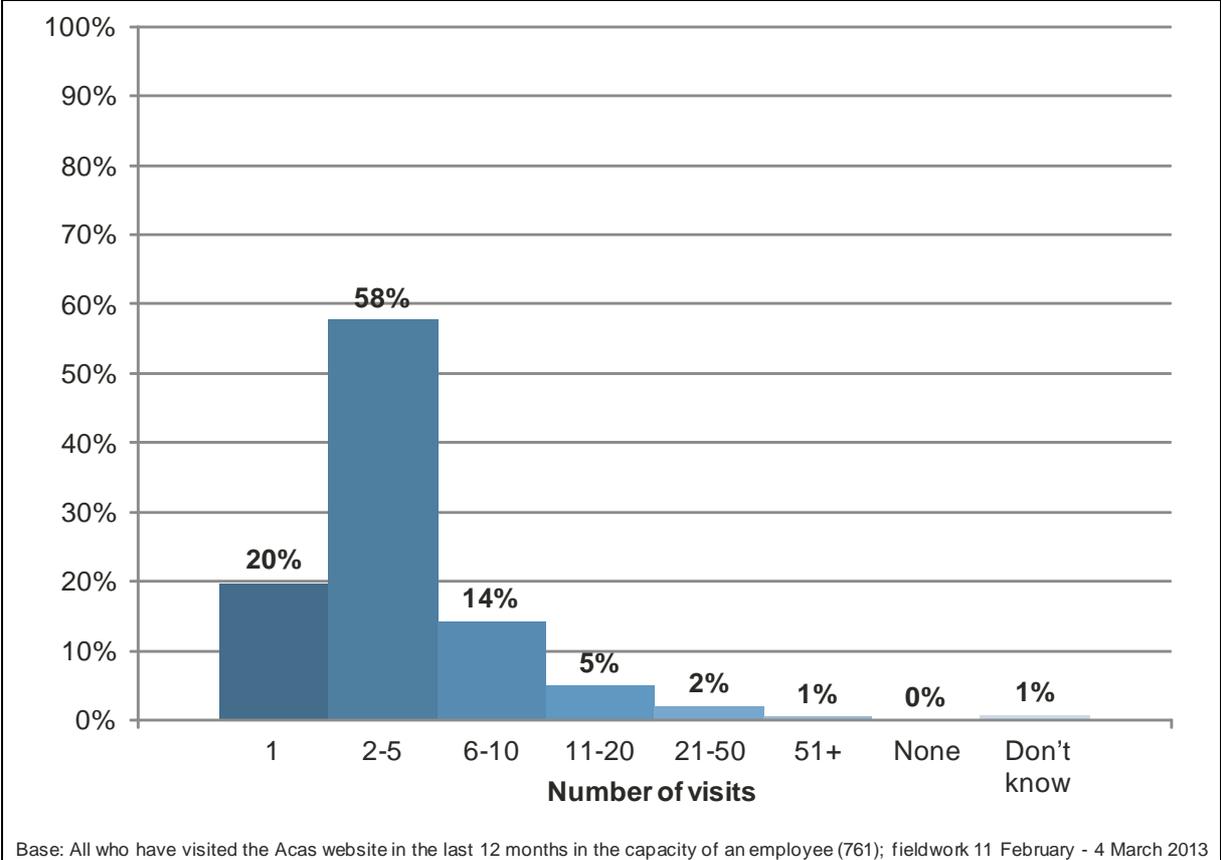
A fifth (20 per cent) of employee website users said that they had only visited the Acas website once in the last 12 months. Almost three fifths (58 per cent) had made between two and five visits to the site, and one in seven (14 per cent) between six and ten. One per cent of respondents say they had visited the site more than 51 times, or around an average of once a week, in the past year.

The mean number of uses of the website in the course of a year is five.

This distribution of visits is similar to that seen in the employee and general public omnibus findings. However in the general public omnibus survey a spike is seen for those who have used the website more than 51 times (seven per cent of employee website

users). This gives a much higher mean number of visits than for the online employee survey (five compared with nine). It should be noted that the online survey is based on a very small base size, and should be treated with caution.

Figure 2.6 Usage of the website



Those based in large workplaces (250+ employees) were more likely to have a higher average number of visits, at seven, compared with an average of just four website visits per year from employees in small workplaces (10-49 employees).

Current employees on long term absence and those who do not have English as their first language are also likely to have more visits on average (both eight, compared with a total of five). This may be due to the fact that they have more complex needs, either in terms of the depth of information they require or the nature of workplace rights issues they face.

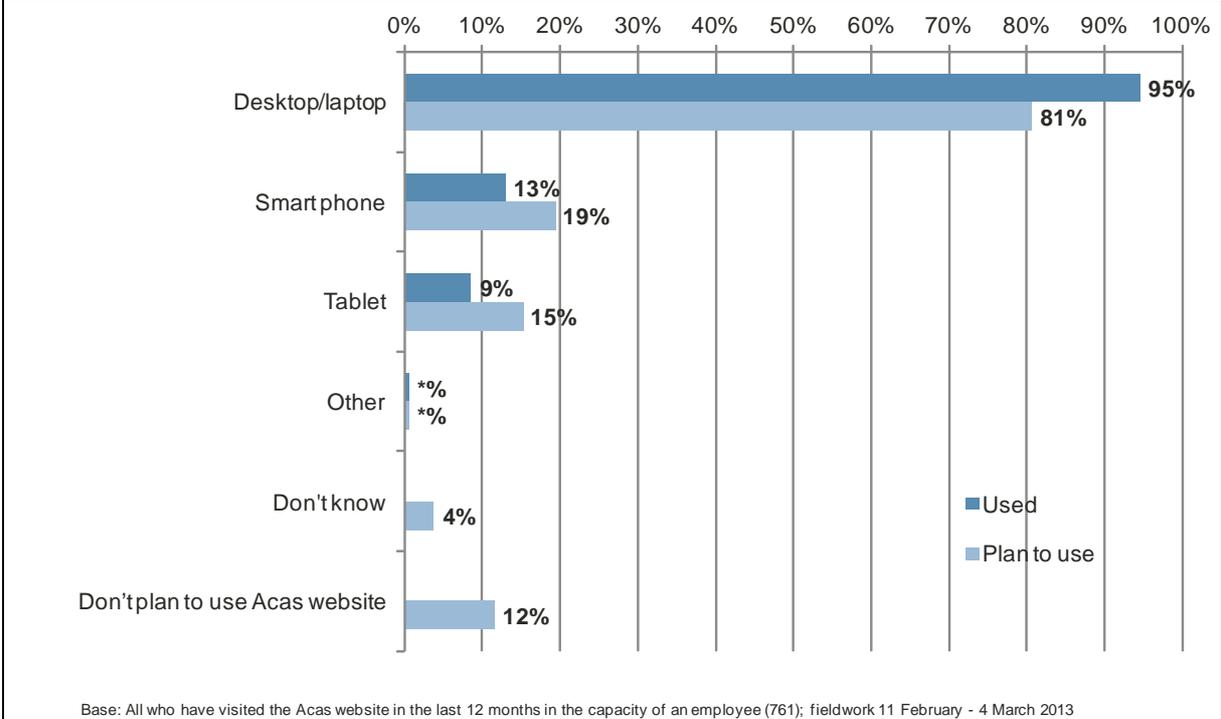
Devices used to access the website

The primary device used for accessing the website is a desktop or laptop computer, used by 95 per cent of respondents. Around one in eight (13 per cent) respondents have viewed the Acas website on their smart phone and just under one in ten (nine per cent) on a tablet computer (such as an iPad).

However, online survey respondents anticipate their usage of devices changing over the coming 12 months, with just four fifths (81 per cent) saying that they plan to use the Acas website on a desktop or laptop computer and around a fifth (19 per cent) saying that they would plan to use their smart phone to access the site. Tablet usage is also anticipated to increase, with around one in seven (15 per cent) saying that they plan to use the Acas website on a tablet computer in the next 12 months.

This increase is in line with the Ipsos MORI Tech Tracker¹², which shows smart phone usage increasing from 13 per cent in January 2010 to 50 per cent in July 2012, and with one in eight (13 per cent) of the public now owning tablet computers, rising to just under a third (31 per cent) of high income households (>£75,000 per annum household income).

Figure 2.7 Devices used to access the Acas website



Those employed in larger workplaces were more likely to say that they have already accessed the Acas website through less traditional methods, with 18 per cent having used smart phones and 15 per cent having used tablet computers. This compares with 10 per cent and three per cent respectively of those employed in small workplaces. Respondents predict that this will even out over the next 12 months, with no significant differences in planned usage based on the size of the workplaces in which employees are based.

The trend towards smart phones in particular is likely to reflect a much longer term shift, with a third (33 per cent) of younger respondents (16–24 years old) having used smart phones to access the site in the past 12 months and 28 per cent of those aged 25–34, dropping to one in ten (10 per cent) of 35–54 year olds and just one per cent of those over 55. Over time, as this younger generation of smart phone users start to form a larger part of the workforce, and as smart phone penetration continues to rise, the number of users accessing the website on smart phones is likely to increase rapidly.

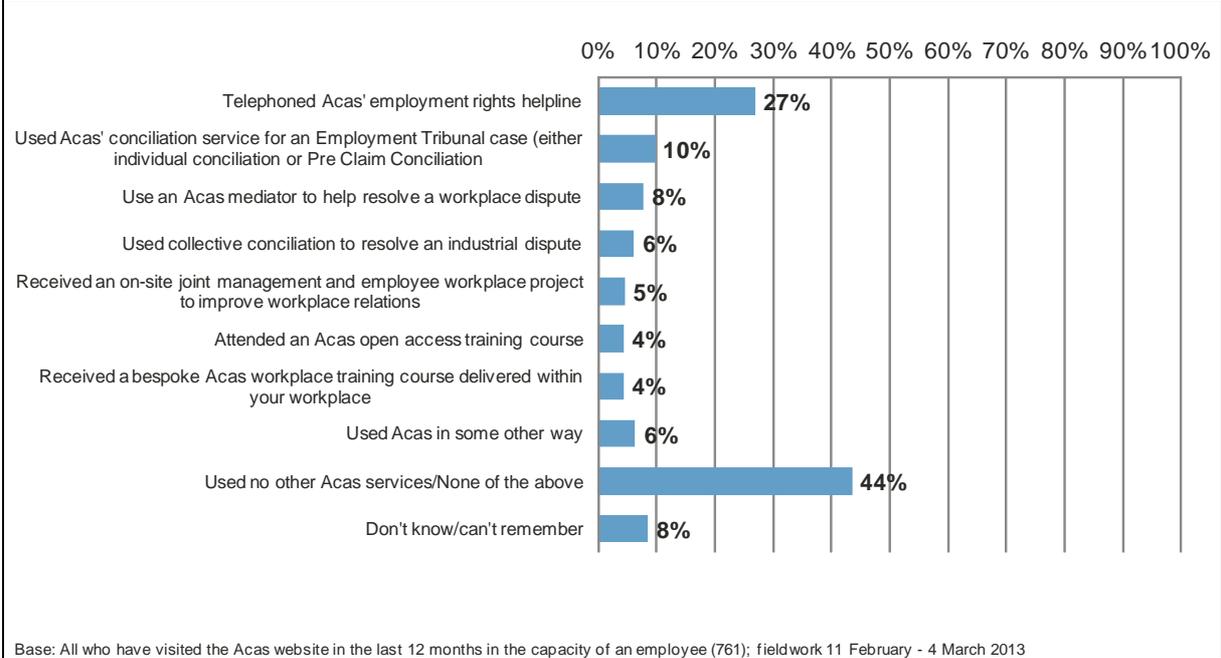
¹² Ipsos Media CT Tech Tracker, Q4 2012, <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/publications/1522/Ipsos-MediaCT-Tech-Tracker.aspx>. This is a face-to-face omnibus survey of a representative sample of circa 1,000 consumers from across Great Britain.

Other Acas services used

Almost half (48 per cent) of respondents had used Acas services other than the website in the past year. Just over a quarter (27 per cent) said they had telephoned the Acas helpline, with one in ten (10 per cent) having used Acas’ conciliation service for an Employment Tribunal case, and a similar proportion (eight per cent) having used an Acas mediator to resolve a dispute.

Two fifths (44 per cent) said that they have not used any other Acas services in the past 12 months.

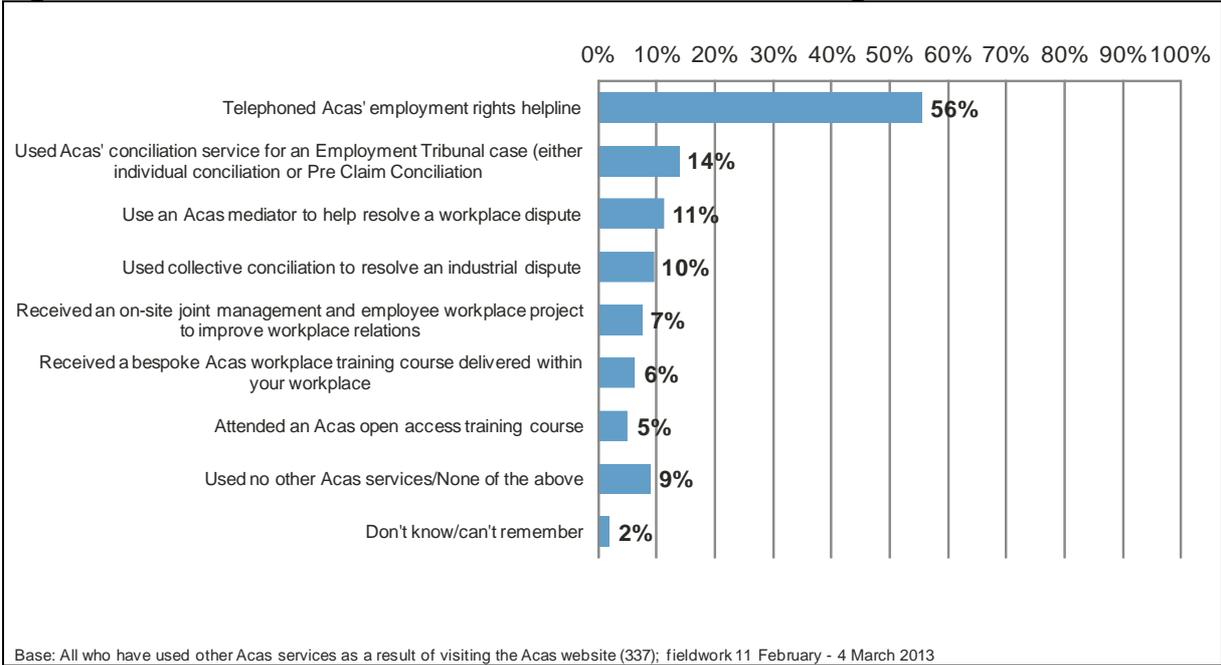
Figure 2.8 Other Acas services used



Of those who have used other Acas services in the past 12 months, most said that this had been as a result of visiting the Acas website, with just under one in 10 (nine per cent) saying the services they had used were not as a result of visiting the website and two per cent unsure. It is important to remember that this survey was conducted with an online panel, and therefore the survey population are likely to be more computer literate and familiar with online sources. The results should be interpreted in this context, with the potential that less confident online users may interact differently with the range of services provided.

Over half (56 per cent) of online survey respondents said that as a result of visiting the website they used the Acas telephone helpline, with around one in seven (14 per cent) saying that visiting the Acas website had led them to use Acas’ conciliation service and one in nine (11 per cent) saying it led them to use an Acas mediator to help resolve a workplace dispute.

Figure 2.9 Other Acas services used as a result of visiting the Acas website



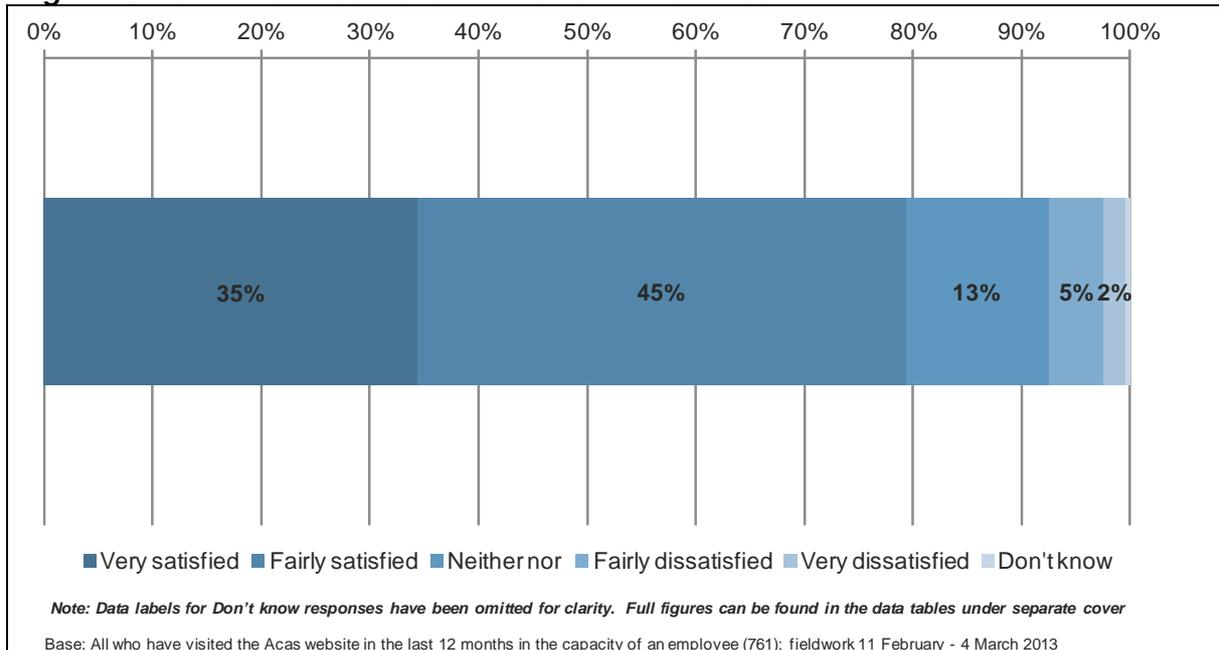
2.3 Overall satisfaction

This section considers levels of satisfaction with the Acas website, both overall and with particular aspects. It also reports on respondent views about the impartiality, accuracy and comprehension of the information on the Acas website.

Overall satisfaction with the Acas website

Respondents in the online survey of employees reported a high level of overall satisfaction with the Acas website. Eight in ten respondents (80 per cent) were satisfied overall, with over a third (35 per cent) being very satisfied. Few respondents claimed to be dissatisfied with the Acas website; five per cent of respondents were fairly dissatisfied, with only two per cent very dissatisfied.

Figure 2.10 Overall satisfaction with the Acas website



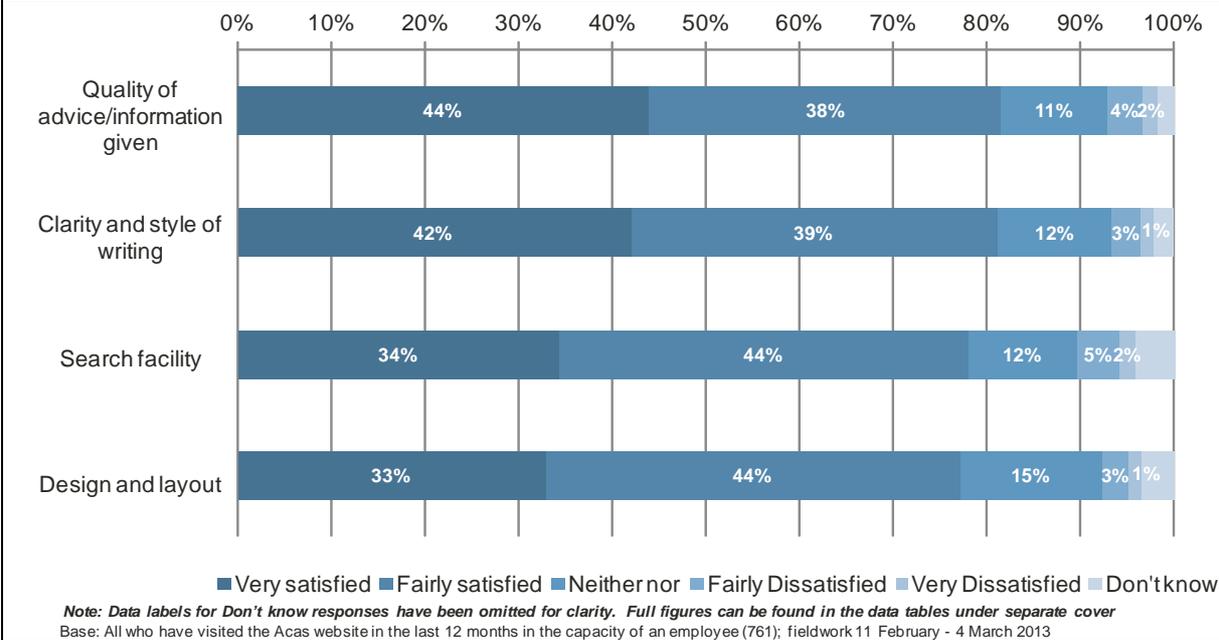
High levels of satisfaction were found across all demographic groups with very little variation. Those who found all that they were looking for, or considered the information they found useful, were more likely to be satisfied – 92 per cent of respondents who found all that they were looking for were satisfied overall with the Acas website.

Satisfaction with particular aspects of the Acas website

Respondents were most positive about the quality of the information given on the Acas website, with 82 per cent of respondents being fairly or very satisfied. Satisfaction with the clarity and style of the writing ranked similarly highly, with 81 per cent expressing satisfaction. The search facility and design of the website were also highly rated, but by slightly fewer respondents, at 78 per cent and 77 per cent respectively.

In all cases dissatisfaction was low. The highest level of dissatisfaction was for the search facility (seven per cent). Around one in ten respondents said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with each of the elements of the website they were asked about.

Figure 2.11 Satisfaction with particular aspects of the Acas website



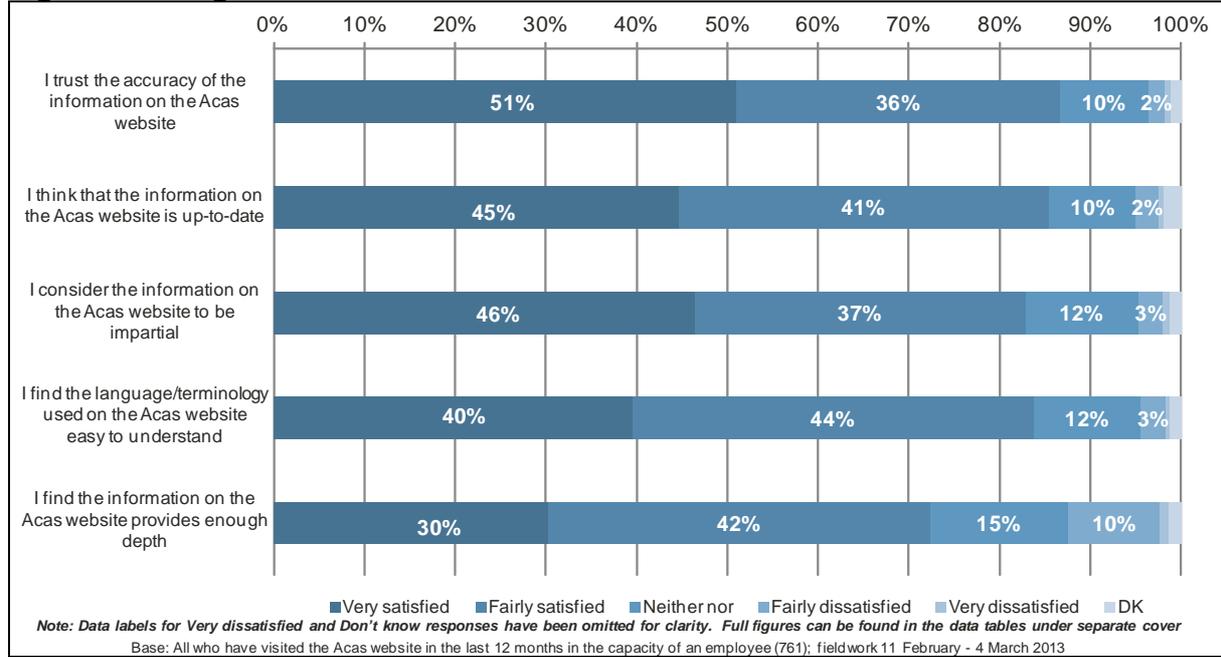
Respondents were also asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements that reflect Acas’ strategic priorities for the website. Overall levels of agreement were high across all statements, particularly with regard to accurate, up-to-date and impartial information, presented in a way that is easy to understand.

The accuracy of the information elicited the strongest level of agreement. Half of respondents (51 per cent) agreed strongly that they trust the accuracy of the information and nearly four in ten (36 per cent) tended to agree – an overall agreement rate of 87 per cent. Only three per cent disagreed with this statement.

Over eight in ten respondents (85 per cent) agreed that the information on the website is up-to-date, with a similar proportion (83 per cent) feeling the information on the website is impartial. Levels of agreement that the language and terminology are easy to understand were also high, however the proportion agreeing strongly with this statement is slightly lower. Again, the level of disagreement is very low at three per cent.

Significantly fewer respondents agreed that the Acas website provides enough depth (72 per cent); a high level of agreement, but significantly below other aspects of the website. One in nine (11 per cent) respondents disagreed with this statement, although only one per cent disagreed strongly. Those who had visited the website more than once were more likely to agree with this particular statement, perhaps indicating that their expectations of the website are different than for less frequent visitors.

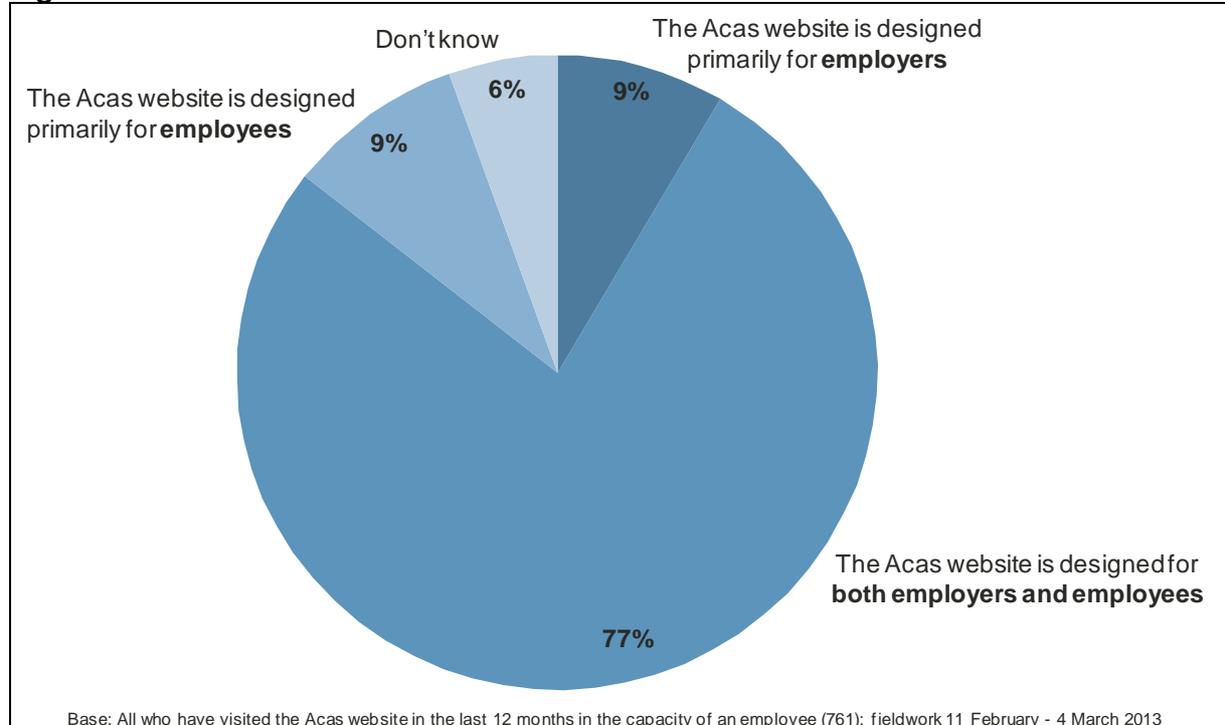
Figure 2.12 Agreement with statements about the Acas website



Perceived main audience for the website

Over three quarters (77 per cent) of respondents agreed that the Acas website was designed for both employers and employees. One in ten respondents felt that the website was designed primarily for employers, with the same proportion feeling that it was designed primarily for employees (nine per cent for each).

Figure 2.13 Perceived main audience of the website



Older employees, and those with greater knowledge of Acas, were both significantly more likely to agree that the website was designed for both employers and employees than younger and less knowledgeable respondents. A similar pattern was observed with the

number of visits in a year – those who had been to the website two to five times were significantly more likely to believe that the website was even-handed towards employers and employees than those who had been just once. It is not possible to say whether this was driven by greater awareness of the different functions of the Acas website as a result of greater use, or whether those who appreciate the neutrality the website offers are likely to use the website more often.

Participants in the qualitative interviews were also positive about the Acas website, although there were some differences in levels of satisfaction. This was usually related to their motivations for using the site, with those searching for very specific answers to a work problem tending to be less content with the service they received, while those looking to inform themselves more generally around employee rights usually more satisfied.

Several qualitative participants who had needed to follow-up their search with a call to the Acas helpline expressed some dissatisfaction that the website itself had not provided them with sufficiently detailed information. After consideration however, some of these participants recognised that the nature of their inquiry was likely to always need a level of tailoring that they would not expect to find on a website.

Some participants in the qualitative interviews compared the Acas website to others that they had either used previously or in conjunction with the Acas one. These included direct.gov.uk and the Citizens' Advice Bureau websites. The Acas website was generally seen to be similar overall, not being any better or worse than these alternatives.

Some participants in the qualitative interviews admitted to having fairly low expectations with regard to finding a website which was able to answer their queries, and several were pleasantly surprised that a website like it existed at all. Moreover, they were often happy with a website that was clear and easy to use and did not mention any more sophisticated requirements.

“It wasn't exactly 'wow' but why would it be! It was clear and simple, that's all I needed”

Employee

“Easier than I thought it would be. All the info was there and easy to find – I didn't have to click 100 times or go all around the houses”

Employee

Many participants in the qualitative interviews talked about the language of the website being easy to follow and intuitive. Several said they were grateful it was written in 'plain English' and considered this a welcome change from other material they had read relating to employee rights.

There was a feeling among some that the site overall appeared to be more aimed at employers than employees, at least on first impressions.

“It seemed more like it was aimed at employers – that was my initial impression. They offered courses for employers – how to make them better. On reflection though I guess that’s a good thing – making employers better. But it meant it took a bit of time for me to find what I needed”

Employee

“It’s [there] for people who are self-motivated. They can deal with information themselves. First you look at it and think it’s just for employers, but then you read further”

Employee

However, a small number of other employees said the website’s tone was pitched at employees rather than employers. These participants felt that the generic nature of the information provided was better suited to employees who were more likely to be lacking knowledge of the basics and in a position of need compared with their employers who they expected to be better-versed in employment regulations.

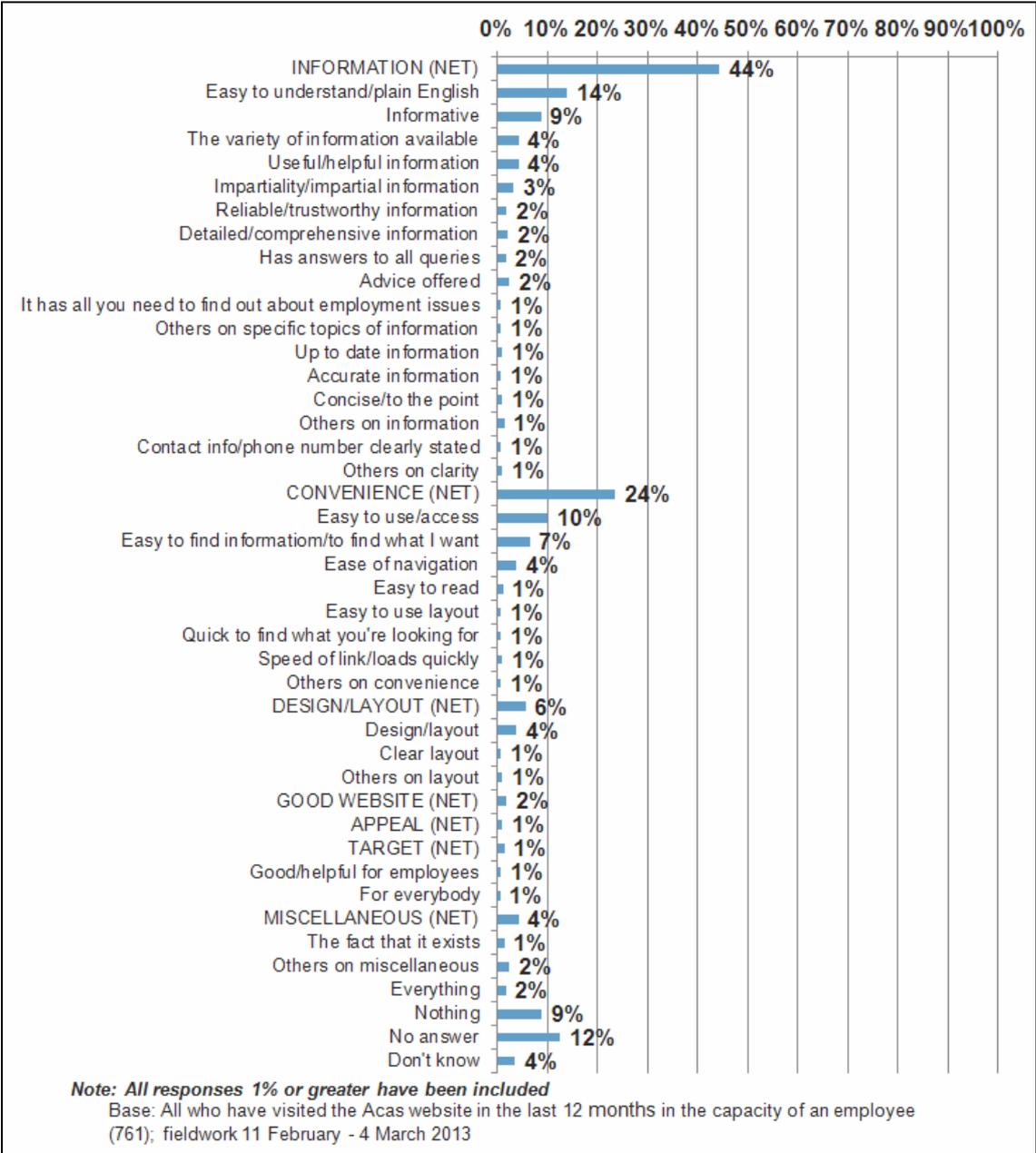
“It’s more aimed at employees rather than employers – at people with no other options”

Employee

Suggested improvements and most liked aspect of the Acas website

Respondents were asked what they liked most about the Acas website. Over four in ten – 44 per cent – of respondents suggested that the information provided by the website was the area they liked most. Within this, the vast majority suggested that it was the information in general, rather than specific topic information, that they liked the most (30 per cent of total respondents said information in general, compared to two per cent saying specific information). One quarter of respondents (24 per cent) said that they liked the convenience of the site – particularly the ease of using the website. Other topics, such as the design and the targeting of information on the website, scored lower than 10 per cent.

Figure 2.14 Areas which respondents liked the most about the Acas website¹³

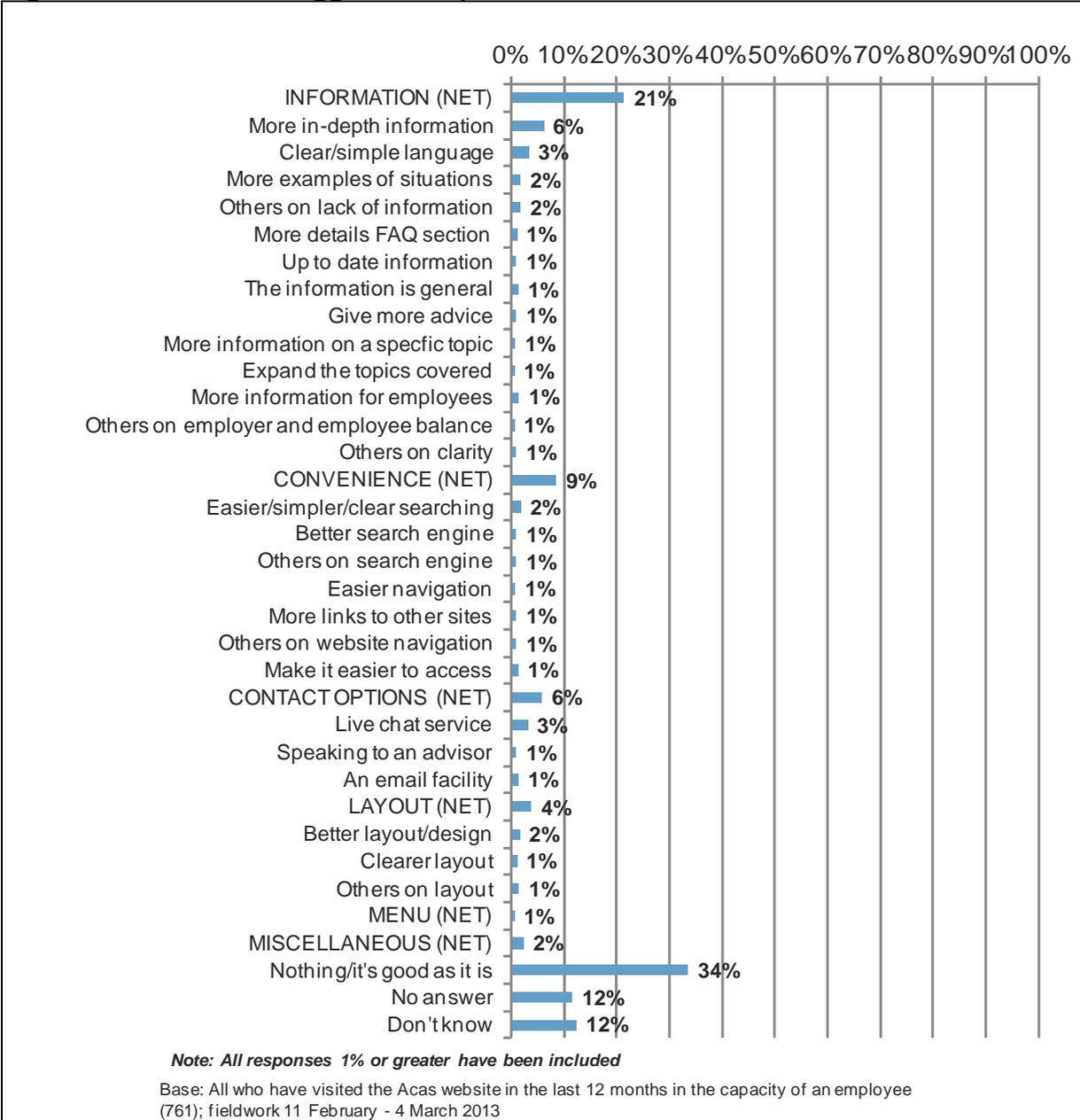


Respondents were also asked to suggest improvements to the Acas website. One third (34 per cent) of employees felt that the Acas website was fine as it is and did not need improvement, and one in ten respondents said that they either did not know (12 per cent) or did not provide an answer (12 per cent). A further five per cent provided a positive comment at this stage.

Of those who suggested improvements to the Acas website, the most commonly mentioned area (mentioned by 21 per cent) was around information – for example providing greater detail or case studies. One in ten (9 per cent) suggested that improvements could be made to the website’s convenience, for instance by improving the search function of the site or website navigation.

¹³ Please note: Net codes have also been provided to group responses into broader topics. These net codes are presented in the charts in uppercase letters (e.g. INFORMATION (NET)) and are the sum of the codes below up to the next net code.

Figure 2.15 Areas of suggested improvement for the Acas website



2.4 Impacts and outcomes

This section covers the reasons behind respondents’ most recent visit to the Acas website, and how the outcomes of using the site had related to their issue or situation. This includes the reasons for the most recent visit, which topics were searched, what information was found, how this information was used and how useful it was perceived to be.

Finding and navigating the website

The qualitative interviews provided some insight into the way that users navigate the website. This often depended on how they had arrived there originally.

Those who had gone straight to the Acas website tended to start off by using the search box on the site. On the other hand, participants who had already used a search engine like Google to look-up their problem had often landed immediately on the relevant page

and did not, at least initially, need to use the search box. Those who had spent more time on the site or had visited it on more than one occasion and were familiar with the headings said that they were clear and generally helped them find their way to relevant information.

However, the majority of participants in the qualitative interviews admitted that they could not properly recall the wording or much of the content on the site; they just knew it had not been problematic to understand and had generally been useful to them.

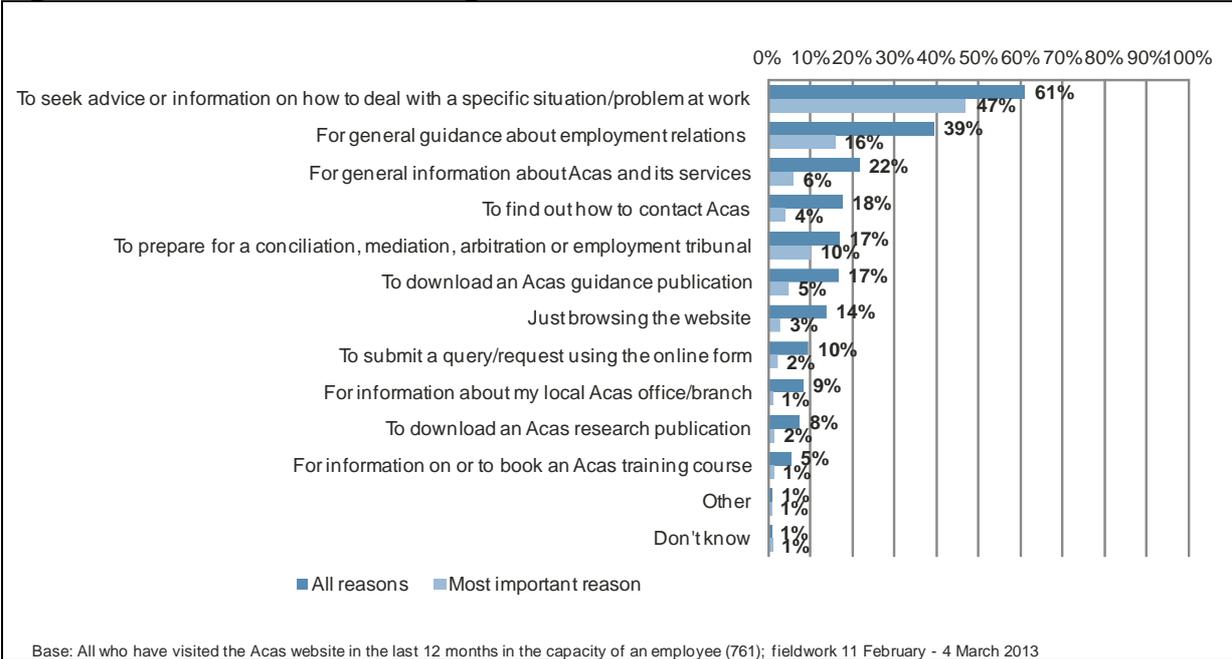
Reasons for visiting the Acas website

By far the most common reason for visiting the Acas website was a specific issue or situation at work. Six in ten online survey respondents (61 per cent) cited this as a reason for their most recent visit to the Acas website and for nearly half (48 per cent) of visitors this was their main reason for visiting.

The next most frequently cited reasons were for general and contact information. Another common reason for visiting the site was as preparation for a conciliation, arbitration, mediation or employment tribunal. These findings underline the important dual role played by the website as a source of both general and specific information.

Around half of visitors to the Acas website came for more than one reason, with 52 per cent giving two or more reasons. Only three reasons – for information about a local Acas branch, to download a research publication, and for information about training courses – were cited by fewer than one in ten respondents (among all of the reasons for visiting).

Figure 2.16 Reasons for visiting the Acas website



Participants in the qualitative interviews described a range of different reasons for using the Acas website. Most had visited the site either because they had a specific concern regarding their employment rights or as a direct response to an issue arising at work. As a result, their usage tended to be reactive and isolated to specific points in time when they needed information. This contrasts with employers who were more likely to be repeat users of the site, treating it as a point of reference and visiting it more regularly.

An example of an employee using the site to generally bring themselves up to speed on their working rights was a single working mother interviewing for a new job. The participant was looking for information about her childcare rights and how this related to

her employment. She was also curious to know what other benefits she might be entitled to as she did not feel sufficiently informed as it was. She was using the site with some urgency since she wanted to raise these points at interview and ensure any potential job offer took them into account.

“Sometimes when you start working life as a parent you don’t know what you’re entitled to. People like employers and the government they don’t always give you the info you need. So it’s nice to know there is this company that does. And that it’s free”

Employee

Several employees spoke about trusting the information they found on the website and relied on it as a reliable means of preparing themselves before having delicate, sometimes difficult, discussions with their employers. These employees described their position before consulting the site as one of almost cluelessness and, in some cases, vulnerability. After visiting the site, however, they felt reassured and confident enough in their views to raise topics that might otherwise have been overlooked.

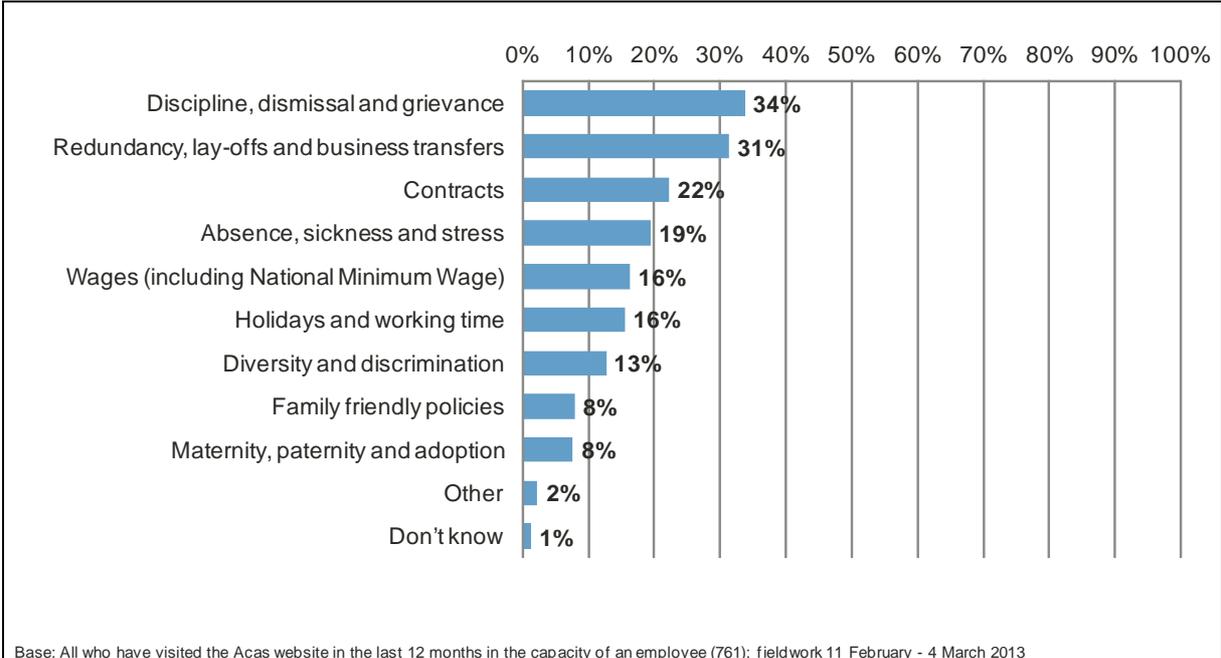
“Trusted? Yes. I felt very confident about the info I found on there. And firm in using it to confront my employer”

Employee

Topic areas behind the most recent visit

Respondents were asked about a broad range of topic areas they may have sought information on, corresponding to the main areas covered by the Acas website. The most commonly cited topic was discipline, dismissal and grievance, selected by one third (34 per cent) of respondents. Three in ten respondents (31 per cent) chose redundancy, lay-offs and business transfers, making it the second most selected option.

Figure 2.17 Topics respondents were looking under in their last visit to the Acas website

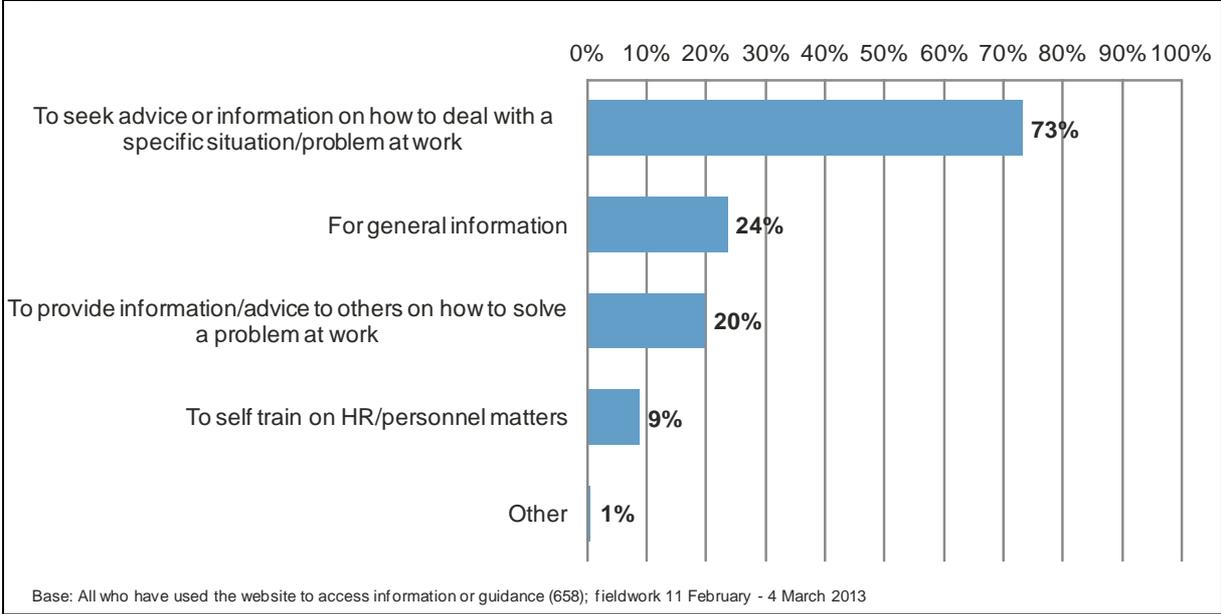


Some topic areas were correlated with higher numbers of visits to the website than others. Respondents who visited the Acas website five times or more in the last year were more likely to cite: maternity, paternity and adoption; contracts; diversity and discrimination; family friendly policies; holidays and working time, or wages as a topic of their visit than those who had been five times or fewer. This finding suggests different contact and information requirements for different issues, which may be useful in planning future resources.

Using information from the Acas website

Three quarters of respondents (73 per cent) used what they found on their last visit to the Acas website for information about a specific problem or issue. A quarter of respondents (24 per cent) used the website for general information, and one in five (20 per cent) used it to inform others. Self training on HR matters was the least common usage, cited by one in eleven respondents (nine per cent).

Figure 2.18 Uses of information taken from the Acas website



Respondents working in large workplaces were significantly more likely to use the Acas website for general information – 36 per cent gave this reason, compared with 21 per cent of those working in medium-sized workplaces. Conversely, those working in small workplaces (between 10 and 49 staff) were significantly more likely to use information for advice on specific situations (79 per cent of small workplace employees gave this reason, compared with 66 per cent of large workplace employees).

This is reflected in the findings from the qualitative work about when employees used the site in response to an existing problem at work; examples included late salary payments, unfair dismissal, to prepare for a misconduct hearing, to query contract amendments and to seek information on maternity leave arrangements.

In general, employees in the qualitative interviews said they did not visit the website looking for a resolution to their issue. Instead they viewed it as an information source that would arm them with the details they needed to approach their employer. Many talked about the website giving them ‘confidence’ and putting them on an ‘equal footing’ with their employer(s). This was true both when employees were looking to address a specific problem arising at work and when they just wanted to have informed discussions about their working rights.

Some participants in the qualitative interviews saw the website as a gateway to other Acas services. They visited it as a first port of call for general information then followed up with a telephone call to the Acas helpline for specific advice and guidance. A few also mentioned following their search up with an email. Most employees in the qualitative interviews who called the helpline for more information said they had never expected to be able to use the website for this. It was therefore not a reflection of the quality or usability of the website, rather it was because they tended to have more specific concerns that would benefit from personalised service.

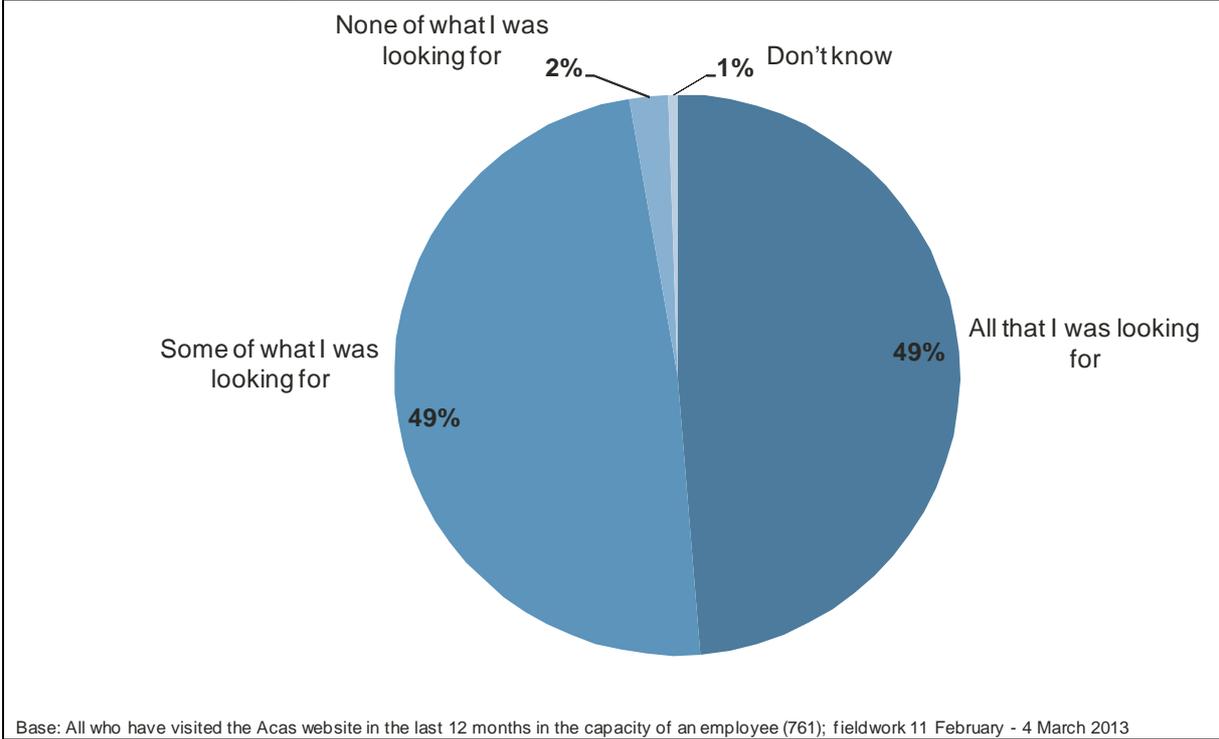
“I did get the info I needed but just not to the level of detail I needed – so that’s when I rang up. But my query was very specific. I wanted proof of my rights to minutes of a meeting between me and my employer. On reflection it isn’t the sort of thing you would expect to find on the website”

Employee

Finding the information sought

Equal proportions of respondents found all or some of what they were looking for (49 per cent for each). Only a very small minority found none of what they were looking for (two per cent).

Figure 2.19 Finding the information sought



Those who claimed to know Acas well were more likely to find all that they were looking for than those who knew Acas a little (54 per cent compared with 41 per cent).

Of those who did not find some or all of what they were looking for, three quarters (74 per cent) were looking for additional information on employment with around two fifths of these (37%) looking for additional information on employment laws and regulations specifically. The further range of topics required was broad, with information on redundancy and dismissal most commonly mentioned (14 per cent). Other areas included holiday entitlements, harassment and TUPE regulations.

Figure 2.20 Information respondents could not find

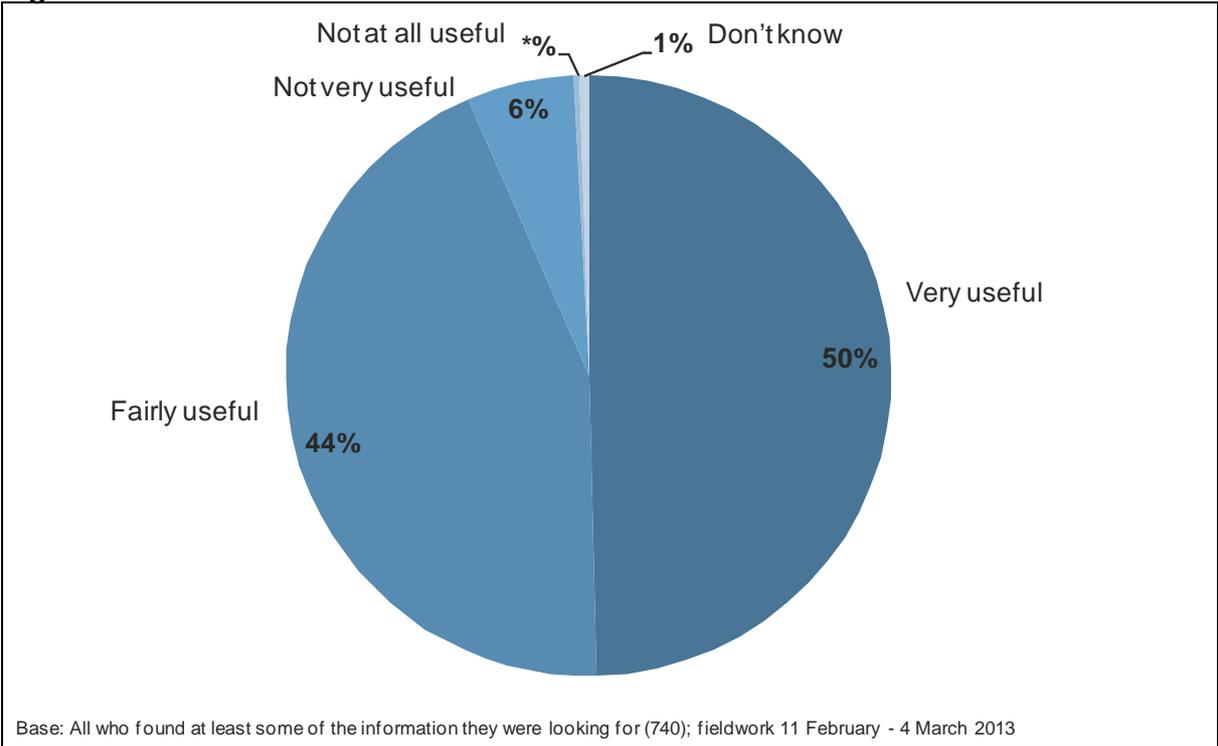
What (else) were you looking for?	Percentage
INFORMATION ON EMPLOYMENT (NET)	74%
INFORMATION ON HOLIDAY ENTITLEMENT (SUB NET)	4%
Holiday entitlement	1%
Information on part time workers' holiday entitlement	1%
Others on holiday entitlement	2%
INFORMATION ON TUPE (SUB NET)	3%
TUPE regulations	1%
Information regarding TUPE	1%
Others on TUPE	1%
INFORMATION ON DISMISSAL/REDUNDANCY (SUB NET)	14%
Information about constructive dismissal	1%
Information about dismissal	1%
Information about unfair dismissal	1%
Information about redundancy pay	2%
Information about redundancy	5%
Information about leaving a job/law about leave	1%
Employees' rights when employer breaks a contract	1%
Others on dismissal/redundancy	2%
INFORMATION ON EMPLOYMENT LAWS/REGULATIONS (SUB NET)	37%
Information on employee rights	5%
Information about work contracts	1%
Information on prolonged sick leave and dismissal	2%
Rules on long term sickness/absence	4%
Rights for compensation after becoming ill at work	2%
Information about maternity leave	2%
Information about the Minimum Wage	2%
Information on appraisals	1%
Pension entitlements	1%
Employment law regarding disability	1%
Information on training courses	1%
Financial/legal support in case of discrimination	2%
Information regarding disciplinary action	2%
Information on how to begin the tribunal process	1%
Information on sudden change of work base/transfer	1%
Information on company forcing changes of contract	2%
Rights of employee if laid off during a takeover	1%
General information on company restructuring	1%
Information on compromise agreements	1%
Information on the legality of workplace monitoring	1%
Others on employment law/regulation	10%
INFORMATION ON BULLYING/HARASSMENT (SUB NET)	5%
Information about bullying at work	2%
Information about harassment at work	1%
Information on how to deal with a problem with your boss	1%

Others on information on bullying/harassment	2%
INFORMATION ON CONTRACT HOURS/BREAKS (SUB NET)	5%
Information on change in contract hours	2%
Information on switching to flexi-time	1%
Others on contract hours information	2%
INFORMATION IN GENERAL (SUB NET)	13%
did not get the information I needed	2%
More detailed information	1%
Need more specific information	5%
Need advice	1%
Others on information	3%
CONVENIENCE (NET)	6%
Not enough help	2%
Confusing	1%
Difficult to find information	1%
Hard to navigate	1%
Others on convenience	2%
MISCELLANEOUS (NET)	11%
<i>Nothing</i>	2%
<i>No answer</i>	7%
<i>Don't know</i>	4%

Usefulness of information

The usefulness of the information provided by the Acas website was also rated highly. Half (50 per cent) of online survey respondents rated the information they took from the Acas website as very useful, with a further 44 per cent saying the information was fairly useful.

Figure 2.21 Usefulness of information



Respondents who visited the website as current employees on a long term absence from work had a slightly less positive view of the usefulness of the information they took. Among this group 85 per cent found the information on the website useful – significantly less than current and former employees (94 per cent and 93 per cent respectively), but still a high proportion.

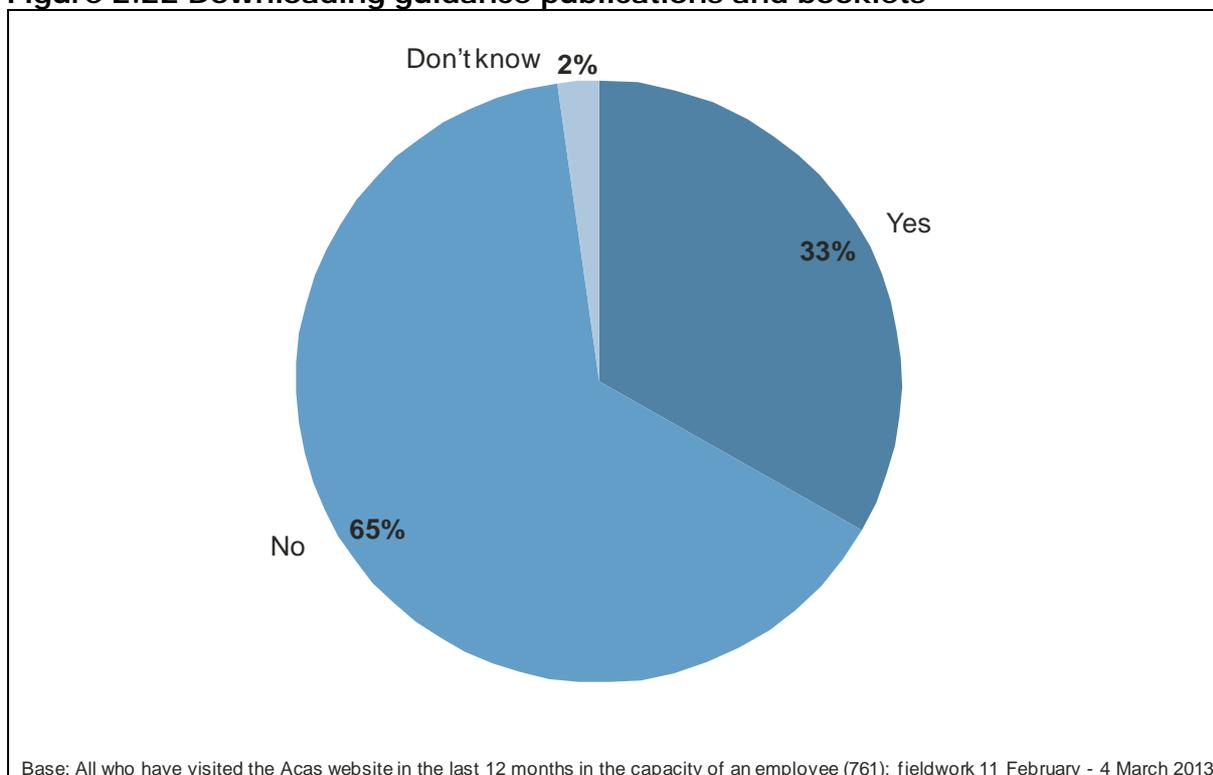
2.5 Guidance and publications

This section looks at whether employees have downloaded Acas guidance publications or booklets from the website, what they have used them for and their satisfaction with the downloads.

Who has downloaded guidance publications or booklets?

Of those who have visited the website, a third (33 per cent) said they had downloaded guidance publications or booklets, with two thirds (65 per cent) saying they had not.

Figure 2.22 Downloading guidance publications and booklets



There were no demographic differences between those who had and had not downloaded guidance publications and booklets.

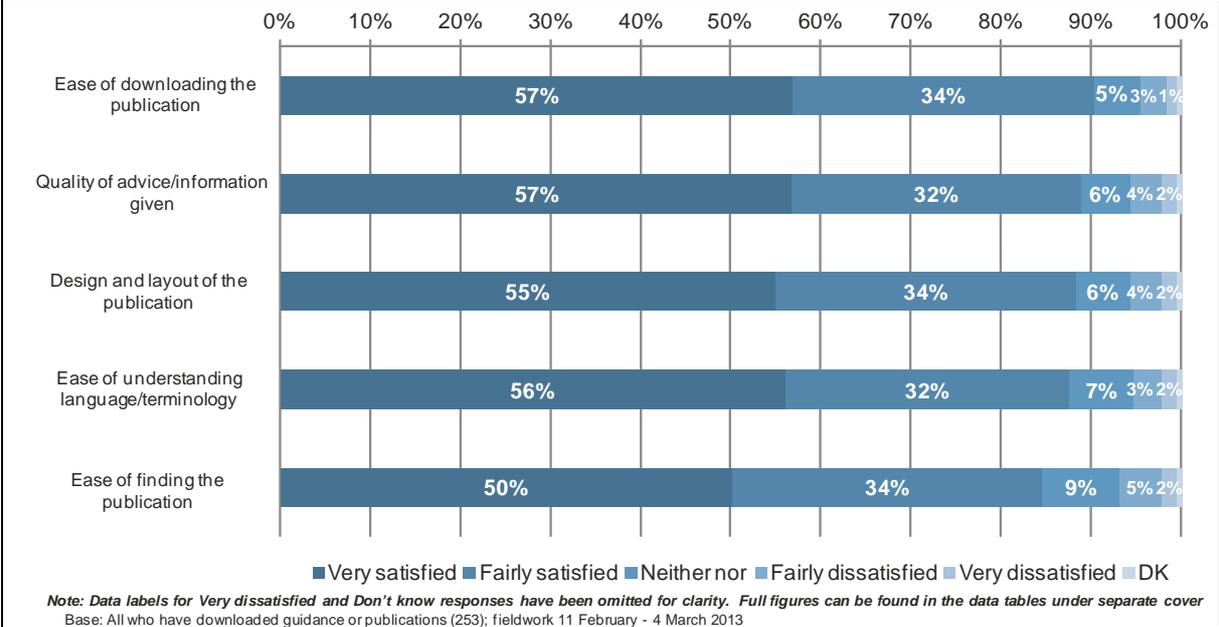
Views on guidance publications and booklets

Across all of the aspects about which they were asked, respondents who had downloaded guidance publications and booklets were most satisfied with the ease of downloading the publication and with the quality of advice and information given in the publication or booklet, with nine in ten satisfied (91 per cent and 90 per cent respectively) and a majority very satisfied (both 57 per cent).

Slightly below nine in ten respondents (89 per cent) were satisfied with the design and layout of the guidance publication or booklet, with 55 per cent very satisfied, and a similar proportion (88 per cent) said they were satisfied with the ease of understanding the language and terminology of the publication (in this case 56 per cent were very satisfied). The ease of finding the publication is the area with the lowest ratings of satisfaction. However, with 85 per cent satisfied and half (50 per cent) very satisfied, these are still high levels of satisfaction.

Dissatisfaction is similarly low across all measures, ranging from four per cent dissatisfied with the ease of downloading the publication to six per cent dissatisfied with the ease of finding the publication.

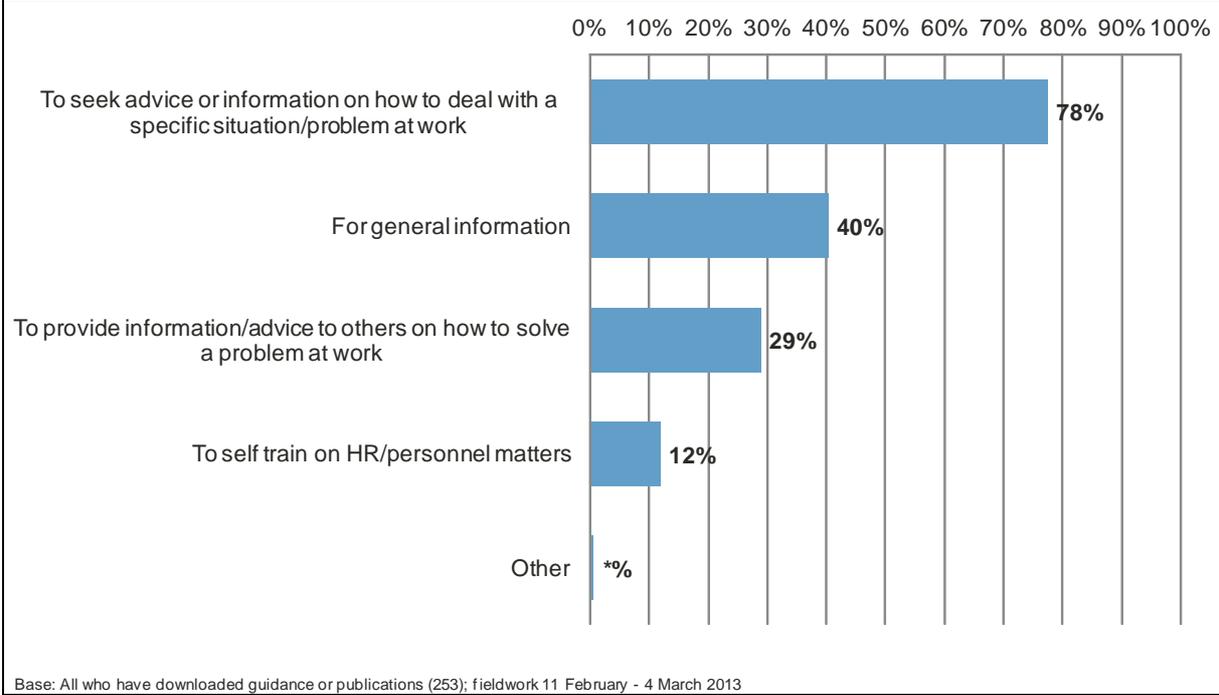
Figure 2.23 Satisfaction with downloaded guidance publications or booklets



Three quarters (78 per cent) of those who have downloaded guidance publications or booklets said that they had used these to seek advice or information on how to deal with a specific problem at work, with two fifths (40 per cent) saying that they were for general information. Three in ten (29 per cent) used guidance publications or booklets to provide information to others on how to solve a problem at work and one in eight (12 per cent) used the information to self-train on HR matters.

Downloads of guidance publications and booklets were more likely to be used for each purpose than information found on the website in general, emphasising the importance of these sources for website users.

Figure 2.24 Purpose of downloading guidance publications or booklets



Most participants in the qualitative interviews said that they had printed at least one guidance document or saved a soft copy in a personal folder.

"I left the PDFs in the download section of my laptop – they're like my emergency references"

Employee

"The PDFs were good – clearly laid out, nice front page, clear contents, easy to follow and read, well-sign posted and easy language to understand"

Employee

"I've used it for reference several times – to check new info, in case what I'm going on is out of date"

Employee

Some said they had simply printed pages from the site that they found particularly useful or could foresee needing to refer to for their own benefit in future. One or two others had downloaded and printed the guidance publication or booklet specifically with a view to further discussions with their employer as they thought it would be a useful way of providing proof of their rights and avoiding confusion or, in the case of a dispute, averting conflict.

One participant valued the fact that the material supplied on the site was written from a neutral perspective. He had been through a difficult time with his employer and said that the information he found on the site encouraged him to be more rational in his approach. This was particularly true of the guidance booklet which he had used as an advocacy tool.

"Seemed like a good service. It offered me a means of arbitration....I printed off the 32-page guidance booklet...And I liked the fact there was a training and informing slant than being heavy-handed"

Employee

Many employees said that having their own copy of relevant information to hand (be it a print out of one of the website pages or a PDF document) was an important part of feeling equipped and confident in following things up with their employer.

3. Employer findings

This section of the report covers findings from the telephone survey conducted with employers. Where possible the sample was made up of Human Resources (HR) managers, with company owners or directors and senior decision makers used as the point of contact for those where HR details were not available. All had some influence on HR decisions within their organisation. This chapter looks at the different sources of advice for employment relations information used by employers, and examines usage of the Acas website within this context. It covers how the website is used, overall levels of satisfaction and satisfaction with specific elements of the website and how the website was used on the last visit, as well as reasons for use.

Although many of these questions are similar to those asked in the online survey of employees, we cannot directly compare between the two surveys. This is due both to differences in methodology (online compared with telephone) but mainly due to the difference in sample structure. The online survey of employees provides indicative results from employees who are Acas website users, but it is not representative of the population of employees generally or of employee users of the Acas website. The employer telephone survey is, however, representative of the population of employers, and therefore results can be extrapolated to the population of organisations within the confidence intervals discussed in Appendix A.

3.1 Sources of advice for employment relations information

This section covers sources of employment relations advice used by employers, as well as familiarity with Acas and usage of the Acas website specifically. This section also looks at employers' usage of social media and awareness of the Acas social media channels.

Sources of advice used

Acas was the top spontaneously mentioned source for employment relations advice among employers, with almost a quarter (23 per cent) mentioning the organisation as somewhere they would go for advice. It should, however, be noted that respondents were aware that the survey was being conducted on behalf of Acas. One in six (17 per cent) said they would go to lawyers for advice, with a similar proportion (16 per cent) saying they would use online websites and forums, and one in seven (14 per cent) saying that they would use a professional network or organisation such as the CIPD.

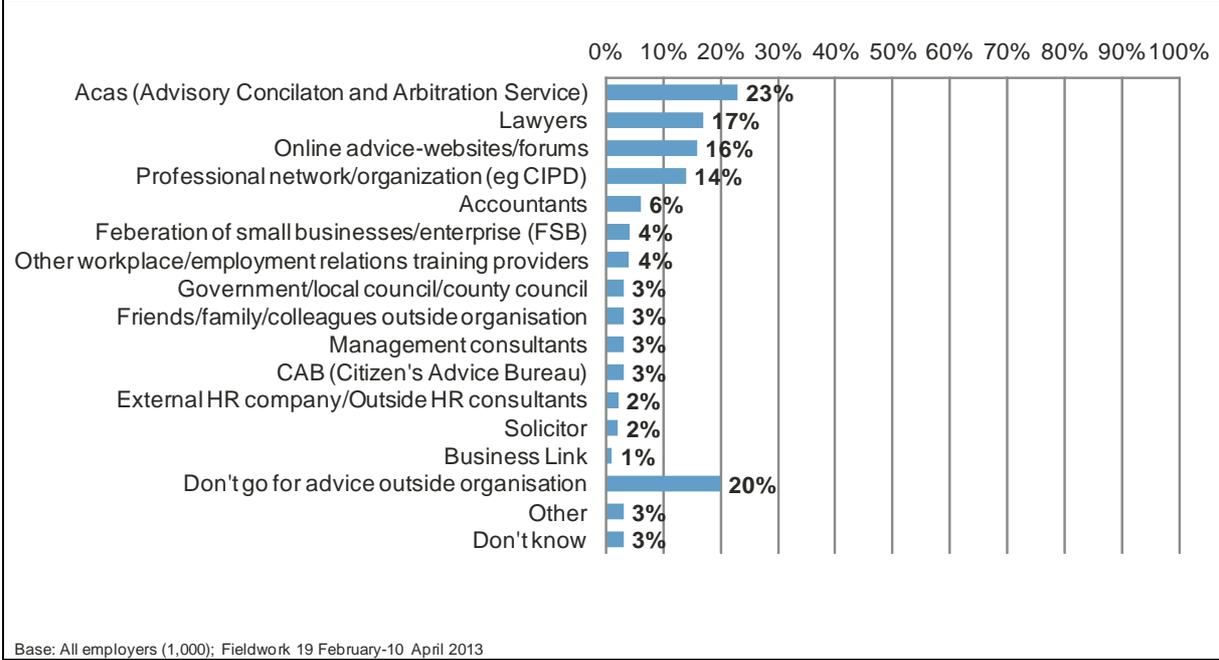
A fifth (20 per cent) of respondents said that they do not go outside of their organisation for advice.

This question shows an increase of five percentage points in those who say that they use Acas as a source of employment relations advice, with a six percentage point decrease in the numbers of those saying they use lawyers compared to the 2010 Acas non-users survey¹⁴. However it is important to remember that the Acas non-users survey did not reveal that the survey was for Acas, whereas Acas was mentioned in the introduction to this survey. This means that in this case respondents had already been prompted to think of Acas.

There is also an increase of eight percentage points from the Acas non-users survey in those saying that they do not go outside of their organisation for advice (from 12 per cent to 20 per cent).

¹⁴ Acas non-users survey, Ipsos MORI, 2010

Figure 3.1 Sources of employment relations advice



There are no significant differences between different types of employers when it comes to who would use the Acas website as a source of employment relations advice.

Large (250+ employees) and medium-sized employers (50-249 employees) were more likely to say that they would use lawyers for advice (29 per cent and 34 per cent respectively compared with 17 per cent of all employers) as were those in the private sector (18 per cent compared with five per cent of those in the public sector).

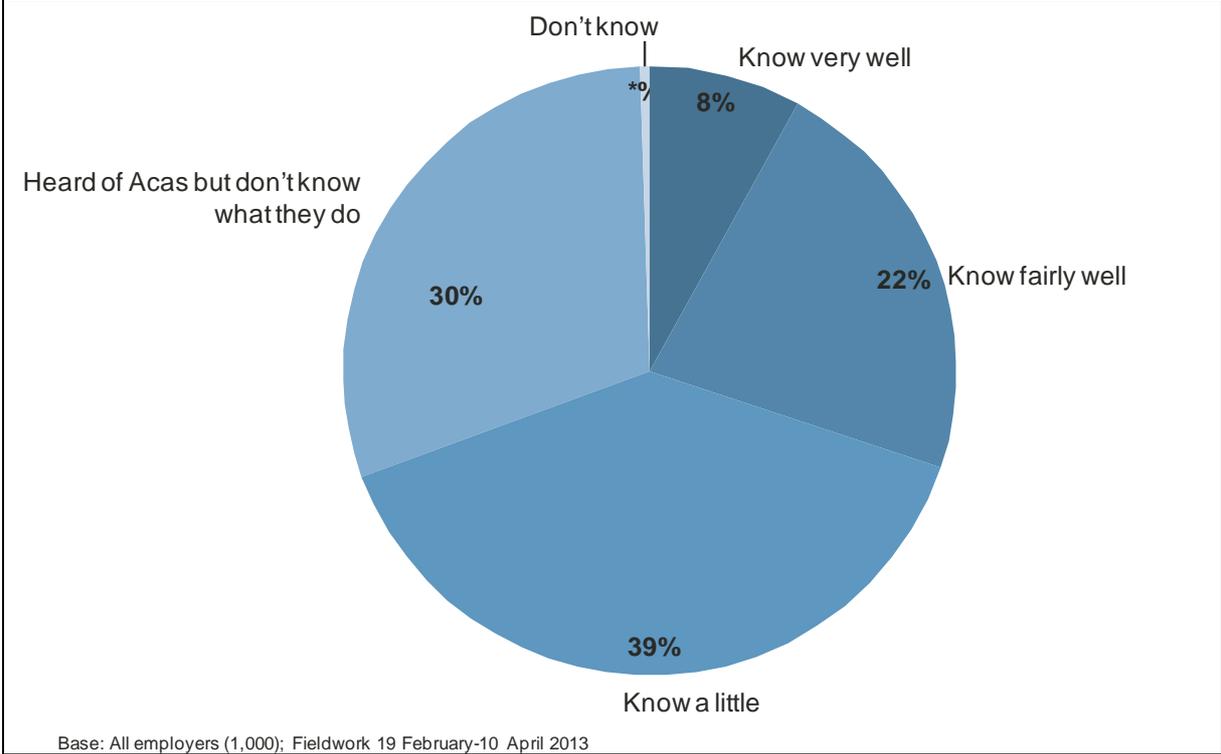
Perhaps unsurprisingly, large employers are the most likely to say that they would not go outside of their organisation for advice, with almost half (49 per cent) saying this compared with a fifth (20 per cent) overall.

Familiarity with Acas

Seven in ten (70 per cent) employers said that they knew at least a little about Acas, with three in ten (30 per cent) saying that they had heard of Acas but did not know what they did. All of those who had not heard of Acas were screened out of the survey at this question, and therefore there is no 'Have not heard of Acas' category to compare with that in the general public survey.

One in twelve (eight per cent) of employers said that they knew Acas very well, with a further fifth (22 per cent) saying they knew them fairly well.

Figure 3.2 Familiarity with Acas



Large employers were more likely to say that they know Acas very well than the total (18 per cent compared with eight per cent).

Participants in the qualitative interviews with employers tended to be more familiar with Acas and the Acas website than employees. Some employers had used the Acas website as an employee in a previous job. Others said that it was a well-known brand and a first port of call for employment related issues.

“Acas is a very high profile organisation, one I knew about from my time in the public sector”

Employer

One participant was not aware that Acas offered services to employers as well as employees, mirroring a similar finding among employees who were not always aware that Acas provided services for them.

“Acas I was aware of as an employee, if you’ve got a problem go to Acas, but then I realised it was for employers too”

Employer

Usage of the website

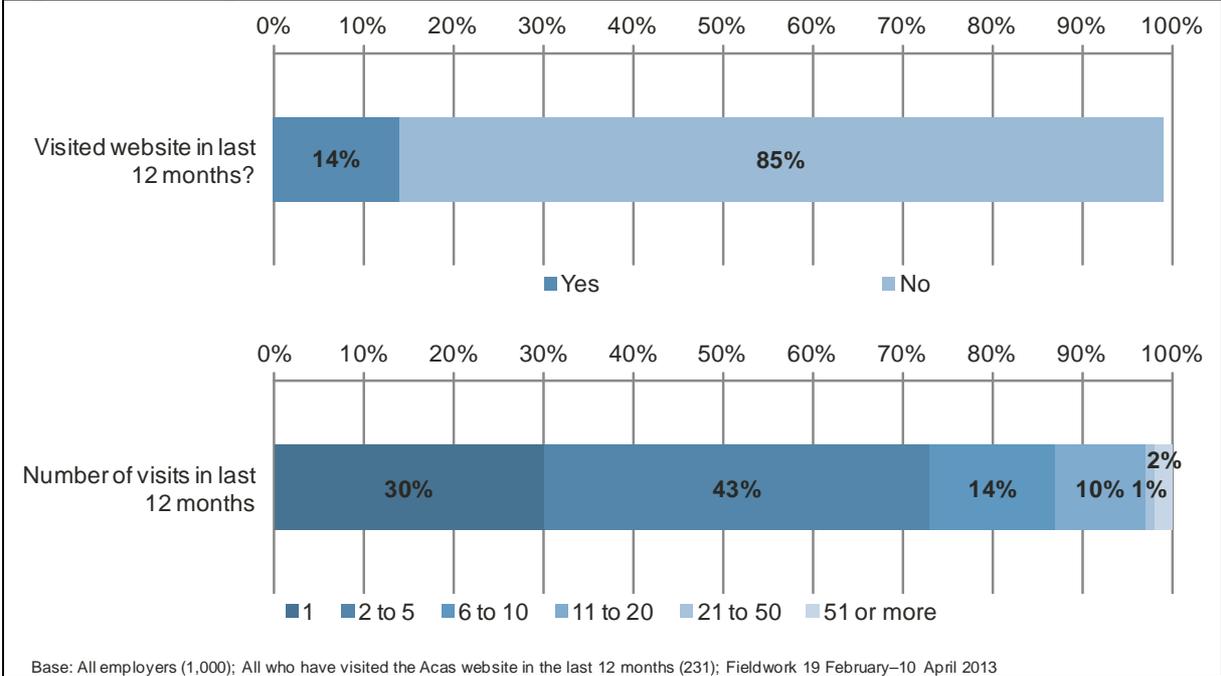
Overall, one in seven (14 per cent) employers had visited the Acas website in the last 12 months, with 85 per cent saying that they had not. This compares with around one in nine (11 per cent) of the general public who say that they have visited the website in any capacity within the last 12 months, and seven per cent of the general public who said that they had visited the website specifically in the capacity of an employee in the last 12 months. Based on the population of employers from which the data sample was drawn

this would indicate around 353,872 employers have visited the website, out of 2,527,655 employers in total at the establishment level¹⁵.

Of employers who had visited the website in the last 12 months, three in ten (30 per cent) had made only one visit to the site, while two fifths (43 per cent) had made two to five visits to the site. One in seven (14 per cent) had visited between six and ten times and one in ten (10 per cent) 11 to 20 times.

The mean number of visits to the website was six. This compares with a mean number of five visits from employees.

Figure 3.3 Usage of the Acas website

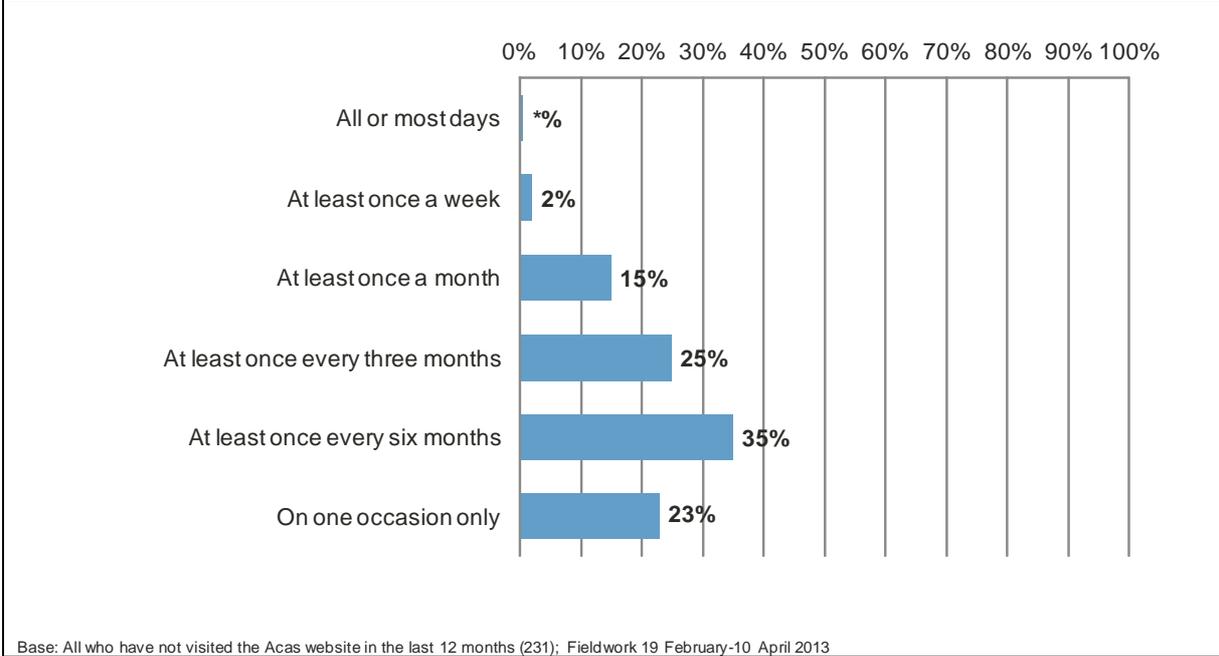


Website users were more likely to be large or medium employers (28 per cent and 31 per cent respectively compared with 14 per cent of employers in total) as were those with a job role entirely related to HR (23 per cent). Female employers were also more likely to be users than males (20 per cent compared with eight per cent); however this is likely to be related to the fact that men are more likely than women to say that their job role has little to do with HR issues (27 per cent compared to 18 per cent). As well as being less likely to use the website, micro employers (fewer than 10 employees) were also more likely to have only used the website on one occasion (43 per cent compared with 30 per cent in total), as were private sector employers (36 per cent).

Just over a third (35 per cent) said they use the Acas website at least once every six months, with a further quarter (25 per cent) saying they use the Acas website at least once every three months. One in seven (15 per cent) use it once a month, with two per cent saying they use at least once a week.

¹⁵ Based on sample population counts from the Inter-Departmental Business Register *UK Business: Activity, size and location, 2012* <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/datasets-and-tables/index.html?pageSize=50&sortBy=none&sortDirection=none&newquery=IDBR&content-type=Reference+table&content-type=Dataset>

Figure 3.4 Frequency of use



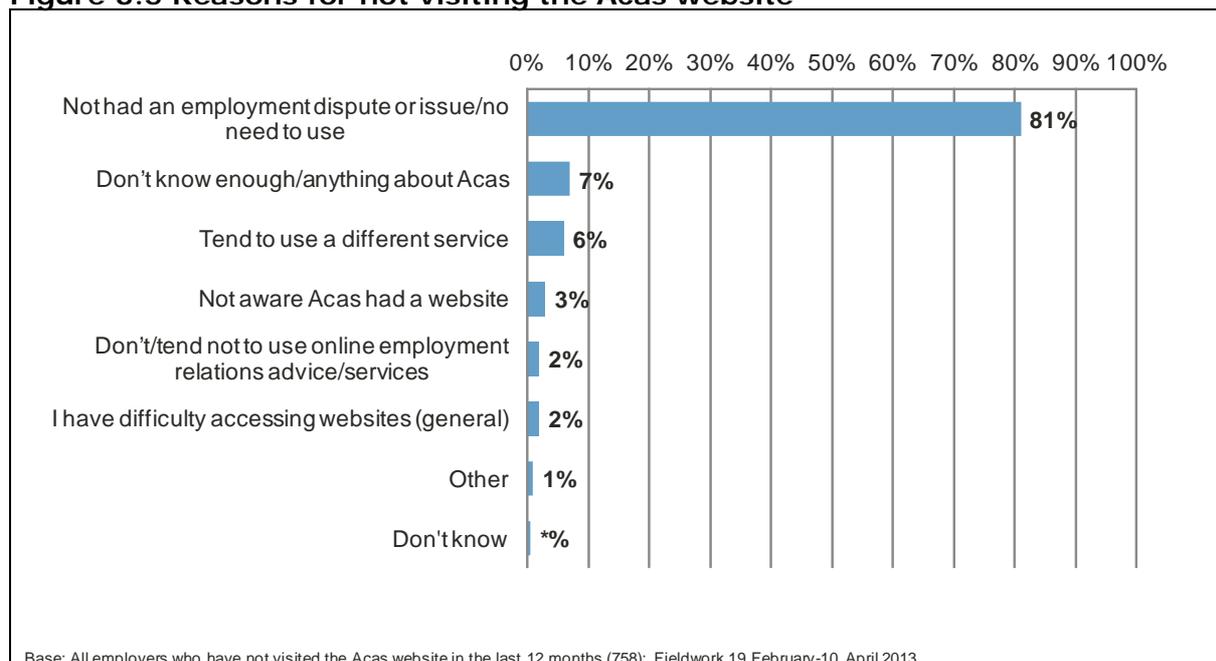
As with number of visits within the past twelve months, private sector employers were again more likely to say that they had only used the website on one occasion (28 per cent compared with 23 per cent of the total).

Reasons for not using the website

Of those employers who were aware of Acas but have *not* used the Acas website in the last 12 months, four fifths (81 per cent) say that this is because they have not had an employment issue. Smaller proportions said that they do not know enough or anything about Acas (seven per cent), with a similar number (six per cent) saying that they would tend to use a different service. Only three per cent were not aware that Acas had a website, with two per cent tending not to use online sources of employment relations advice or services and a further two per cent having difficulty in accessing websites in general¹⁶.

¹⁶ All who had difficulty in accessing websites in general said that this was because they had difficulty with computers or did not have access to a computer.

Figure 3.5 Reasons for not visiting the Acas website



Small employers were most likely to say that they tend to use a different service (13 per cent compared with six per cent in total).

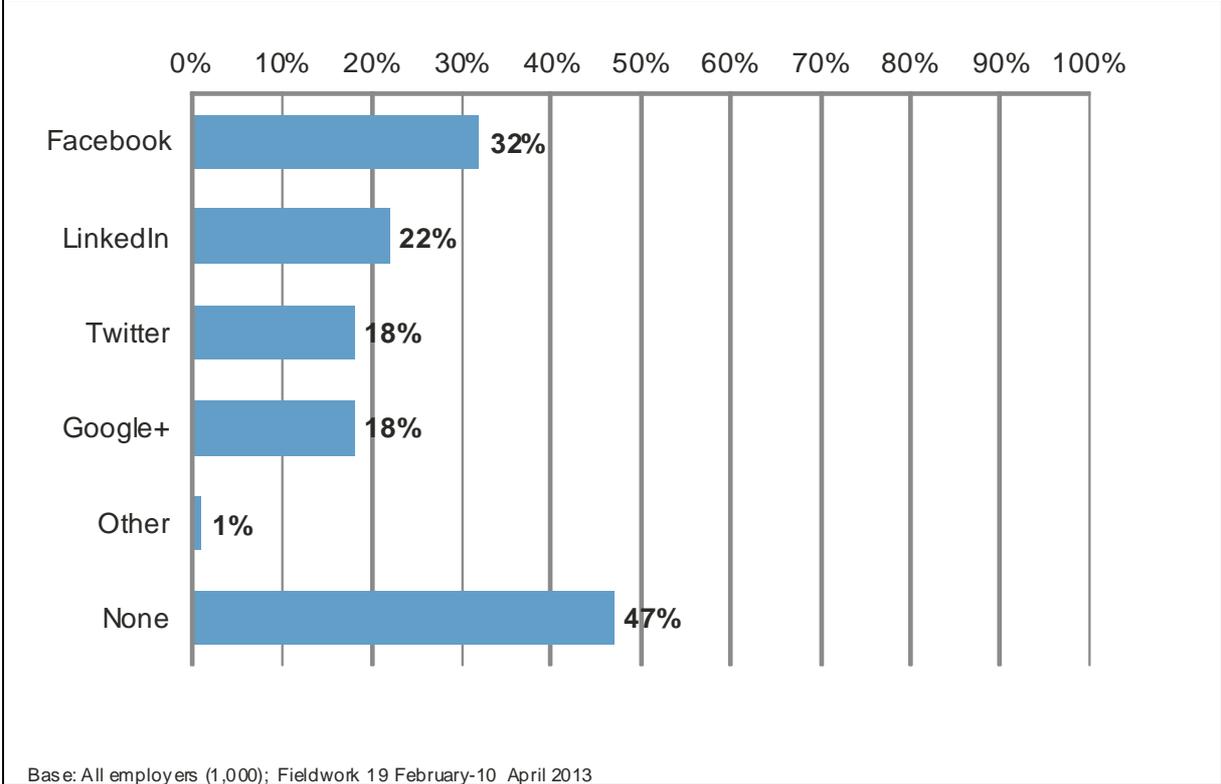
Mirroring findings from the employee omnibus survey, younger employers (aged 35–44) were most likely to say that they did not know enough about Acas to use the service (13 per cent compared with seven per cent in total), whereas older respondents (65+) were most likely to say that they had difficulty accessing websites (16 per cent compared with two per cent in total).

Usage of social media

Just over half (53 per cent) of all employers use social media in their professional life¹⁷, with Facebook being the most popular (32 per cent). Around a fifth (22 per cent) use LinkedIn, and a similar proportion use Twitter and Google+ (both 18 per cent). Just under half (47 per cent) say they do not use social media in their professional life.

¹⁷ The question asked referred specifically to social media used in a professional context. However, it is possible that some respondents answered with regard to non-professional or semi-professional usage of Facebook (e.g. keeping in touch with colleagues) rather than strictly professional usage.

Figure 3.6 Professional social media usage

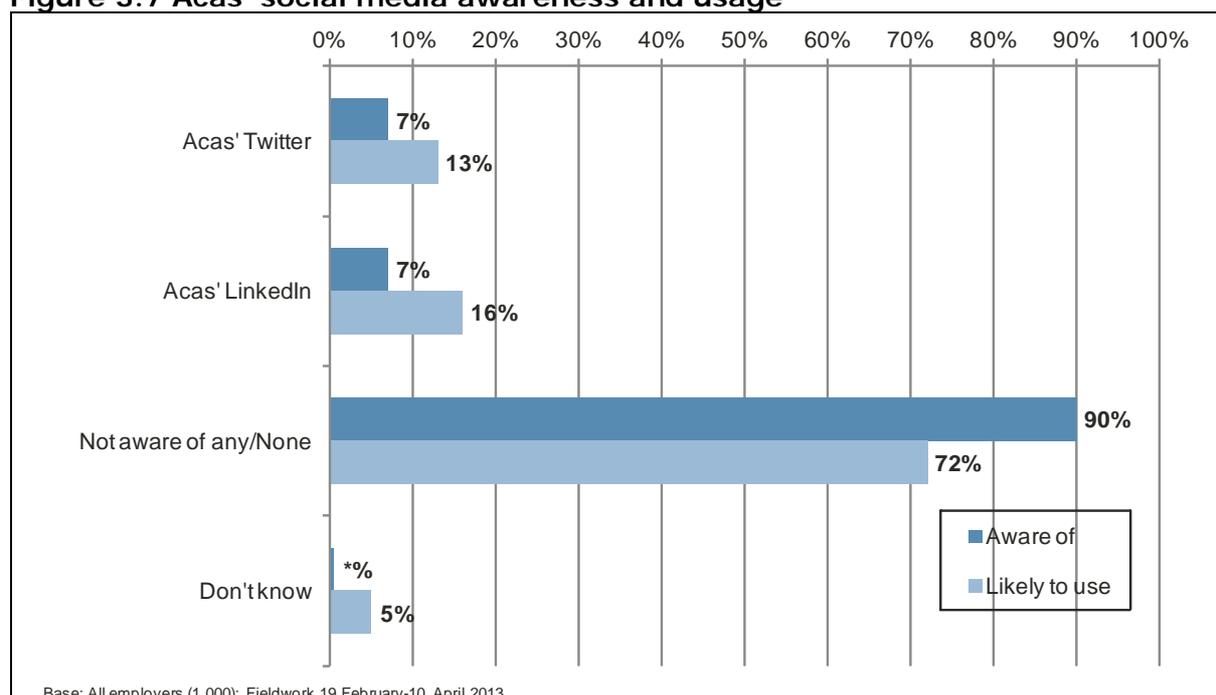


Medium sized employers were more likely to be using Linked In (37 per cent) as were those in the private sector (24 per cent) and those based in London (52 per cent), all compared with 22 per cent in total. Younger respondents (18–34) were generally more likely to say that they were using social media, including Facebook and Twitter (68 per cent and 35 per cent compared to 32 per cent and 18 per cent among employers overall respectively).

Those with a long term disability were more likely to say that they use Facebook professionally (48 per cent compared with 32 per cent of the total).

Nine in ten (90 per cent) employers were not aware of Acas’ Twitter or LinkedIn profiles, with seven per cent aware of each of these channels. However, there is an indication that greater awareness might increase usage, as a significantly higher proportion of those who were not aware of these Acas social media channels said they would use both Acas’ Twitter and LinkedIn in the future (13 per cent and 16 per cent respectively), having been made aware of these channels through taking part in the survey.

Figure 3.7 Acas' social media awareness and usage



Those who use Twitter in their professional life were no more likely to be aware of the Acas Twitter than employers in general, however those who use LinkedIn in their professional life were more likely to be aware of Acas' LinkedIn profile (13 per cent compared with seven per cent in total).

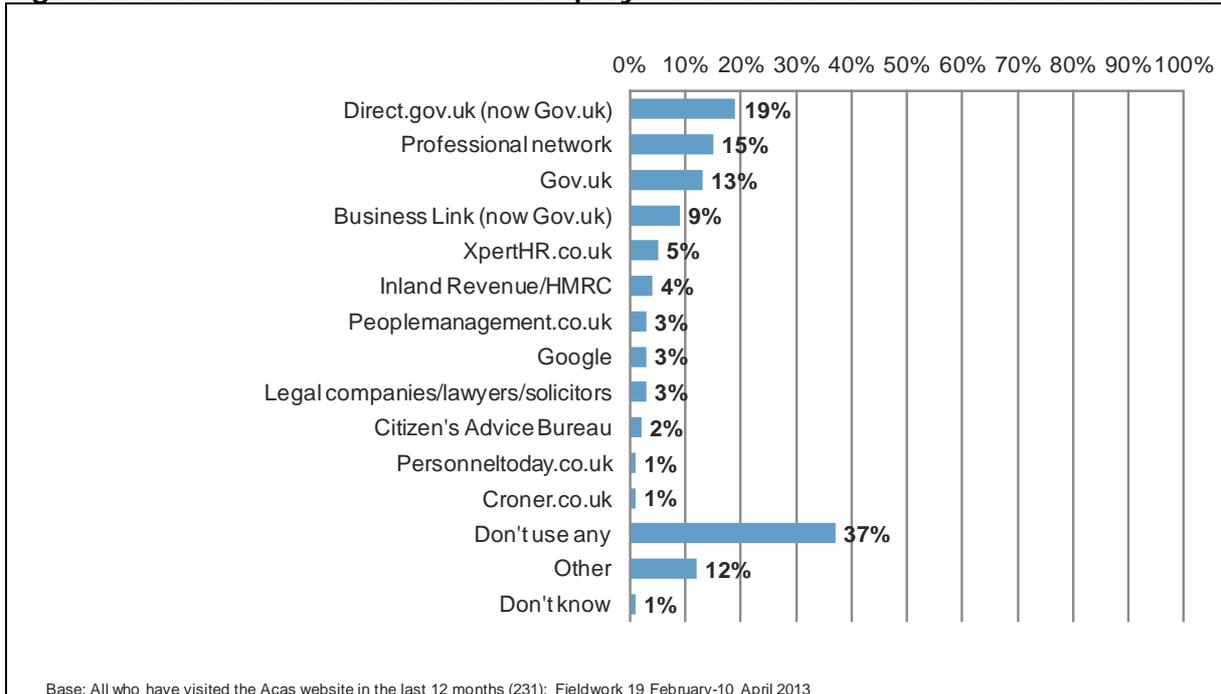
Employers already active on any social media professionally were more likely to say that they would use Acas' Twitter in the future, particularly those who already use Twitter in this capacity (37 per cent compared with 13 per cent in total), similarly with Acas' LinkedIn (45 per cent of those already using LinkedIn plan to use compared with 16 per cent in total).

Younger employers were more likely to say that they would use Twitter in the future (30 per cent of 18–34s and 20 per cent of 35–44s compared with 13 per cent of the total), however they were no more likely than employers overall to say that they would use LinkedIn.

Other online sources of employment relations information and advice

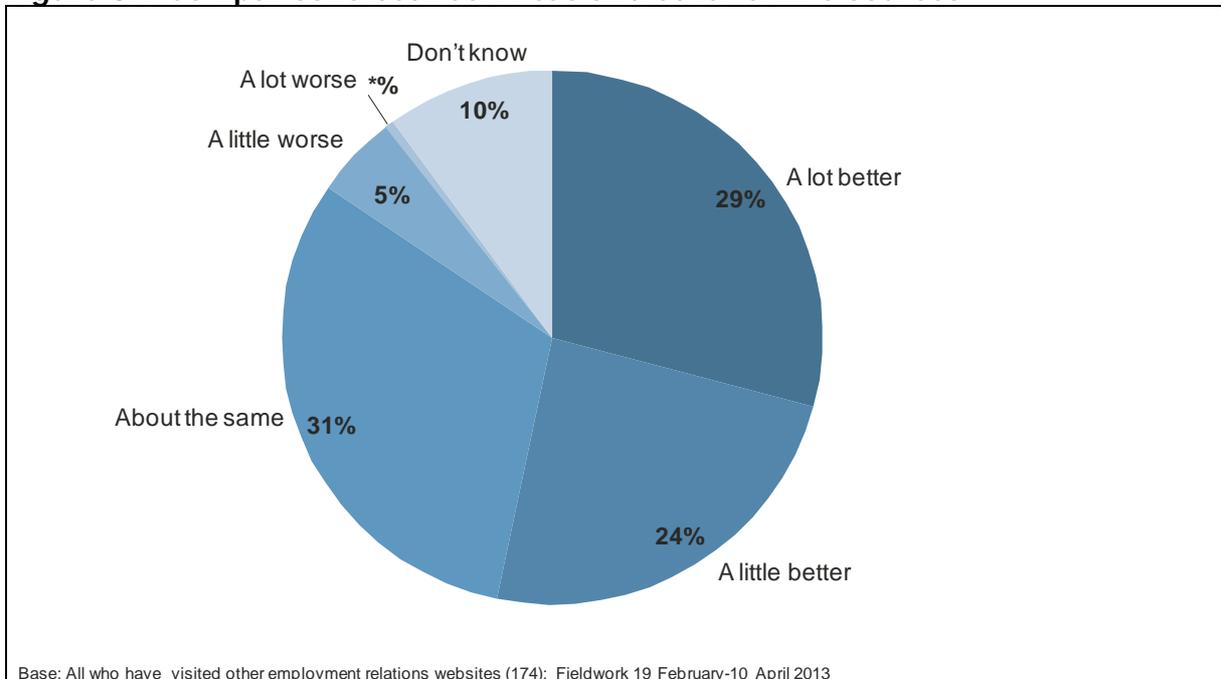
Those who have used the Acas website also said that they have used direct.gov.uk (19 per cent), professional networks (15 per cent) and gov.uk (13 per cent) as online sources of employment relations information and advice in the past 12 months. Two fifths (37 per cent) of those who had used the Acas website in the past 12 months had not used any other online sources of information and advice.

Figure 3.8 Other online sources of employment relations information and advice



Of those who had used other online sources, around three in ten (29 per cent) said the Acas website was a lot better than those other sources, and a further quarter (24 per cent) felt it was a little better. Three in ten (31 per cent) said Acas was about the same as other websites they had used with one in twenty (five per cent) thinking it was a little worse, and very few saying it was a lot worse.

Figure 3.9 Comparisons between Acas and other online sources



Most participants in the qualitative employer interviews found the website relatively simple and intuitive to use. In several cases it was considered better than, or just as good as, other sites of its sort, such as the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB).

“The thing I most liked was the lay out, it was clean. And the search facility – the headings were appropriate”

Employer

“It was all fairly standard. The search box was where I expected it to be. There were different categories as you would expect. Not too many ads. It was all in all a good website. Easier than CAB, clearer and less cluttered”

Employer

“*[Some other public sector websites are]* appalling! Acas’ is much better. With *[some]* you have to know exactly what question you want to ask – it’s time-consuming and not designed with the lay customer in mind. Acas’ was simpler – the tariff menu makes it easier to find your way around”

Employer

3.2 How is the website used?

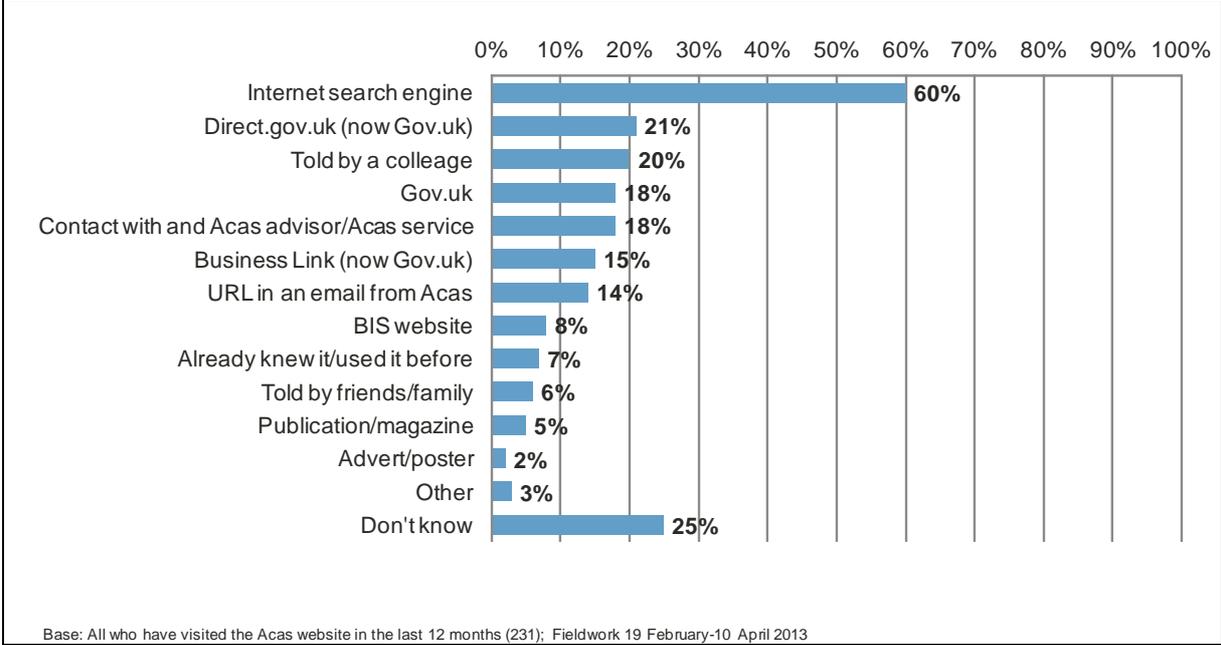
This section covers how those employers who use the website first came across it and which devices they have used to access the Acas website. In addition this section also explores which other Acas services have been accessed by employers as a whole and by website users specifically.

Sources used to find the Acas website

Of those who have used the Acas website in the last 12 months, three fifths (60 per cent) said they found it through an internet search engine. Around a fifth say they used direct.gov.uk (21 per cent) or gov.uk (18 per cent), were told by a colleague (20 per cent), or had previous contact with an Acas advisor or other Acas service (18 per cent).

Although findings are not directly comparable, this would indicate that employers and employees tend to come across the website in similar ways, with an internet search engine being the first port of call for most.

Figure 3.10 Sources used to find the Acas website



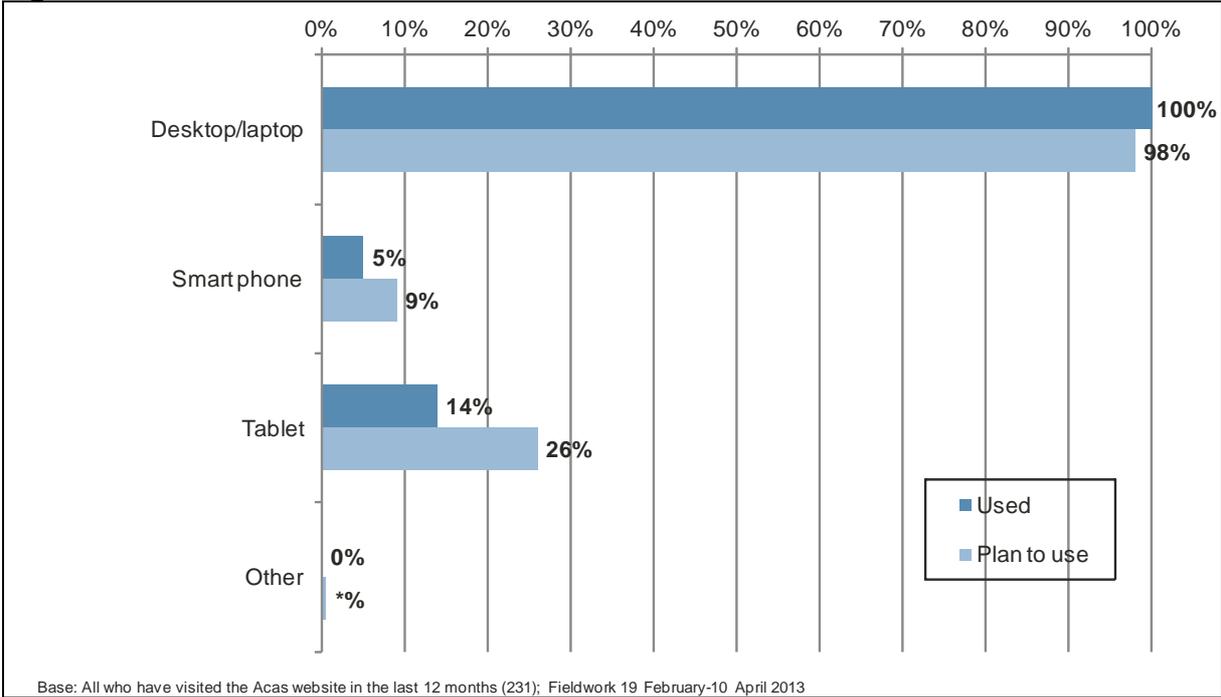
Devices used to access the website

All of those who have used the Acas website in the past 12 months have done so on a desktop or laptop computer at some point. One in twenty (five per cent) of these have also used a smart phone, with one in seven (14 per cent) having used a tablet computer, such as an iPad.

Almost all employers (98 per cent) said that they plan to use the Acas website on a desktop or laptop in the next 12 months. One in eleven (nine per cent) said they plan to use the website on a smart phone, four percentage points higher than current reported usage, and over a quarter (26 per cent) on a tablet computer, 12 percentage points higher than current reported usage.

Along with the employee results, this indicates that Acas is likely to see some change in the way a minority of users access the website over the next 12 months, but desktop and laptop computers will likely remain the most commonly used devices.

Figure 3.11 Devices used to access the Acas website

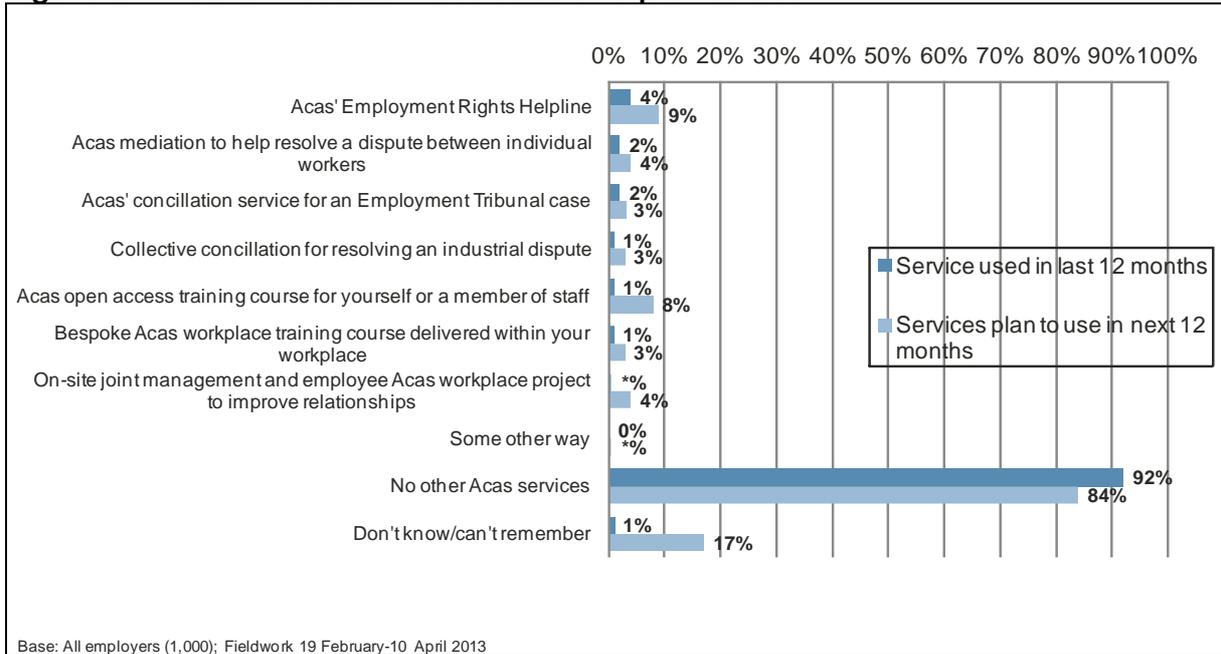


Other Acas services used

Nine in ten (92 per cent) employers had not used any other Acas services, although this was around two thirds (68 per cent) of website users. As with employees, the Acas helpline was the most often mentioned, with four per cent saying they had used this service, and low numbers of mentions spread across the other Acas services.

A greater number of employers claimed they will use other Acas services in the future, with one in eleven (nine per cent) saying that they plan to use the Acas helpline in the next 12 months, and slightly fewer (eight per cent) saying that they plan to attend or have a member of staff attend an Acas open access training course. However, a large majority (84 per cent) say that they do not plan to use any other Acas services in the next 12 months.

Figure 3.12 Other Acas services used and plan to use



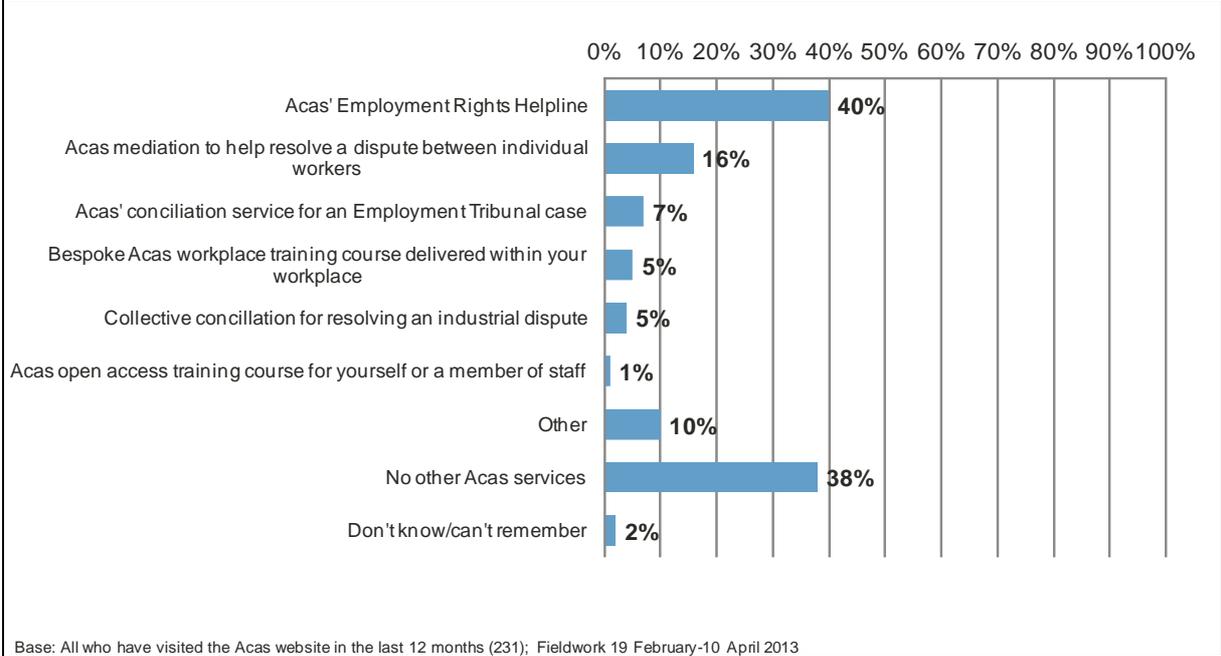
Acas website users were more likely than non-users to have used other Acas services and to say that they plan to use these in the next 12 months. This applies across all services mentioned, with the exception of the on-site joint management and employee Acas workplace project to improve relationships, where the findings are similar across users and non-users.

Employers in small businesses were more likely to say that they plan to use Acas services over the next 12 months (with the exception of Acas mediation and Acas open access training courses).

Those who are satisfied with the Acas website in general and the different aspects of the Acas website in particular were more likely to say they would use other Acas services.

Of Acas website users who have also used other Acas services, three fifths (60 per cent) have done so as a result of their visit to the Acas website. Two fifths (40 per cent) said that they have used the Acas helpline as a result of visiting the website, with one in six (16 per cent) having used Acas mediation as a result of the website.

Figure 3.13 Other Acas services used as a result of visiting the website



Several participants in the qualitative interviews said they used the Acas website and telephone helpline, as they saw them as offering two different types of service. For example, one participant said that the website served him as a reference point, whereas he would use the helpline if he ever needed specific advice or an immediate answer. In general, employers tended to view the website as a standalone service, compared with employees who were more likely to rely on follow-up phone calls. This was because employers seemed to expect the website to act as more of an information gathering tool or a sense-check on their existing processes. This compares with employees who were often looking for detailed, personal advice better suited to a phone call.

“I predominantly use the website because I’m looking at general policies – it’s very useful and sufficient for our needs”

Employer

“What I found on the website I trusted and found straightforward. I didn’t need to cross-check it with anything else or feel the need to call-up. I felt confident enough about understanding the information on there”

Employer

This echoes findings from the Acas Helpline evaluation¹⁸ where employees make up a higher proportion of callers than employers (46 per cent compared to 34 per cent respectively).

¹⁸ York, C and Fettiplace, S (ORC International) (2012) *Acas Helpline evaluation 2011 – Summary Report* available from <http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2056>

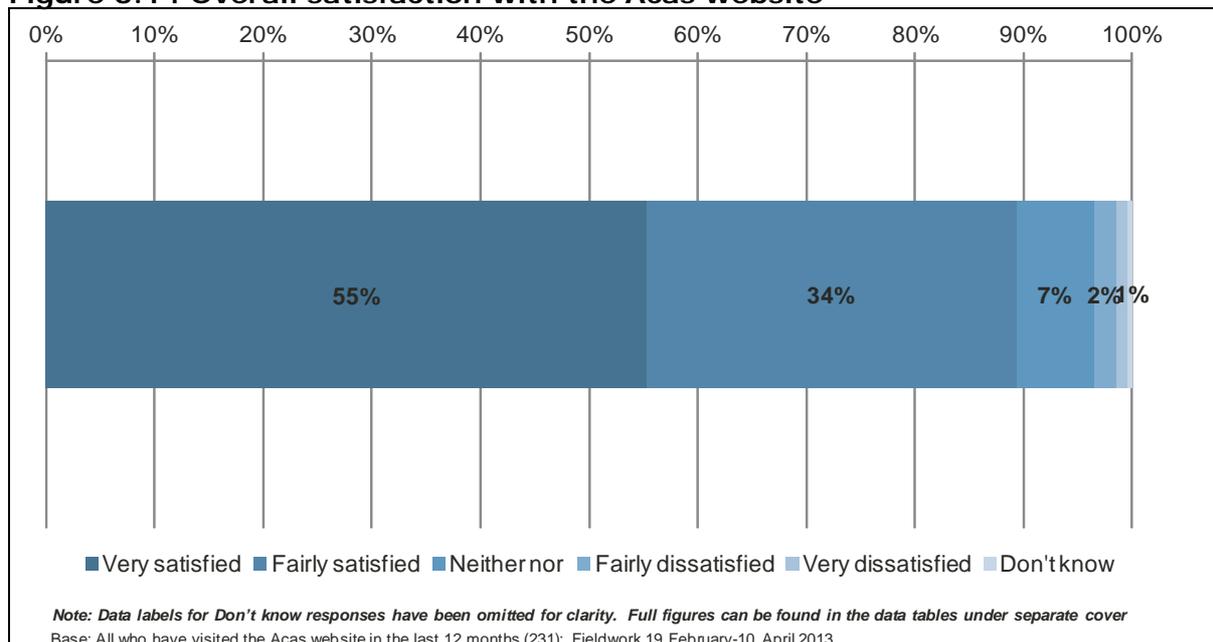
3.3 Overall satisfaction

This section gives a general overview of how employers felt about the Acas website, examining levels of overall satisfaction as well as satisfaction with different aspects of the website. Relatively small numbers of website users among employers surveyed mean that limited subgroup analysis is possible. Qualitative insight has been provided where appropriate to help illustrate and explain the quantitative findings.

Overall satisfaction

Overall, satisfaction with the Acas website was high, with 90 per cent of employers satisfied and a majority (55 per cent) very satisfied. Again, this reflects similarly high levels of satisfaction seen in the online survey of employees.

Figure 3.14 Overall satisfaction with the Acas website



The qualitative work indicated that most employers tended to be satisfied with the level and amount of information that they found on the website, which was the key factor they said shaped their overall perceptions. They particularly valued it as a free service that they could access instantly and at their own convenience, unlike helpline services, which, in general, were associated with hassle and wasting time.

“Information about employment issues is all in one place”
Employer

“The website is a massive help – better than when you had to ring up and wait”
Employer

While most employers were satisfied with the site overall, they also tended to have fairly low expectations of a free online service. As such, they were not usually expecting the information provided to be very in-depth or specific, making them slightly less demanding than some of the employee participants. Employers were also more likely to be knowledgeable and trust their own ability to interpret information provided on the site without needing to rely on follow-up calls to the Acas helpline and were therefore more likely to be satisfied customers.

“I felt confident enough with the information I found there and I didn’t need to call up. If you’re quite intelligent you can make sense of it”

Employer

There were a couple of exceptions and some employers called for more specificity on the topics they had searched, particularly as this would allow them to bypass phoning the Acas helpline.

“(I would like) slightly higher level answers to some queries, more detail. It’s more of an overview at the moment”

Employer

“There are some areas where there doesn’t seem to be that much (information). The next port of call would be to call them”

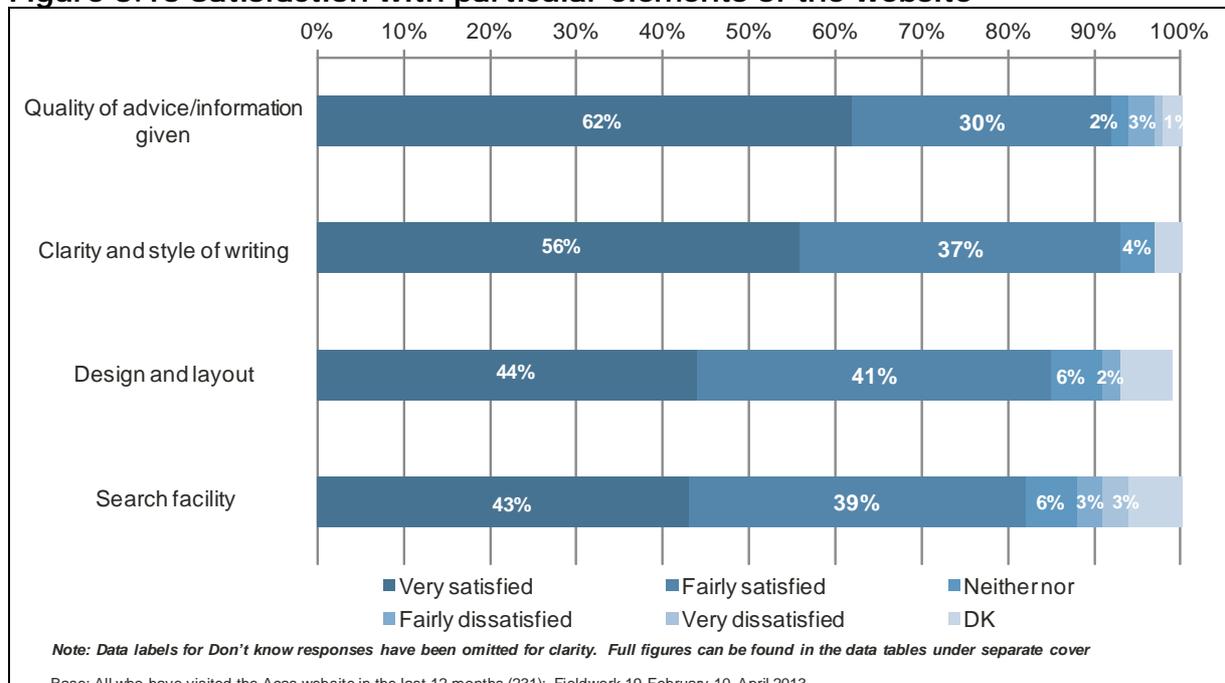
Employer

Satisfaction with particular elements of the website

When focussing on individual aspects of the website, satisfaction was again high across all measures among employers who are Acas website users. However, there are some small differences in levels of dissatisfaction on these specifics.

Over nine in ten (92 per cent) respondents reported being satisfied with the quality of the advice given by the website and the clarity and style of writing. The proportion satisfied with the design and layout and search facility was high but slightly lower, at 85 per cent and 82 per cent respectively.

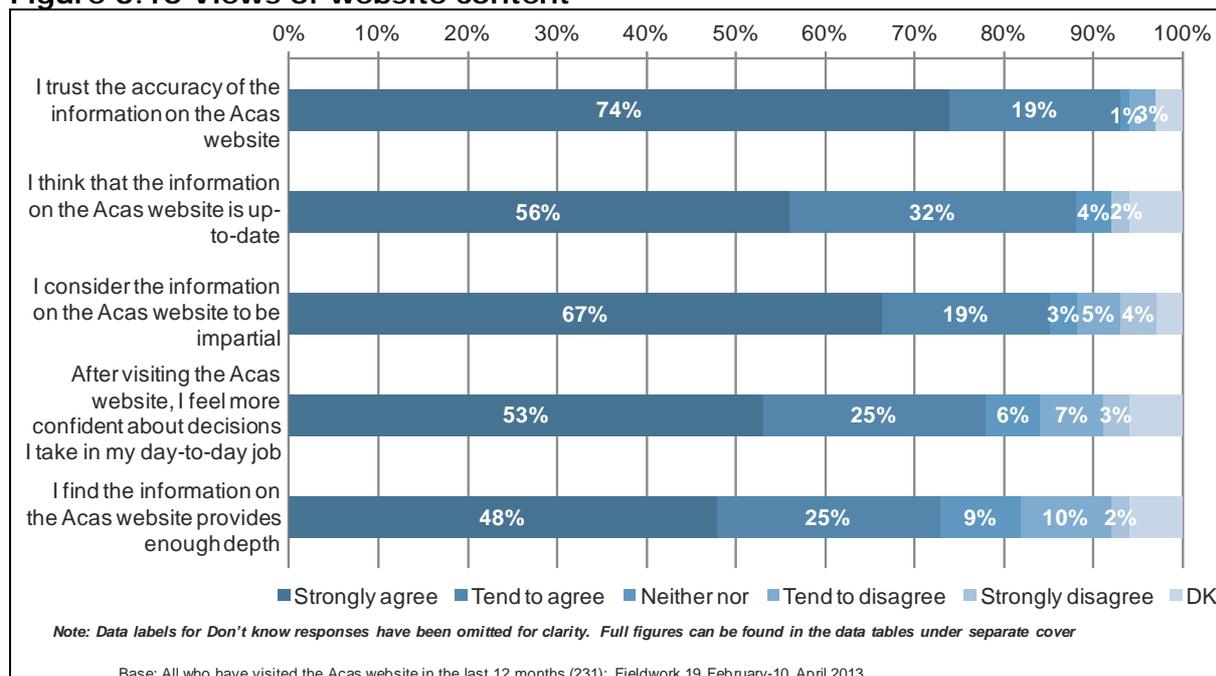
Figure 3.15 Satisfaction with particular elements of the website



Views of website content

A large majority of employers agreed with all of the statements around the content of the Acas website. Over nine in ten respondents (93 per cent) trusted the information on the Acas website, and a similar proportion (88 per cent) agreed that the information on the website was up to date. Slightly fewer employers agreed that Acas provided impartial information – but still a large majority of 85 per cent. Ratings of specific information scored the lowest, with 79 per cent agreeing that they felt more confident making decisions in their jobs after visiting the website, and just over seven in ten (73 per cent) agreed that the website provided sufficient depth.

Figure 3.16 Views of website content



Employers in the qualitative research tended to trust the information they found on the website, and several referred to it as the 'industry (gold) standard' or 'best practice'. Employers' ability to comment on the quality and credibility of site material often depended on their familiarity with other websites of a similar kind and any previous experiences they had had of using them. For example, one employer in the qualitative interviews compared Acas' site to Business Link, preferring its public sector feel and seeing this as a guarantor of credibility.

"[I definitely trust it], it's government sponsored, it's linked to what's going on in employment tribunals, it's the closest link to changes in employment law"

Employer

"[I trust the information] wholeheartedly. Because of the nature of the website you trust it 100 per cent. "

Employer

"It's good that it's not like a commercial website – not lots of jargon and claims. You trust what you see on there."

Employer

Some employers, however, had different expectations of the site and were looking for it to provide them with material that would help them to defend their rights as employers'

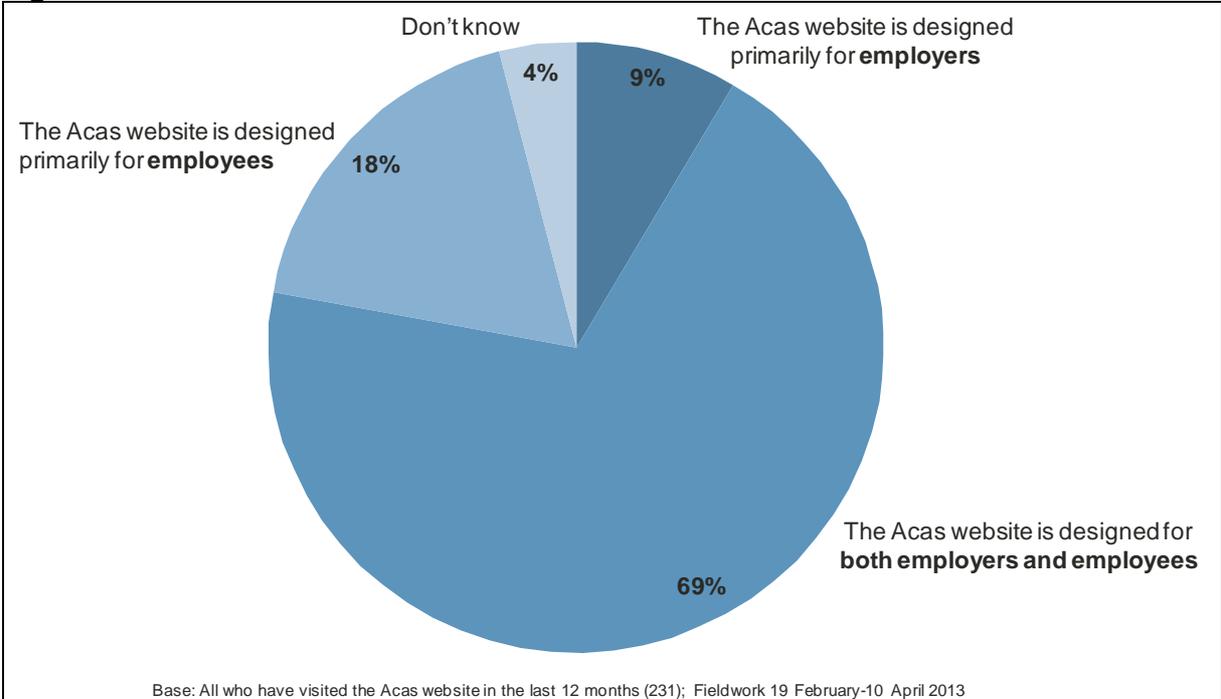
and take effective action if, for example, they were dealing with a disciplinary issue. A few had reservations about the content and tone of the information provided on the site, arguing that it was too neutral and lacking in commercial sense to be useful for their purposes.

Perceived main audience of the website

Seven in ten employer respondents (69 per cent) to the telephone survey felt that the Acas website is designed for both employers and employees. Nearly twenty per cent (18 per cent) felt that the website is designed primarily for employees, and one in ten (9 per cent) felt that it is designed primarily for employers. Therefore, although a large majority feel the website is aimed at both equally, the balance of opinion of those who do not feel it is equal tends towards those who feel it is designed for employees.

Although responses to this question were similar to those given by employees in that the majority felt it is designed for both, almost a fifth (18 per cent) of employers felt that the website is designed primarily for employees, nine percentage points greater than the number of employees who felt that this is the case.

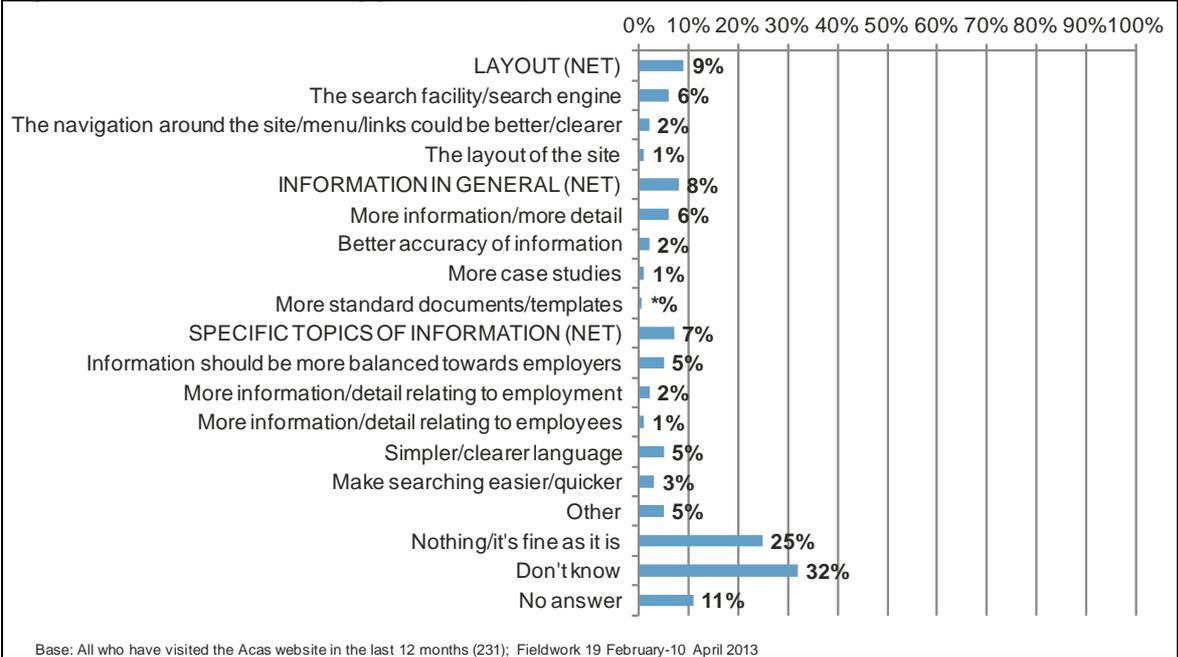
Figure 3.17 Perceived audience for the Acas website



Suggested improvements and most liked aspect of the Acas website

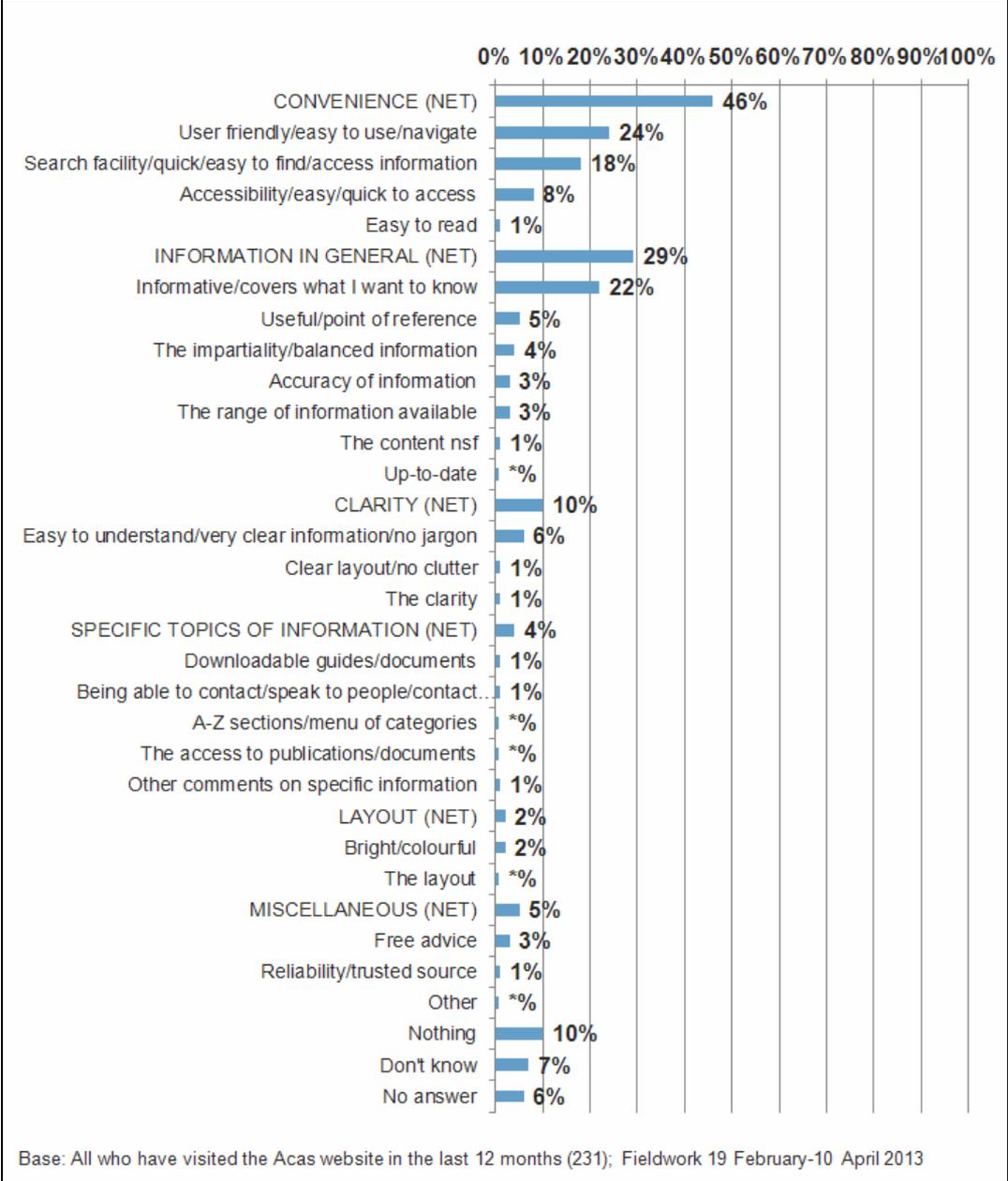
One quarter of respondents, when asked, did not think that the Acas website could be improved. A further 32 per cent did not know of any changes they could recommend, and one in ten respondents did not give a response to this open question. Among those who had recommendations there was no clear pattern. Just under one in ten (9 per cent) suggested improvements to the layout, and a similar number (8 per cent) suggested that the general information provided could be improved.

Figure 3.18 Areas of suggested improvement for the Acas website



Nearly half (46 per cent) of respondents said that the thing they liked most about the Acas website was its convenience, with the site being described as user friendly and easy to navigate. Three in ten (29 per cent) said that the general information provided was the part they liked most, and ten per cent rated its clarity as the aspect they liked most. Specific information topics were mentioned less frequently. Only one in sixteen (six per cent) respondents, when asked, did not provide an answer.

Figure 3.19 Areas which respondents liked the most about the Acas website

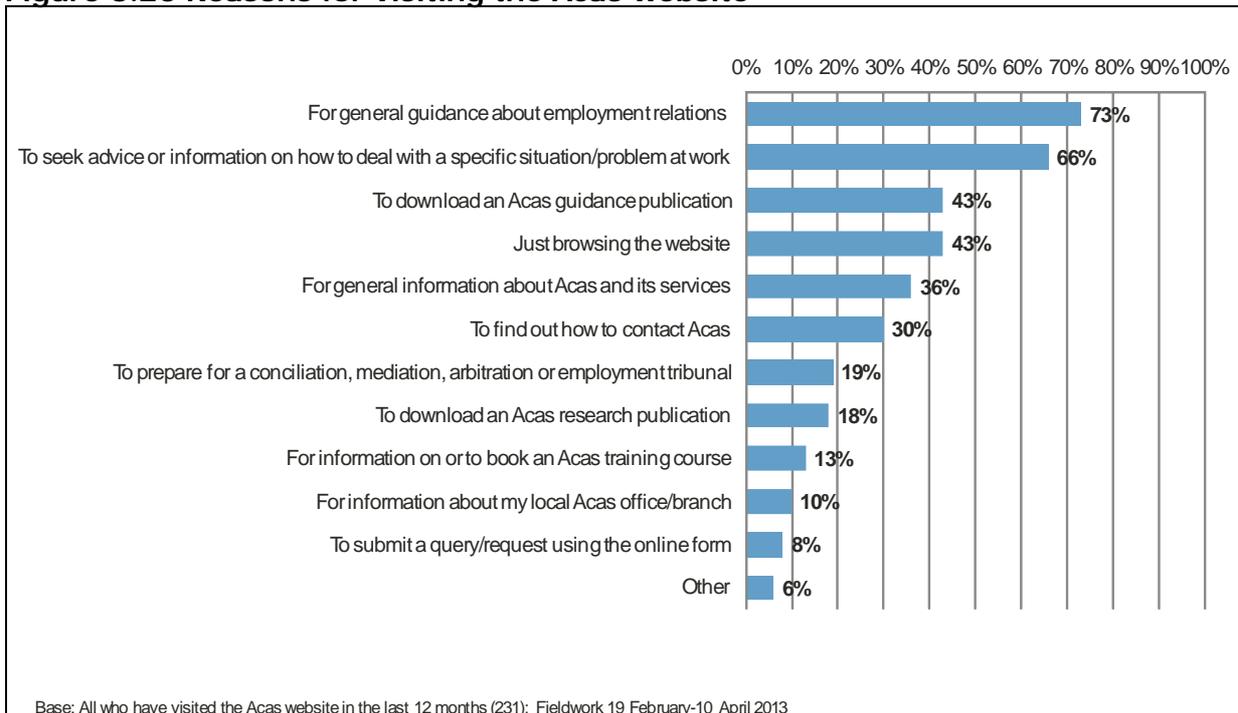


3.4 Impacts and outcomes

Reasons for visiting the Acas site

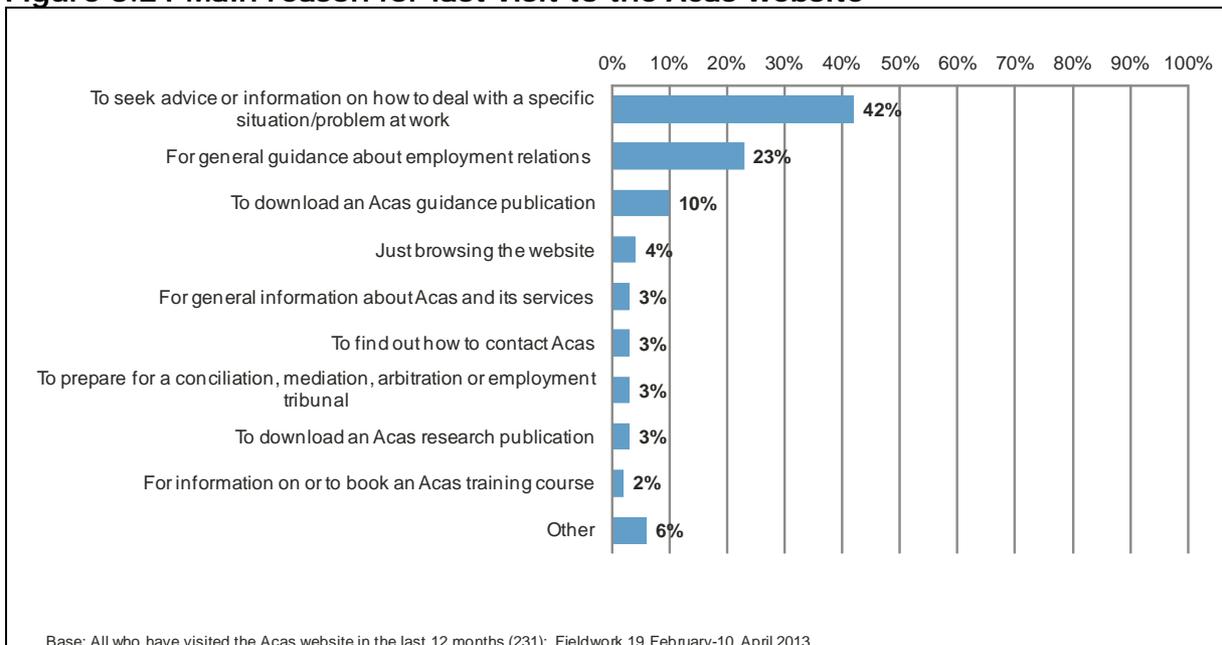
The principal reason given for visiting the Acas website was for general guidance about employee relations, cited by three quarters (73 per cent) of employers who had used the website in the past year. Seeking guidance on a specific situation was the second most commonly selected reason, given by 66 per cent of respondents. A relatively high proportion of respondents (43 per cent) said they had visited at some point to just browse the website, for example to keep up to date with developments in employee relations.

Figure 3.20 Reasons for visiting the Acas website



Focussing specifically on the main reason behind their last visit to the Acas website, four in ten (42 per cent) employers were seeking advice and information about a specific issue at work. A quarter (23 per cent) visited for general guidance about employee relations, and one in ten (10 per cent) came to download an Acas guidance publication. Three per cent of respondents had visited the Acas website to prepare for a conciliation, mediation, arbitration or employment tribunal.

Figure 3.21 Main reason for last visit to the Acas website

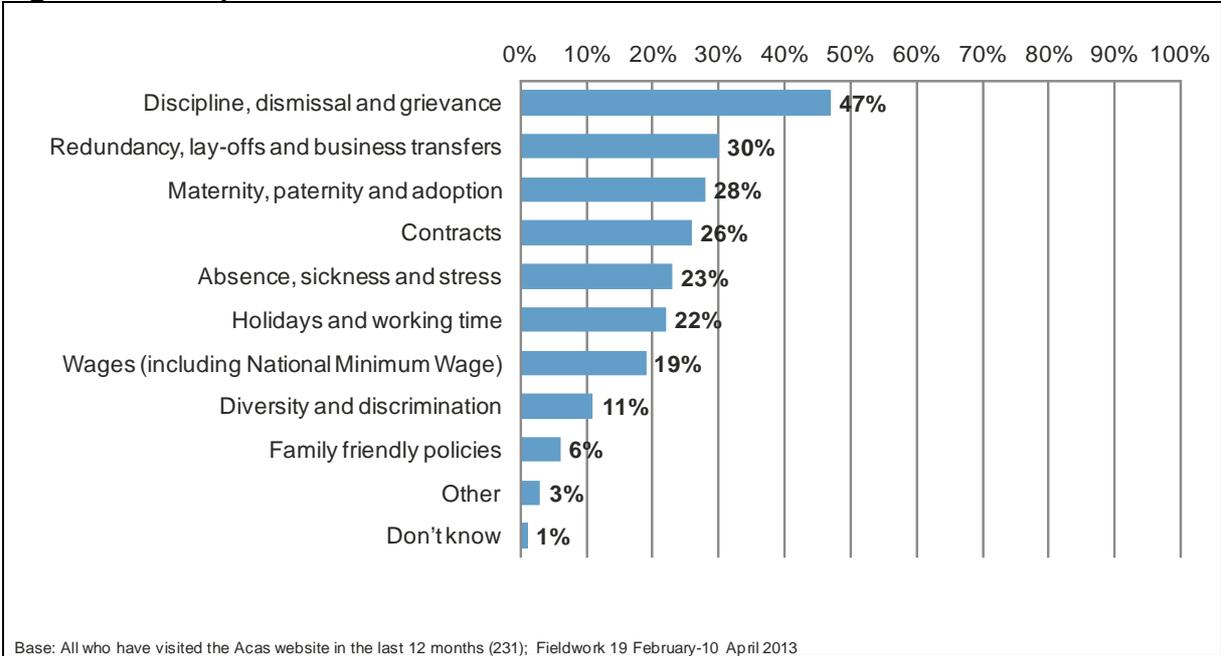


Topic areas used at the last visit

When asked to select the main topic of their most recent visit to the Acas website, the pattern was similar to the employee online survey. Almost half of respondents (47 per cent) were looking for information under the topic of discipline, dismissal and grievance. Redundancy was the second most frequently cited topic, mentioned by three in ten respondents. Family-friendly policies was the least frequently cited topic, mentioned by six per cent of employer respondents.

Four of the top five mentions match with those in the employee survey, with employers more likely to search for maternity, paternity and adoption information than employees (28 per cent compared to eight per cent respectively). This also mirrors the top mentions in the Acas helpline evaluation¹⁹ with maternity, paternity and adoption replaced in the top five by holidays and working time for helpline respondents. It should be noted however that the helpline survey included both employers and employees and asks only for the main subject area of their enquiry.

Figure 3.22 Topic areas used at last visit



The qualitative research suggests employers were generally more likely than employees to be using the search facility than browsing the site for anything of interest. This was usually because their time was more limited and they were also more likely to be using the site to top-up their understanding or in response to a specific issue rather than educating themselves generally on a topic.

There were a couple of concerns from employers that the search function was not selective enough and they found it frustrating that when searching for guidance documents on an issue it also threw up results for available training courses.

¹⁹ York, C and Fettiplace, S (ORC International) (2012) *Acas Helpline evaluation 2011 – Summary Report* available from <http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2056>

“I tend to use the search engine, but it comes up with everything, like training courses and everything. It would be good if you could narrow it down and just search for guidance”

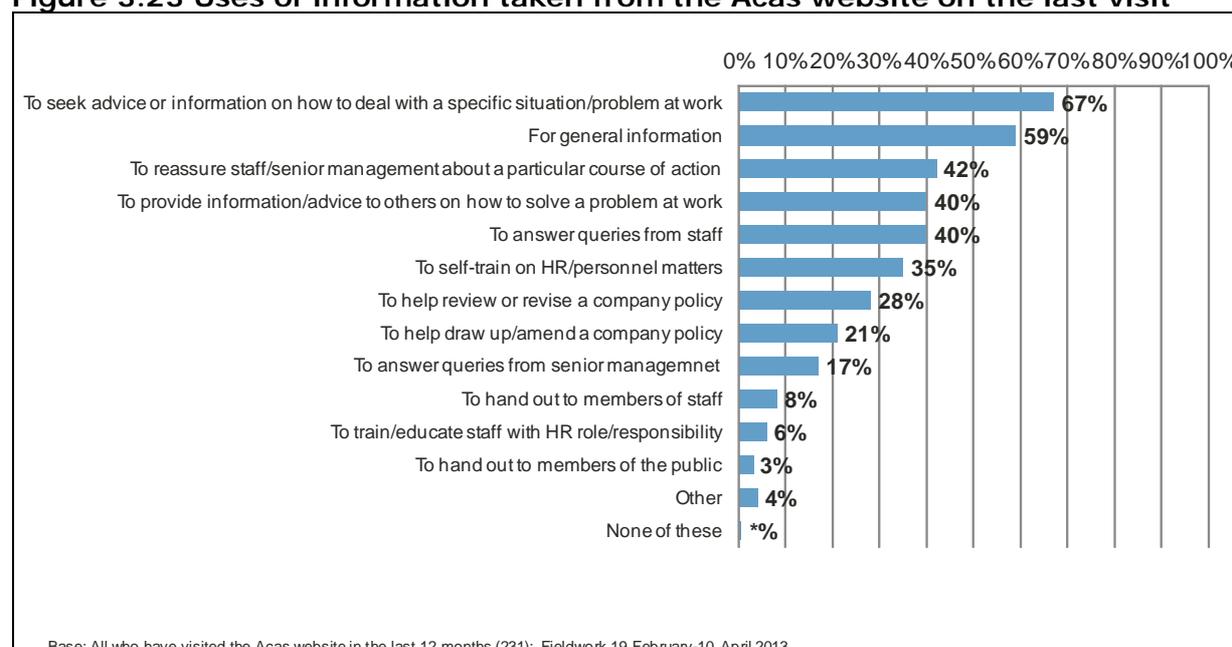
Employer

Using information from the Acas website

The way employers in the telephone survey said they use the Acas website again highlights the different roles for the information accessed. On their last visit to the website two thirds (67 per cent) used the information they took from the Acas website to deal with a specific problem or situation at work, whilst six in ten (59 per cent) used it for general information, reflecting the dual general and specific information provision role found among employees.

Other frequently cited uses were reassuring staff or senior management about a particular course of action (42 per cent), answering queries from staff (40 per cent), and providing help to others to solve a problem at work (40 per cent). Nearly three in ten respondents (28 per cent) had used information from the Acas website to help review or revise a company policy. These usage statistics show the wide range of areas in which employers look to the Acas website for help and advice.

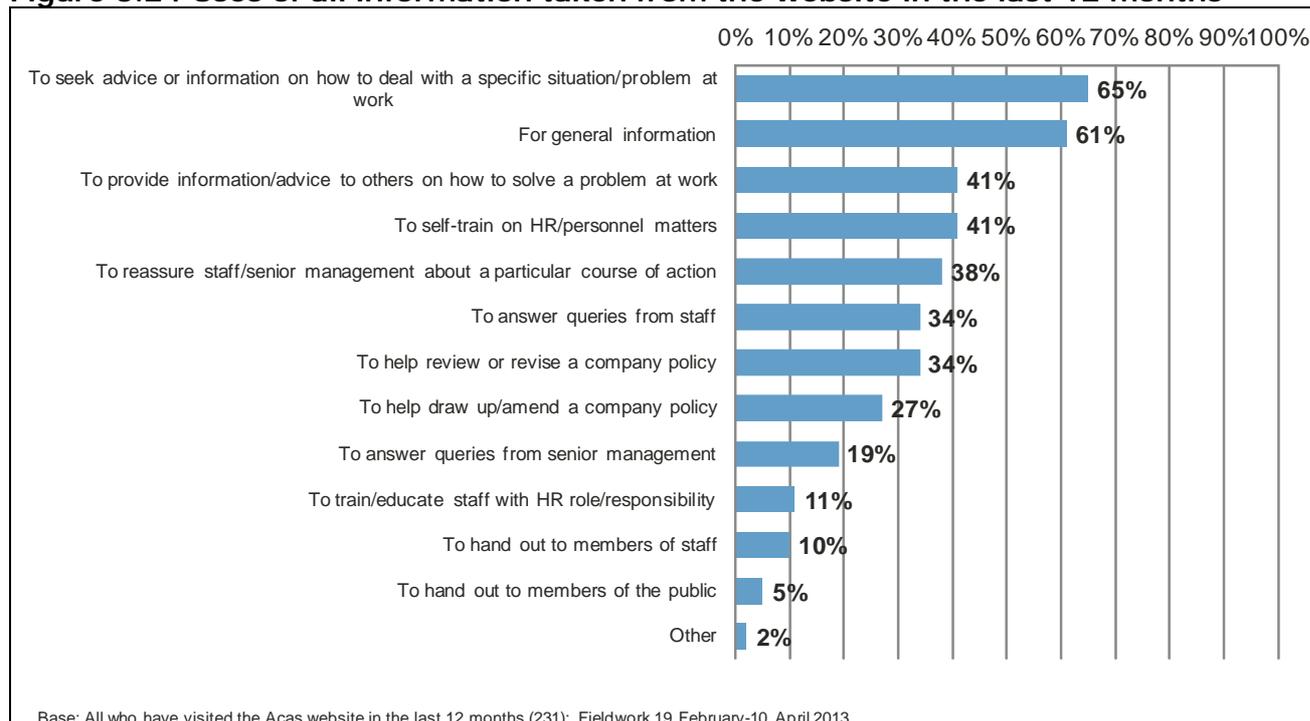
Figure 3.23 Uses of information taken from the Acas website on the last visit



When asked about how they had used any information they had obtained from the website, including any guidance or publication downloads, over the last 12 months, employers gave similar responses to those given when considering their last visit to the website.

Two thirds (65 per cent) had used the website to help deal with a specific issue, whilst six in ten (61 per cent) had used it for general information. Self training purposes were mentioned slightly more frequently for overall usage than for those on their last visit – four in ten (41 per cent) compared with the 35 per cent who used the website more generally. Similarly, generally using the Acas website for revising company policies was more common than for the last visit, with 34 per cent saying they had done so at some point compared with 28 per cent having used the website for this purpose in the last 12 months.

Figure 3.24 Uses of all information taken from the website in the last 12 months



Participants in the employer qualitative interviews also described a range of different uses for the Acas website. For some it served as a starting point, a useful resource that they drew on during early stages of developing a business or if they were branching out into a new area. These employers regularly relied on the website, referring to it often for general information on employment rights. They tended to say it provided them with a useful helping hand and one participant even said it had served her like a personal training course, saving her time and money.

“My background is in sales and marketing so setting up my own business was obviously a challenge! I needed to get up to speed on employment law and quick, there was lots I needed to know. So I looked up lots on Acas and printed it all off. Holiday entitlement, sickness pay etc. I used it an awful lot at the beginning, starting up, like every day. But now it’s more like every couple of months, if I need to remind myself or refresh my memory”

Employer

“I use it when I am setting up offices abroad too – I adopt and adapt UK guidelines to the local context. In many countries there is no Acas equivalent. It’s an important blue print which is enormously helpful”

Employer

Several participants in the qualitative interviews said they relied heavily on material supplied on the website to draw up employee contracts and other important documents relating to employee working rights. They talked about the website supplying them with ‘templates’ and a ‘framework’ that ensured they were setting out on the right footing and in line with best practice.

“Sometimes I will cheat – use the material from the website to put our own contracts and regulations together. I highlight text and copy and paste it into a separate document. Or I might restructure what I find there to suit our own needs”

Employer

“First time I used the Acas website was when I started my own enterprise ten years back – I wanted documents on employee regulations, best practice in policy guidelines. Because internal strife is the last thing you want. It’s part of my personal philosophy, wanting to make sure you are doing the right and proper thing”

Employer

More experienced employers described the website as a useful reference point that they used to cross-check their existing procedures and ensure paperwork was up to date. This was the case both for employers with internal Human Resources (HR) departments and those who outsourced their HR work to a third party.

“I use a mix of our internal HR info and what I find on the website. It’s generally the same info but just from a slightly different perspective and that’s useful – gives me the standard versus our organisational way of doing things”

Employer

Mirroring the quantitative findings, several employers had also used the website to resolve a specific issue, either a dispute over employee rights or simply a query that one of their staff had come to them with. This was usually more the case for employers with less experience of managing a workforce. Common examples of issues employers were looking up include statutory sick pay, holiday entitlement and redundancy procedures. Employers using the website in this way were often very pleased with the service they received as it saved them hassle, time and, as in the case of the employer below, worry.

“Recently an employee was off sick a few weeks and she said she wanted statutory sick pay. I thought ‘God! What do I do?’ The ‘ready reckoner’ calculator²⁰ was brill ... it was very straightforward and calculated the statutory sick pay easily! It was all very quick – like a half an hour process”

Employer

A few employers said they used information stored on the Acas website to help bring employees up to speed on employment rights as well as themselves. This was more common among participants working in small businesses. One employer had printed several documents and distributed them to her six staff to ensure they felt supported and well-informed of current practices. Employers who were using the website in this way saw the website as helping them be a good, transparent employer. A few also thought it

²⁰ Please note: There has never been a ‘ready reckoner’ calculator on the Acas website itself. The participant is likely to have followed a link from the website to the calculator.

was a useful source to know about as it was widely used among employees and therefore might be quoted back at them.

“I frequently use the Acas website to look up info about redundancy rights for employees...”

Employer

The impact that using the Acas website had on an employer generally depended on their reason(s) for visiting the site. Those using it as a starting-off point for developing company procedures and drawing up staff contracts often had concrete examples of documentation that they had written as a result of visiting the site; they saw the site as a ‘facilitator’ helping them to do their job well.

“What was the result? No direct action on my part, it was just a good cross-check with our current practices and templates”

Employer

“For me it’s not so much to do with content as actual application. It’s good for facilitating best practice – it’s lazy I know – maybe we should do it ourselves but it’s useful to know that you are keeping to best practice. So I’m not really too fussed about the exact language it’s more the application issue I’m thinking about – can I adapt these regulations to an international context”

Employer

Other employers in the qualitative interviews described the soft impact of using a site like Acas which provided them with a valuable stamp of reassurance on their practices and in some cases the confidence to take a difficult course of action.

“I printed off a word doc. on redundancy rights. The checklist was very useful too – it corresponded with what we are doing as an organisation which was reassuring”

Employer

“For example it’s virtually impossible to sack someone now. There’s so much to get your head around, so generally it’s good to have something like Business Link or Acas to go to – something that points you to links and toolkits. It’s invaluable”

Employer

“It gives you confidence – you know you’ve got the info or at least you know where you need to go if you need it. The buck stops with me at the end of the day so I need stuff to keep me on top of things”

Employer

One employer summed-up well the dual function he felt a website like Acas’ needed to perform, providing an overview for the lay person and specificity for the expert.

“I think the website has to serve two purposes. To be there for the lay person, help people get a grasp of

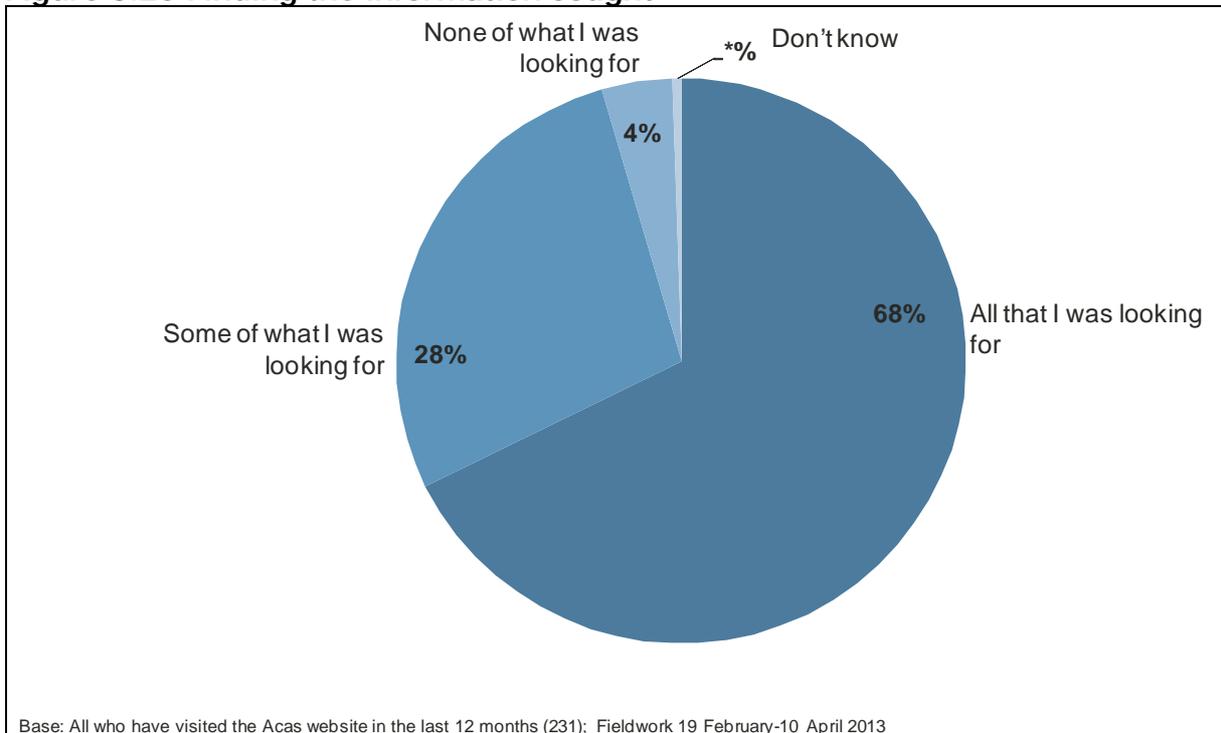
employment regulations. It has to be written in plain English if it's going to achieve on that. But it also has to go into more detail for some employers – which Act of Parliament etc”

Employer

Finding the information sought

A large majority of employers (68 per cent) found all that they were looking for on their last visit to the Acas website. Just over a quarter (28 per cent) found some of what they were looking for. Four per cent of respondents said that they found none of what they were looking for. This pattern is similar to that observed in the employee online survey, although the proportion of employers finding all that they were looking for is larger.

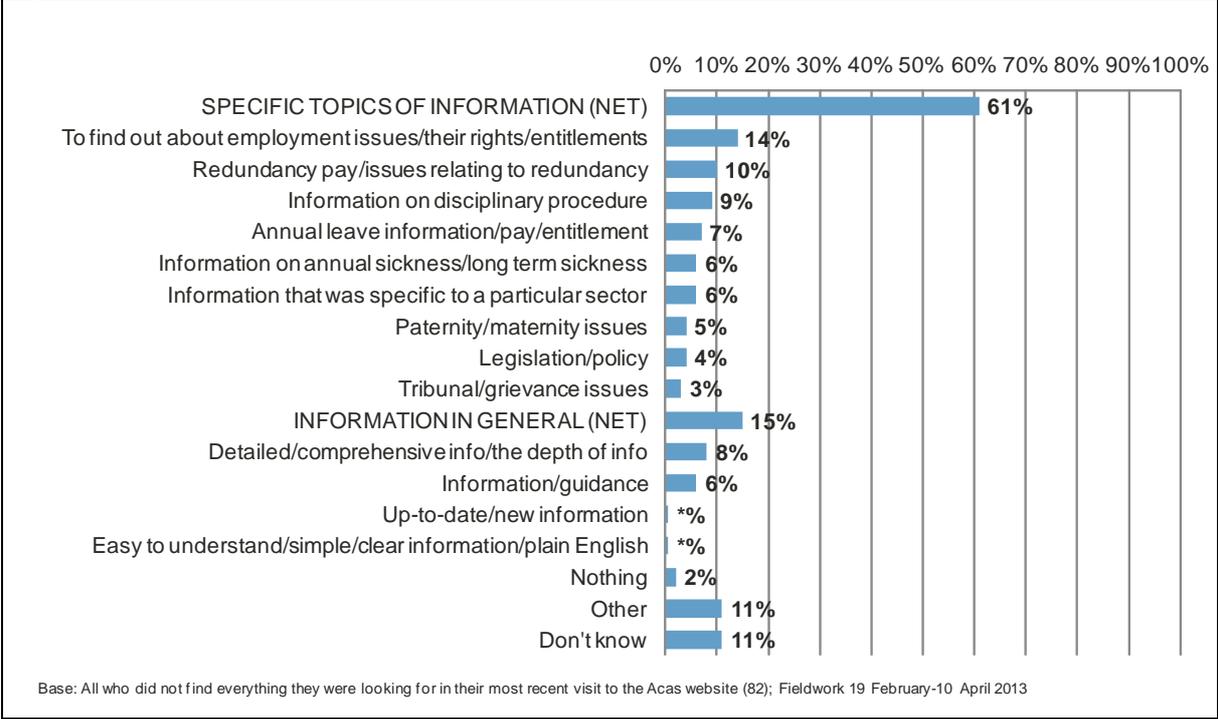
Figure 3.25 Finding the information sought



Few respondents asked claimed to find none of what they were looking for (4 per cent overall). On the whole, those who said they could not find some or all of what they were looking for were not able to find a specific piece of information pertaining to an area of information covered by Acas. Six in ten (61 per cent) were looking for specific topics of information, with information about employment rights (14 per cent) and redundancy (10 per cent) being the most mentioned areas, however these topic areas are also those most often looked for and therefore likely to be mentioned by a greater number of respondents.

One in thirteen (eight per cent) said that they wanted more detailed or comprehensive information on the subject on which they were searching. Over one in ten (11 per cent) were unsure of what it was they were looking for that they could not find.

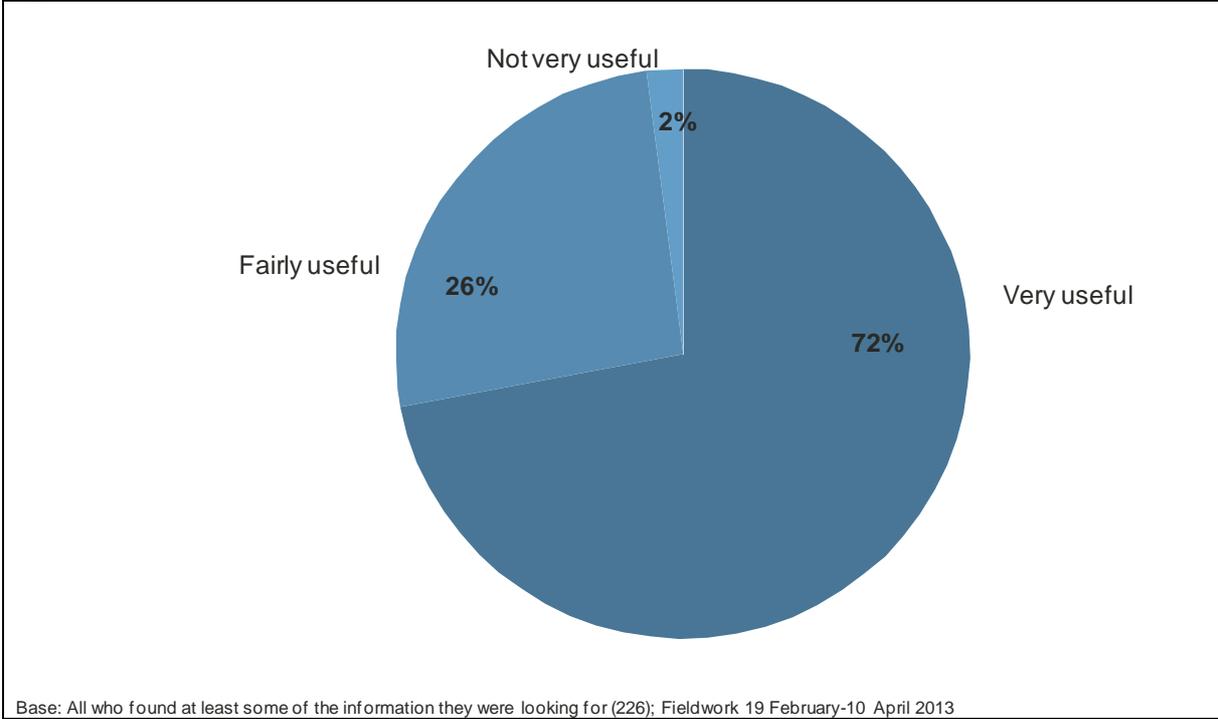
Figure 3.26 Information respondents could not find



Usefulness of information

Nearly three quarters (72 per cent) of respondents who found at least some of the information they were looking for on the Acas website rated that information as very useful. A further quarter (26 per cent) found the information fairly useful, with a small minority (two per cent) rating the information as not very useful. No respondents felt the information was not at all useful.

Figure 3.27 Usefulness of the information

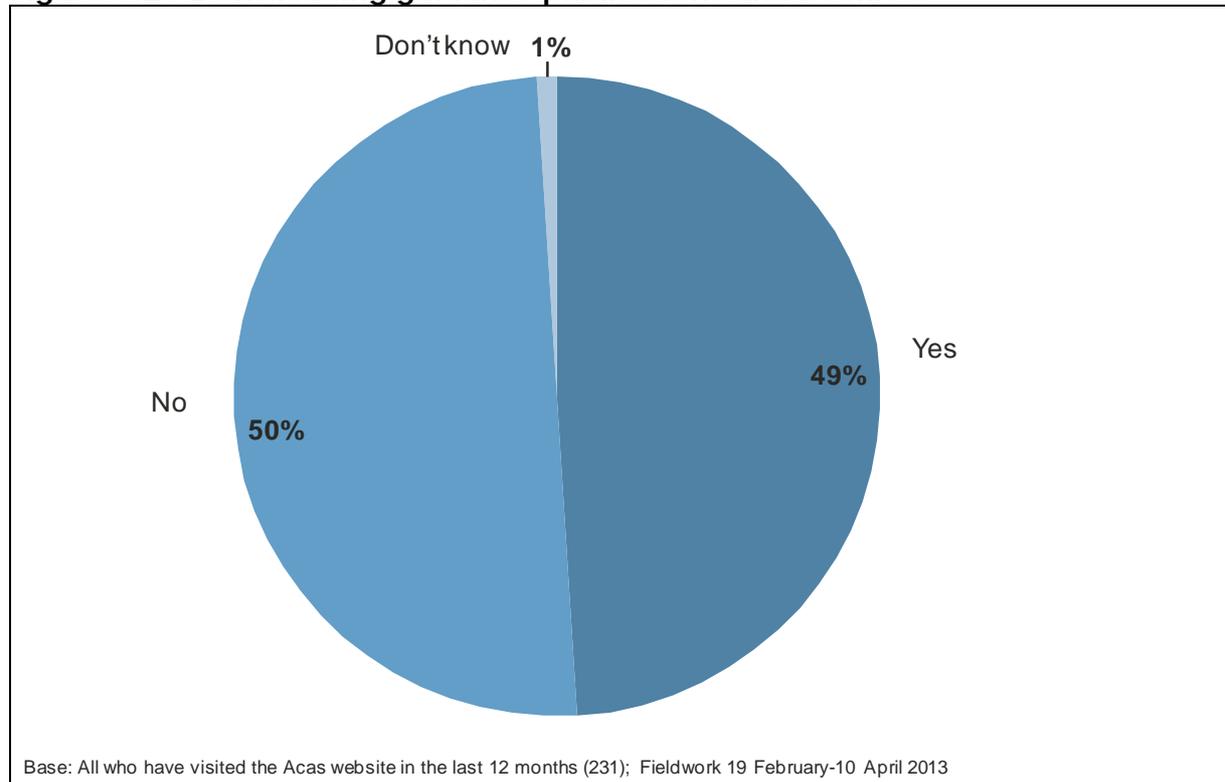


3.5 Guidance and publications

Who has downloaded guidance publications and booklets?

Around half (49 per cent) of employers had downloaded a guidance publication or booklet. This represents a larger proportion of respondents downloading guidance publications or booklets than in the employee survey, where roughly one third of respondents said that they had downloaded guidance publications or booklets.

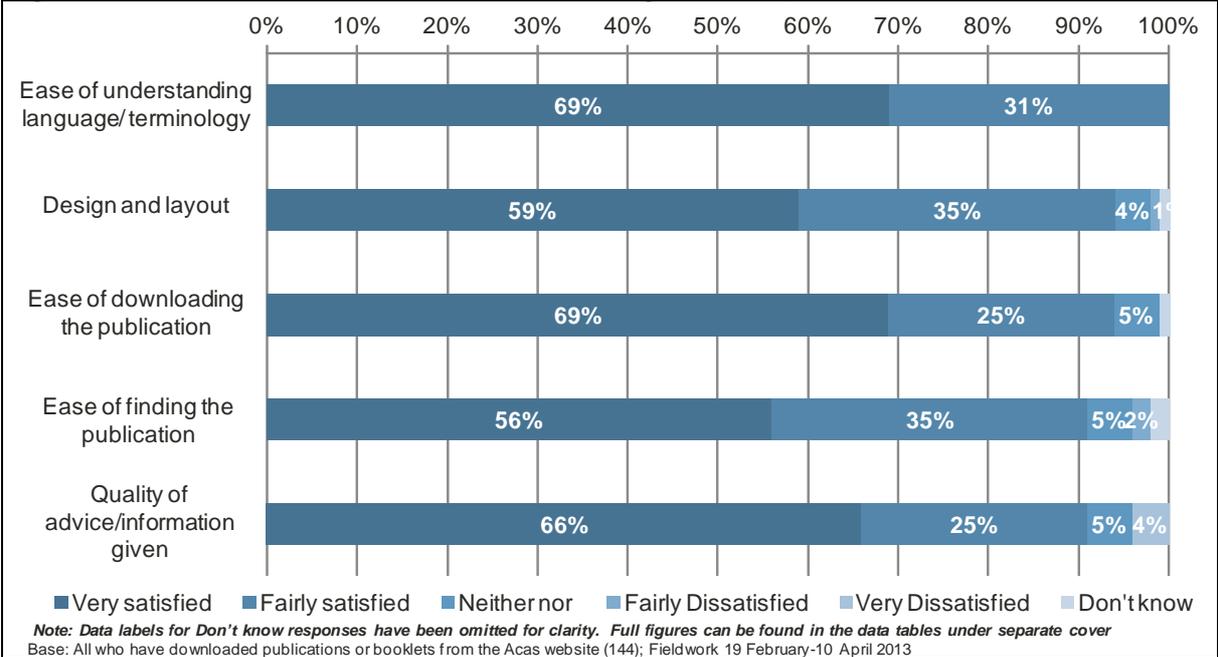
Figure 3.28 Downloading guidance publications and booklets



Views on guidance publications and booklets

Amongst respondents who had downloaded a guidance publication or booklet, satisfaction was high across the board. All employers were satisfied with the ease of understanding the language and terminology (69 per cent were very satisfied). Even for those aspects where satisfaction was slightly lower (ease of finding the publication and the quality of advice or information given) satisfaction remained above 90 per cent.

Figure 3.29 Satisfaction with downloaded guidance publications and booklets



In general, the qualitative work indicated that employers were more likely to be printing guidance and publications documents than employees. This was often because they were building up a store of information that they could use for future reference.

“I print lots off and save it to our company files. I know that in doing that it’s just a snapshot in time and legislation may change but it’s still useful”

Employer

In some cases employers had needed to print documents off as proof of employer or employee rights that they could refer to during difficult discussions with employees or (in the extreme) if they were involved in a legal case.

Appendices

Appendix A: Statistical reliability

The respondents to the surveys are only a sample of the total "population" of employers or employees so we cannot be certain that the figures obtained are exactly those we would have if everybody had been interviewed (the "true" values).

Where the sample of those who responded to the survey is representative of the population as a whole (i.e. in the general public survey and in the employers survey), we can, however, predict the variation between the sample results and the "true" values. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is usually chosen to be 95 per cent - that is, the chances are 95 in 100 that the "true" value will fall within a specified range. The table below illustrates the predicted ranges for different sample sizes and percentage results at the "95 per cent confidence interval".

It is important to note that the employee online survey is not subject to any of the above sampling tolerances as it is not a representative sample. As there is no knowledge of the demographics of the population of Acas users we are unable to ensure that our sample of users reflects this population demographic and therefore it is not possible to discuss the statistical significance of differences in results either between or within the sample.

Size of sample on which survey result is based	Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
	±	±	±
100 responses	6	9	10
200 responses	4	6	7
300 responses	3	5	6
400 responses	3	4	5
500 responses	3	4	4
671 responses	2	4	4
1,000 responses	1	3	3

For example, with a sample size of 500 where 30 per cent give a particular answer, the chances are 19 in 20 that the "true" value (which would have been obtained if the whole population had been interviewed) will fall within the range of ± 4 percentage points from the sample result.

When results are compared between separate groups within a representative sample, different results may be obtained. The difference may be "real", or it may occur by chance (because not everyone in the population has been interviewed). To test if the difference is a real one - i.e. if it is "statistically significant", we again have to know the size of the samples, the percentage giving a certain answer and the degree of confidence chosen. If we assume "95 per cent confidence interval", the differences between the results of two separate groups must be greater than the values given in the table overleaf:

Size of samples compared	Differences required for significance at or near these percentage levels		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
	±	±	±
100 and 100	8	13	14
100 and 200	8	11	12
100 and 300	7	10	11
100 and 400	7	10	11
100 and 500	6	10	11
200 and 200	6	9	10
200 and 300	5	8	9
200 and 400	5	8	9
300 and 300	5	7	8
300 and 400	5	7	8
400 and 400	4	6	7
400 and 500	4	6	7
400 and 600	4	6	6
1000 and 100	6	9	10
1000 and 500	3	5	5

Appendix B: Profile of employee online panel survey

The employee and general public omnibus survey was intended to provide a baseline of employee use of the website, whereas the online panel survey of employees was designed to provide a larger sample size of employee users for more detailed questions, but was not representative of the population of employee users as a whole. As there is no data on the whole profile of employee users we cannot weight the final data, however in order to provide some information on the online panel survey demographics, the table below compares the demographics of those answering from the online survey with those employee users picked up in the omnibus survey. It should be remembered however that the base of employee users in the general public omnibus survey is very low (39) giving a sampling tolerance of around +/-16 per cent.

SAMPLE PROFILE			
Sub-group	Sub-group Categories	% Omnibus survey (Base=39)	% Online panel survey (Base=761)
Sector	Private	74	62
	Public	24	29
	Voluntary	2	6
Size of workplace	Micro (1-9)	17	17
	Small (10-49)	38	22
	Medium (50-249)	37	30
	Large (250+)	6	29
Gender	Male	47	38
	Female	53	62
Age	15-24	21	2
	25-34	20	23
	35-44	23	28
	45-54	22	26
	55-64	12	20
	65+	3	1
Ethnicity	White	81	89
	BME	19	11

Appendix C: Questionnaires and discussion guides

Employee Capibus questionnaire

ASK ALL coded 4 (Not working – Housewife), 8 (Unemployed and seeking work), 10 (Not in paid work for other reason) or 11 (Not in paid work because of long term illness or disability) at QWork2D

Q1 Have you had any full or part time employment including voluntary work in the last 3 months?

Yes Go to Q2
No Thank and end module

ASK ALL coded 1 (Yes) at Q1 AND all coded 1 (Paid job – full time), 2 (Paid job – part time), 3 (Paid job – part time under 8 hours), 5 (self-employed), 6 (Full time students)

Q2 How well would you say you know Acas, the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, and the services it offers?

SINGLE CODE
Know very well
Know fairly well
Know a little
Heard of but not sure what they do
Never heard of GO TO Q6
Don't know

Q3 How many times did you visit the Acas website as in the last 12 months?

READ OUT. SINGLE CODE

1
2-5
6-10
11-20
21-50
51 or more
None
Don't know/can't remember

ALL WHO HAVE NOT USED THE ACAS WEBSITE (code 7 at Q3)

Q4 Why have you not visited the Acas website in the last 12 months?

UNPROMPTED. MULTICODE

Don't know enough/anything about Acas
Not had an employment dispute or issue/no need to use
Tend to use a different service
Not aware Acas had a website
Bad experience of Acas website in the past
Bad experience of other Acas services in the past (please specify)
Don't/tend not to use online employment relations advice/services
I have difficulty accessing websites (general)
I have difficulty accessing the Acas website (specifically)

Don't know
Other (please specify)

ALL WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY ACCESSING WEBSITES (CODE 8 and CODE 9 AT Q4)

Q4a Could you please briefly explain in what ways you have difficulty accessing <TEXT SUB FROM Q4 the Acas website (CODE 9 AT Q4)/websites (CODE 8 AT Q4)>.

PLEASE WRITE IN

ALL WHO HAVE USED THE ACAS WEBSITE (CODES 1-6 at Q3)

Q5 Thinking about the last 12 months, have you most often visited the Acas website.....

SHOW SCREEN, SINGLE CODE

For yourself as a current employee
For yourself as a current employee on long-term absence
For yourself as a former employee
In your role as a line manager
In your role as an HR professional
In your role as a business owner/senior manager
For academic purposes
Other (please specify)

ASK ALL coded 1 (Yes) at Q1 AND all coded 1 (Paid job – full time), 2 (Paid job – part time), 3 (Paid job – part time under 8 hours)

ASK ALL coded 1 (Yes) at Q1 AND all coded 1 (Paid job – full time), 2 (Paid job – part time), 3 (Paid job – part time under 8 hours), 5 (self-employed)

Please answer the following questions with respect to your main job. This is the job which you spend most of your time doing.

Q6 Do you work in the.....?

SINGLE CODE

Private sector
Public sector
Not-for-profit/voluntary sector
Other (please specify)
Don't know

Q7 Looking at this list, which of the options best describes the industry you currently work in?

Manufacturing
Electricity, gas & water supply
Construction
Wholesale and retail trade
Hotels and restaurants
Transport
Financial services
Other business services
Public authorities
Education
Health

Other organisations (SPECIFY)
Don't know/Refused

ASK ALL coded 1 (Yes) at Q1 AND all coded 1 (Paid job – full time), 2 (Paid job – part time), 3 (Paid job – part time under 8 hours), 5 (self-employed)

ASK ALL coded 1 (Yes) at Q1 AND all coded 1 (Paid job – full time), 2 (Paid job – part time), 3 (Paid job – part time under 8 hours)

Q8 Approximately how many people, including you, currently work at the place where you work? This means the building you work in or the physical site on which you are based.

1-4
5-9
10-49
50-99
100-249
250-499
500-999
1,000 or more
Don't know

ASK ALL coded 1 (Yes) at Q1 AND all coded 1 (Paid job – full time), 2 (Paid job – part time), 3 (Paid job – part time under 8 hours)

Q9 Is your workplace part of a larger organisation?

SINGLE CODE

Yes CONTINUE
No GO TO Q11
Don't know GO TO Q11

ASK ALL coded 1 (Yes) at Q1 AND all coded 1 (Paid job – full time), 2 (Paid job – part time), 3 (Paid job – part time under 8 hours)

Q10 Approximately how many employees work for your organisation as a whole on all different sites?

SINGLE CODE

Less than 50
50 to 249
250 to 499
500 to 999
1,000 to 4,999
5,000 or more
Don't Know

Recontact question

ASK ALL WHO HAVE USED THE ACAS WEBSITE (CODE1-6 AT Q3)

Q11 Ipsos MORI will be conducting follow up research on this topic for Acas in the next three months and would like to talk to some people in more detail

about some of the issues we have talked about today. Would you be willing for Ipsos MORI working on behalf of Acas to contact you about this research?

INTERVIEWER NOTE: RESPONDENTS WILL ONLY BE RECONTACTED BY IPSOS MORI FOR THE PURPOSES OF WORK RELATED TO THIS RESEARCH AS A RESULT OF AGREEMENT. SINGLE CODE ONLY

Yes

No

Online Employee Panel Survey

Introduction

Ipsos MORI are conducting a survey on behalf of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, also known as Acas. The interview will cover your views on some of the services offered by Acas.

Please be assured that your replies will be confidential and anonymous. The survey should only take around 15 minutes to complete, and you can save the survey and return at any time.

Q1. How well would you say you know Acas, the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, and the services it offers?

SA. Ask all. Reverse scale 1 to 5

- 1. Know very well
- 2. Know fairly well
- 3. Know a little
- 4. Heard of but not sure what they do
- 5. Never heard of
- 6. Don't know

THANK AND CLOSE

Q2. Thinking about the last 12 months, have you visited the Acas website

MA. Ask all.

- 1. For yourself as a current employee
- 2. For yourself as a current employee on long-term absence
- 3. For yourself as a former employee
- 4. In your role as a line manager
- 5. In your role as an HR professional
- 6. In your role as a business owner/senior manager
- 7. For academic purposes
- 8. Other (OE box here)

THANK AND CLOSE

Q3 How many times did you visit the Acas website in the last 12 months?

SA. Ask all who answered codes 1-3 at Q2 (including if codes 4-8 also selected).

- 1. 1
- 2. 2-5
- 3. 6-10
- 4. 11-20
- 5. 21-50
- 6. 51 or more
- 7. None

THANK AND CLOSE

- 8. Don't know/can't remember

Q4. Which, if any, of the following sources helped you find www.acas.org.uk?

MA. Ask all who answered codes 1-6 or 8 at Q3. Randomise codes 1 - 12

- 1. Told by my friends/family
- 2. Publication/Magazine
- 3. Told by a colleague/someone at work

4.Contact with an Acas advisor or other Acas service
5.Advert or poster
6.BIS (Department of Business, Innovation and Skills) website
7.Local authority/ council website
8.Direct.gov.uk (now replaced by GOV.UK)
9.Business Link (now replaced by GOV.UK)
10.GOV.UK
11.Internet search engine (e.g. Google)
12.Link/URL in email from Acas
13.Other ([OE box here](#))
14.Don't know ([Exclusive code](#))

Q5. Which, if any, of the following devices have you used to access the Acas website over the last 12 months?

MA. Ask all who answered codes 1-6 or 8 at Q3.

1.Desktop or laptop computer
2.A smart/internet phone
3.Tablet computer e.g. iPad
4.Other ([OE box here](#))

**Q6. Which, if any, of the following devices do you think you will use to access the Acas website in the next 12 months? **

MA. Ask all who answered codes 1-6 or 8 at Q3.

1.Desktop or laptop computer
2.A smart/internet phone
3.Tablet computer e.g. iPad
4.Other ([OE box here](#))
5.Don't know ([Exclusive code](#))
6.Do not plan to use the Acas website in the next 12 months ([Exclusive code](#))

Reason for visit

Q7. Thinking about the last 12 months, for which of the following reasons have you visited the Acas website?

MA. Ask all who answered codes 1-6 or 8 at Q3. Randomise statements except 12 and 13.

1.For general information about Acas and its services
2.For general guidance about employment relations
3.To seek advice or information on how to deal with a specific situation/problem at work
4.To prepare for a conciliation, mediation, arbitration or employment tribunal

5.To download an Acas guidance publication
6.For information about my local Acas office/branch
7.For information on or to book an Acas training course
8.To submit a query/request using the online form
9.To find out how to contact Acas
10.To download an Acas research publication
11.Just browsing the website
12.Other ([OE box here](#))
13.Don't know ([Exclusive code](#))

Q8. Thinking about your last visit to the Acas website, what was your main reason for visiting?

SA. Ask all who answered with more than one code at Q7 (Exclude "don't know"). Only show statements selected at Q7.

1.For general information about Acas and its services
2.For general guidance about employment relations
3.To seek advice or information on how to deal with a specific situation/problem at work
4.To prepare for a conciliation, mediation, arbitration or employment tribunal
5.To download an Acas guidance publication
6.For information about my local Acas office/branch
7.For information on or to book an Acas training course
8.To submit a query/request using the online form
9.To find out how to contact Acas
10.To download an Acas research publication
11.Just browsing the website
12.Other ([OE box here](#))
13.Don't know

Q9. Thinking about your last visit to the Acas website, please select from the list below which topics were the focus of your visit

MA. Ask all who answered codes 1-6 or 8 at Q3. Please follow formatting for answer codes (bold and non bold parts of answer codes). Randomise codes 1-9.

1.**Maternity, paternity and adoption**
(e.g. maternity rights and paternity rights, parental leave and leave relating to adoption)

2.**Contracts** (e.g. terms and conditions, notice period/pay, probation period and rights of casual/temporary/fixed-term workers)
3.**Diversity and discrimination** (e.g. race discrimination, sex discrimination, disability discrimination, sexual orientation discrimination, religion or belief discrimination and age discrimination)
4.**Discipline, dismissal and grievance** (e.g. discipline procedures, dismissal, grievance procedures and bullying/harassment)
5.**Absence, sickness and stress** (e.g. absence, sick pay and stress)
6.**Family friendly policies** (e.g. flexible working regulations, rights of part-time workers and time off for dependents)
7.**Holidays and working time** (e.g. holiday entitlement, working time regulations and bank/public holidays)
8.**Redundancy, lay-offs and business transfers** (e.g. redundancy/redundancy pay, lay-offs/short-time work and company takeover/merger)
9.**Wages (including National Minimum Wage)** (e.g. non payment/deduction of wage, National Minimum Wage and other wage issues)
10.**Other** ([OE box here](#))
11.**Don't know/can't remember** ([Exclusive code](#))

Q10. Again, thinking about your most recent visit to the Acas website, how much of what you were looking for were you able to find?

[SA. Ask all who answered codes 1-6 or 8 at Q3.](#)

1.All that I was looking for
2.Some of what I was looking for
3.None of what I was looking for
4.Don't know

Q10a. Please could you briefly explain what it was you were looking for and could not find?

[OE. Ask all who answered codes 2 or 3 at Q10. Response not compulsory](#)

Q11. Thinking about the most recent information and guidance you accessed from the Acas website, what did you use it for?

[MA. Ask all who answered 2, 3, 4, 5 or 12 at Q7. Randomise statements except for 5.](#)

1.For general information
2.To seek advice or information on how to deal with a specific situation/ problem at work
3.To provide information/advice to others on how to solve a problem at work
4.To self-train on HR/personnel matters
5.Other ([OE box here](#))

Q12. Thinking about your most recent visit to the Acas website, to what extent was the information you found useful?

SA. Ask all who answered 1 or 2 at Q10. Reverse scale 1 to 4

- 1.Very useful
- 2.Fairly useful
- 3.Not very useful
- 4.Not at all useful
- 5.Don't know

Q13. Why would you say that the information you found was not useful?

OE. Ask all who answered 3 or 4 at Q12. Response not compulsory.

Website construction

Introductory text for all who have visited Acas website (Q3 = 1-6, 8).

We would now like to ask you some more general questions about the Acas website. Please think about the Acas website overall when answering these questions.

Q14. Thinking about the website in general, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with each of the following aspects of the Acas website? Please tick one box only for each aspect.

SA per row. Ask all who have visited Acas website (Q3 = 1-6, 8).

Across top if grid (reverse scale 1 to 5):

- 1.Very satisfied
- 2.Fairly satisfied
- 3.Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- 4.Fairly dissatisfied
- 5.Very dissatisfied
- 6.Don't know/can't remember

Down side of grid (randomise statements):

- 1. Search facility
- 2. Design and layout
- 3. Quality of advice / information given
- 4. Clarity and style of writing

Q15. Which, if any, other websites or online sources of information have you used to seek advice about your rights as an employee at work in the last 12 months?

MA. Ask all who have visited Acas website (Q3 = 1-6, 8). Randomise codes 1 – 13.

- 1. Croner.co.uk
- 2. HRzone
- 3. Linked In
- 4. Business Link (now replaced by GOV.UK)

5. Direct.gov.uk (now replaced by GOV.UK)
6. GOV.UK
7. Managementtoday.co.uk
8. Peoplemanagement.co.uk
9. Personneltoday.com
10. XpertHR.co.uk
11. CAB (Citizen's Advice Bureau)
12. Professional network/organization (e.g. CIPD)
13. Wikipedia
14. Other ([OE box here](#))
15. Don't know ([Exclusive code](#))
16. Have never sought advice about my rights as an employee ([Exclusive code](#))

Q16. Overall, how do you think the Acas website compares with other websites you have used to seek advice about your rights as an employee at work?

SA. Ask all who have visited another employment relations website (Q15 = 1-14). Reverse scale 1 to 5.

1.A lot better
2.A little better
3.About the same
4.A little worse
5.A lot worse
6.Don't know

Impressions of the ACAS website

Q17. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Acas website?

SA per row. Ask all who have visited Acas website (Q3=1-6, 8). Rotate down side responses

Across top of grid (reverse scale 1 to 5):

1.Strongly agree
2.Tend to agree
3.Neither agree nor disagree
4.Tend to disagree
5.Strongly disagree
6.Don't know

Down side of grid:

- I trust the accuracy of the information on the Acas website
- I consider the information on the Acas website to be impartial
- I think that the information on the Acas website is up-to-date
- I find the information on the Acas website provides enough depth
- I find the language/terminology used on the Acas website easy to understand

Q18. Which of the following statements most closely reflects your view about the Acas website?

SA. Ask all who have visited Acas website (Q3=1-6, 8). Reverse scale 1-3.

1. The Acas website is designed primarily for employers
2. The Acas website is designed for both employers and employees
3. The Acas website is designed primarily for employees
4. Don't know

Q19. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the Acas website?

SA. Ask all who have visited Acas website (Q3=1-6, 8). Reverse scale 1 to 5

1.Very satisfied
2.Fairly satisfied
3.Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
4.Fairly dissatisfied
5.Very dissatisfied
6.Don't know

Q20. What, if anything, do you think would improve the Acas website?

OE. Ask all who have visited Acas website (Q3=1-6, 8). Response not compulsory

Q21. What, if anything, do you like most about the Acas website?

OE. Ask all who have visited Acas website (Q3=1-6, 8). Response not compulsory

Q22. Have you downloaded any guidance publications or booklets from the Acas website?

SA. Ask all who have visited Acas website (Q3=1-6, 8).

1.Yes
2.No [route to Q25]
3.Don't know

ASK ALL WHO HAVE DOWNLOADED PUBLICATIONS OR BOOKLETS

Q23. Now, thinking specifically about the most recent guidance publication or booklet you downloaded from the Acas website, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with each of the following aspects? Please tick one box only for each aspect.

SA per row. Ask all who answer Yes to Q22 (Q22=1). Rotate down side statements.

Across top of grid (reverse scale 1 to 5)

1.Very satisfied
2.Fairly satisfied
3.Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
4.Fairly dissatisfied
5.Very dissatisfied
6.Don't know/not applicable

Down side of grid

Ease of finding the publication
Ease of downloading the publication
Design and layout of the publication
Quality of advice / information given
Ease of understanding language/terminology

Q24. Thinking about all of the Acas information and guidance (including downloadable publications or booklets as well as other guidance sections) you have accessed from the Acas website in the last 12 months, which, if any, of the following, did you use it for?

MA. Ask all who answer yes to Q22 (Q22=1).

1.For general information
2.To seek advice or information on how to deal with a specific situation/ problem at work
3.To provide information/advice to others on how to solve a problem at work
4.To self-train on HR/personnel matters
5.Other (OE box here)

Other sources of contact

Q25. Which, if any, other Acas services have you used in the last 12 months?

MA. Ask all who have visited Acas website (Q3=1-6, 8). Randomise statements 1-7.

1. Telephoned Acas' Employment Rights Helpline
2. Used collective conciliation for resolving an industrial dispute
3. Used an Acas mediator to help resolve a workplace dispute
4. Attended an Acas open access training course
5. Used Acas' conciliation service for an Employment Tribunal case (either individual conciliation or Pre Claim Conciliation)
6. Received a bespoke Acas workplace training course delivered within your workplace
7. Received an on-site joint management and employee workplace project to improve relationships
8. Used Acas in some other way
9. Used no other Acas services (Exclusive code)
10. Don't know/ can't remember (Exclusive code)

Q26. And of these services, which, if any, have you used as a direct result of visiting the Acas website?

MA. Ask all who answered 1-7 at Q25. Only show codes selected at Q25, but always show codes 8 and 9.

1. Telephoned Acas' Employment Rights Helpline
2. Used collective conciliation for resolving an industrial dispute
3. Used an Acas mediator to help resolve a workplace dispute
4. Attended an Acas open access training course

5. Used Acas' conciliation service for an Employment Tribunal case (either individual conciliation or Pre Claim Conciliation)
6. Received a bespoke Acas workplace training course delivered within your workplace
7. Received an on-site joint management and employee workplace project to improve relationships
8. None of the above ([Exclusive code](#))
9. Don't know ([Exclusive code](#))

Demographics

We would now like to ask some questions about your current job role and your employer, in order that we can make sure we have spoken to a range of different employees.

Q27. Which of the following best describes your current situation?

[SA. Ask all who have visited Acas website \(Q3=1-6, 8\).](#)

1. Working 30 hours or more a week (Full-time)
2. Working 8-29 hours a week (Part-time)
3. Homemaker
4. Unemployed
5. Long term sick or disabled
6. Retired
7. Student
8. Don't know
9. Refused

Q28. Do you work in the.....?

[SA. Ask all who answer 1-2 at Q27.](#)

Include note: Please answer the following questions with respect to your main job. This is the job which you spend most of your time doing.

- | | |
|----|---------------------------------|
| 1. | Private sector |
| 2. | Public sector |
| 3. | Not-for-profit/voluntary sector |
| 4. | Other (please specify) |
| 5. | Don't know |

Q29. Looking at this list, which of the options best describes the industry you currently work in?

[SA. Ask all who answer 1-2 at Q28.](#)

1. Manufacturing
2. Electricity, gas & water supply
3. Construction
4. Wholesale and retail trade
5. Hotels and restaurants
6. Transport

7. Financial services
8. Other business services
9. Public authorities
10. Education
11. Health
12. Other organisations (SPECIFY)
13. Don't know/Refused

Q30. Approximately how many people, including you, currently work at the place where you work? By this I mean the building you work in or the physical site on which you are based.

SA. Ask all who answer 1-2 at Q27.

1. 1-4
2. 5-9
3. 10-49
4. 50-99
5. 100-249
6. 250-499
7. 500 – 999
8. 1,000 or more
9. Don't know

Q31. Is your workplace part of a larger organisation?

SA. Ask all who answer 1-2 at Q27.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know

Q32. Approximately how many employees work for your organisation as a whole on all different sites?

SA. Ask all who answer Yes at Q31 (Q31=1).

1. Less than 50
2. 50 to 249
3. 250 to 499
4. 500 to 999
5. 1,000 to 4,999
6. 5,000 or more
7. Don't Know

Q33. In which of the following regions are you based?

SA. Ask all who answer 1-2 at Q27.

1. East Midlands
2. East of England
3. London
4. North East
5. North West
6. South East
7. South West

- 8. West Midlands
- 9. Yorkshire and Humber
- 10. Scotland
- 11. Wales
- 12. Don't know/refused
- 13. Other (please specify)

Include note: We would now like to ask some questions about you, in order that we can make sure we have spoken to a range of different employees.

Q34. How old are you?

SA. Ask all. Response not compulsory.

- 1. Under 18
- 2. 18-24
- 3. 25-34
- 4. 35-44
- 5. 45 -54
- 6. 55-64
- 7. 65+

Q35. Are you.....

SA. Ask all. Response not compulsory.

- 1. Male
- 2. Female

Q36. Would you say that English is your first language?

SA. Ask all. Response not compulsory.

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Don't know
- 4. Prefer not to say

Q37. To which of these groups do you consider you belong to.....

SA. Ask all. Response not compulsory.

WHITE (HEADING, NOT ANSWER CODE)

- 1. British
- 2. Irish
- 3. Any other white background

MIXED (HEADING, NOT ANSWER CODE)

- 4. White and Black Caribbean
- 5. White and Asian
- 6. Any other mixed background

ASIAN OR ASIAN BRITISH (HEADING, NOT ANSWER CODE)

- 7. Indian

- 8.Pakistani
- 9.Bangladeshi
- 10.Any other Asian background

BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH (HEADING, NOT ANSWER CODE)

- 11.Caribbean
- 12.African
- 13.Any other black background

CHINESE OR OTHER ETHNIC GROUP (HEADING, NOT ANSWER CODE)

- 14.Chinese
- 15.Any other background

Q.38 Do you have any long-term illness, health problem or disability? By long-term we mean that it can be expected to last for more than a year

SA. Ask all who have visited Acas website (Q3=1-6, 8).

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Prefer not to say

Recontact question (INCLUDE ALL Q TEXT)

Q39. Ipsos MORI will be conducting follow up research on this topic for Acas in the next three months and would like to talk to some individuals in more detail about some of the issues we have talked about today. Would you be willing for Ipsos MORI working on behalf of Acas to contact you about this research?

Ipsos MORI will only re-contact you for the purposes of work related to this research. It does not affect the confidentiality of your response and you reserve the right to decline to take part further at any time.

SA. Ask all who have visited Acas website (Q3=1-6, 8).

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

**Acas website evaluation employers' survey
Telephone Questionnaire**

Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is from Ipsos MORI, the research organisation.

Ipsos MORI are conducting a survey on behalf of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, also known as Acas. The interview will cover your views on some of the services offered by Acas.

Please be assured that your replies will be confidential and anonymous. The interview should only take around 15 minutes.

Are you able to spare a few minutes to take part in this survey?

Q1. Do you have any responsibility for human resource and personnel issues in your organisation? IF NECESSARY, PROMPT: For example, you could be the human resources or personnel director / manager, or you could be the owner, managing director or general manager.

Yes – PROCEED TO INTERVIEW – Q2

No

IF NO: please can you give me the contact details of the person with these responsibilities? INTERVIEWER CODE NAME AND TELEPHONE NUMBER AND THEN THANK AND CLOSE

Q2. Could you please tell me how many employees your organisation currently employs? That includes yourself and people doing work on other sites, but excludes the self employed, non-employee trainers, outside contractor/agency staff or any employees under 16.

ADD IF NECESSARY - By that I mean both full-time and part-time employees on your payroll (and not the full-time equivalent).

INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF ORGANISATION IS MULTI-NATIONAL, ASK FOR NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES IN GREAT BRITAIN.

INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF SOLE PRACTITIONER PLEASE SELECT 1.

CODE INTO FOLLOWING OPTIONS

INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF THE RESPONDENT ANSWERS 'ONE' OR 'TWO' PLEASE CONFIRM THAT THEY ARE REFERRING TO ACTUAL EMPLOYEES, NOT PARTNERS IN THE ORGANISATION, SELF EMPLOYED OR CONTRACT STAFF

0-1	THANK AND CLOSE
2-9	CONTINUE
10-49	CONTINUE
50-249	CONTINUE
250-499	CONTINUE
500-999	CONTINUE
1,000 – 4,999	CONTINUE
5,000 or more	CONTINUE

Q3. How well would you say you know Acas, the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, and the services it offers?

READ OUT. SINGLE CODE

Know very well

Know fairly well

Know a little

Heard of but not sure what they do

Never heard of

THANK AND CLOSE

Don't know

Q4. Can I just check which of the following best describes your role in the organisation? Your role... READ OUT. SINGLE CODE ONLY

...is entirely related to human resources issues

...is mostly related to human resources issues

...is partly related to human resources issues

...has little to do with human resources issues

...has no influence on human resources issues

ASK FOR REFERRAL

Don't know/refused ASK FOR REFERRAL

Q5. Could you please tell me how many employees work at your workplace? That includes yourself and people doing work on the same site as you, but excludes the self employed, non-employee trainers, outside contractor/agency staff or any employees under 16.

ADD IF NECESSARY - **By that I mean both full-time and part-time employees on your payroll (and not the full-time equivalent).**

INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF SOLE PRACTITIONER PLEASE SELECT 0.

CODE INTO FOLLOWING OPTIONS

INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF THE RESPONDENT ANSWERS 'ONE' OR 'TWO' PLEASE CONFIRM THAT THEY ARE REFERRING TO ACTUAL EMPLOYEES, NOT PARTNERS IN THE ORGANISATION, SELF EMPLOYED OR CONTRACT STAFF

1-4 CONTINUE

5-9 CONTINUE

10-49 CONTINUE

50-99 CONTINUE

100-249 CONTINUE

250-499 CONTINUE

500-999 CONTINUE

1,000 or more CONTINUE

Don't know THANK AND CLOSE

We would like to ask you some questions about the sources of information you use for employee relations information.

Q6. If you have an employment issue or dispute, where, if anywhere, do you go for advice outside your organisation? PROMPT: Where else?

UNPROMPTED. CODE ALL THAT APPLY OK

Lawyers

Accountants
Business Link
Management consultants
Online advice – websites/forums
CAB (Citizen's Advice Bureau)
Other workplace/employment relations training providers
Professional network/organization (e.g. CIPD)
Wikipedia
Acas (Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service)
Other (SPECIFY)
Don't know
Don't go for advice outside organisation

ASK ALL

Q7. Have you visited the Acas website in your capacity as someone with responsibility for HR issues in the last 12 months?

INTERVIEWER TO ADD IF NECESSARY: **This does not include seeking information or help for yourself as an employee, for example about your rights at work.**

DO NOT READ OUT. SINGLE CODE

Yes
No
Don't know

ALL WHO HAVE NOT USED THE ACAS WEBSITE (CODE 2 AT Q7)

Q8a. Why have you not visited the Acas website in the last 12 months?

UNPROMPTED. CODE ALL THAT APPLY

Don't know enough/anything about Acas
Not had an employment dispute or issue/no need to use
Tend to use a different service
Not aware Acas had a website
Bad experience of Acas website in the past (please specify)
Bad experience of other Acas services in the past (please specify)
Don't/tend not to use online employment relations advice/services
I have difficulty accessing websites (general)
I have difficulty accessing the Acas website (specifically)
Don't know
Other (please specify)

ALL WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY ACCESSING WEBSITES (CODES 8-9 AT Q8a)

Q8b. Could you please briefly explain in what ways you have difficulty accessing <TEXT SUB FROM Q8a the Acas website (CODE 9 AT Q8a)/websites (CODE 8 AT Q8a)>.

PLEASE WRITE IN

ALL WHO HAVE USED THE ACAS WEBSITE (CODE 1 AT Q7)

Q9. In general, how frequently, do you visit the Acas website in your professional role?

READ OUT. SINGLE CODE

- All or most days
- At least once a week
- At least once a month
- At least once every three months
- At least once every six months
- On one occasion only
- Don't know/can't remember

ALL WHO HAVE USED THE ACAS WEBSITE (CODE 1 AT Q7)

Q10. How many times have you visited the Acas website in your professional role in the last 12 months?

- 1
- 2-5
- 6-10
- 11-20
- 21-50
- 51-150
- 151 or more
- Don't know/can't remember

ALL WHO HAVE USED THE ACAS WEBSITE (CODE 1 AT Q7)

Q11. Which, if any, of the following sources helped you find www.acas.org.uk?

READ OUT. CODE ALL THAT APPLY CODE ALL THAT APPLY. RANDOMISE CODES 1-12

- Told by my friends/family
- Publication/Magazine
- Told by a colleague/someone at work
- Contact with an Acas advisor or other Acas service
- Advert or poster
- BIS (Department for Business, Innovation & Skills) website
- Local authority/ council website
- Direct.gov.uk (now replaced by GOV.UK)
- Business Link (now replaced by GOV.UK)
- GOV.UK
- Internet search engine (e.g. Google)
- Link/URL in email from Acas
- Other (write in)
- Don't know

ALL WHO HAVE USED THE ACAS WEBSITE (CODE 1 AT Q7)

Q12. Which, if any, of the following devices have you used to access the Acas website over the last 12 months?

READ OUT. CODE ALL THAT APPLY CODE ALL THAT APPLY. RANDOMISE CODES 1-3.

- Desktop or laptop computer

Using a smart/internet phone
Tablet computer e.g. iPad
Other (please specify)

ALL WHO HAVE USED THE ACAS WEBSITE (CODE 1 AT Q7)

Q13. Which, if any, of the following devices do you think you will use to access the Acas website in the next 12 months?

READ OUT. CODE ALL THAT APPLY. RANDOMISE CODES 1-3.

Desktop or laptop computer
Using a smart/internet phone
Tablet computer e.g. iPad
Other (please specify)

ASK ALL

Q14. Which, if any, of the following social media do you use in your professional life?

READ OUT. CODE ALL THAT APPLY

Twitter
Linked In
Facebook
Google+
Other (please specify)
None

Q15. Which, if any, of the following social media channels are you aware of?

READ OUT. CODE ALL THAT APPLY

Acas' Twitter
Acas' Linked In
Not aware of any
Don't know

Q16. Which, if any, of the following social media channels would you be likely to use to interact with Acas in the next 12 months?

Acas' Twitter
Acas' Linked In
None
Don't know

Reason for visit

ALL WHO HAVE USED THE ACAS WEBSITE (CODE 1 AT Q7)

Q17. Thinking about the last 12 months, for which of the following reasons have you visited the Acas website?

READ OUT. CODE ALL THAT APPLY

For general information about Acas and its services
For general guidance about employee relations
To seek advice or information on how to deal with a specific situation/problem at work
To prepare for a conciliation, mediation, arbitration or employment tribunal
To download an Acas guidance publication
For information about my local Acas office/branch
For information on or to book an Acas training course
To submit a query/request using the online form
To find out how to contact Acas
To download an Acas research publication
Just browsing the website
Other (write in)
Don't know

ALL WHO GAVE MORE THAN ONE REASON AT Q17

Q18. Thinking about your last visit to the Acas website, what was your main reason for visiting?

READ OUT ALL ANSWERS GIVEN AT Q17. SINGLE CODE. RANDOMISE

For general information about Acas and its services
For general guidance about employee relations
To seek advice or information on how to deal with a specific situation/problem at work
To prepare for a conciliation, mediation, arbitration or employment tribunal
To download an Acas publication
For information about my local Acas office/branch
For information on or to book an Acas training course
To submit a query/request using the online form
To find out how to contact Acas
To download an Acas research publication
Just browsing the website
Other (write in)
Don't know

ALL WHO HAVE USED THE ACAS WEBSITE (CODE 1 AT Q7)

Q19. Thinking about your last visit to the Acas website, please select from the list below which topics were the focus of your visit

READ OUT BOLD TEXT ONLY. CODE ALL THAT APPLY. UNBOLDED TEXT CAN BE USED FOR EXPLANATION IF NECESSARY.

Maternity, paternity and adoption (e.g. maternity rights and paternity rights, parental leave and leave relating to adoption)

Contracts (e.g. terms and conditions, notice period/pay, probation period and rights of casual/temporary/fixed-term workers)

Diversity and discrimination (e.g. race discrimination, sex discrimination, disability discrimination, sexual orientation discrimination, religion or belief discrimination and age discrimination)

Discipline, dismissal and grievance (e.g. discipline procedures, dismissal, grievance procedures and bullying/harassment)

Absence, sickness and stress (e.g. absence, sick pay and stress)

Family friendly policies (e.g. flexible working regulations, rights of part-time workers and time off for dependents)

Holidays and working time (e.g. holiday entitlement, working time regulations and bank/public holidays)

Redundancy, lay-offs and business transfers (e.g. redundancy/redundancy pay, lay-offs/short-time work and company takeover/merger)

Wages (including National Minimum Wage) (e.g. non payment/deduction of wage, National Minimum Wage and other wage issues)

Other (please specify)

Don't know/can't remember

ALL WHO HAVE USED THE ACAS WEBSITE (CODE 1 AT Q7)

Q20. In which of the following ways, if any, was the information you found on your last visit to the Acas website used?

READ OUT. CODE ALL THAT APPLY

For general information

To seek advice or information on how to deal with a specific situation/ problem at work

To provide information/advice to others on how to solve a problem at work

To self-train on HR/personnel matters

To help draw up/ amend a company policy

To reassure staff/senior management about a particular course of action

To hand out to members of staff

To hand out to members of the public

To answer queries from senior management

To answer queries from staff

To help review or revise a company policy

To train/educate staff with HR role/responsibility

Other (please specify)

Don't know

None of these

ALL WHO HAVE USED THE ACAS WEBSITE

Q21. Again, thinking about your most recent visit to the Acas website, how much of what you were looking for were you able to find?

READ OUT. SINGLE CODE

All that I was looking for

Some of what I was looking for

None of what I was looking for

Don't know

ALL THOSE WHO ANSWERED CODES 2 AND 3 AT Q21

Q21a. Please could you explain briefly what it was you were looking for and could not find?

PLEASE WRITE IN ANSWER IN FULL

ALL WHO FOUND AT LEAST SOME INFORMATION THEY WERE LOOKING FOR (CODES 1-2 AT q21)

Q22. Thinking about your most recent visit to the Acas website, to what extent was the information you found useful?

READ OUT. SINGLE CODE

Very useful
Fairly useful
Not very useful
Not at all useful
Don't know

ALL WHO DID NOT FIND THE INFORMATION USEFUL (CODES 3 AND 4 AT Q22)

Q22a. Why would you say that the information you found was not useful?

PLEASE WRITE IN ANSWER IN FULL

Website construction

ASK ALL WHO HAVE VISITED THE WEBSITE (CODE 1 AT Q7)

We would now like to ask you some more general questions about the Acas website. Please think about the Acas website overall when answering these questions.

Q23. Thinking about the website in general, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with each of the following aspects of the Acas website? Please tick one box only for each aspect.

READ OUT. SINGLE CODE EACH. ROTATE STATEMENTS. REVERSE SCALE 1-5.

Very satisfied
Fairly satisfied
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
Fairly dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied
Don't know/can't remember

Search facility
Design and layout
Quality of advice / information given
Clarity and style of writing

Q24. Which, if any, other websites or online sources of information have you used for employment relations or HR information and advice in the last 12 months?

UNPROMPTED. CODE ALL THAT APPLY

Croner.co.uk
HRzone.co.uk
Linked In
Business Link (now replaced by GOV.UK)
Direct.gov.uk (now replaced by GOV.UK)
GOV.UK
Managementtoday.co.uk
Peoplemanagement.co.uk
Personneltoday.com

XpertHR.co.uk
CAB (Citizen's Advice Bureau)
Professional network/organization (e.g. CIPD)
Wikipedia
Other (please specify)
Don't use any
Don't know

ASK ALL WHO HAVE VISITED ANOTHER ER WEBSITE (CODES 1-14 AT Q24)

Q25. Overall, how do you think the Acas website compares with other websites you have used for information about employment relations?

READ OUT. SINGLE CODE. REVERSE SCALE 1-5.

A lot better
A little better
About the same
A little worse
A lot worse
Don't know

Impressions of the ACAS website

ASK ALL WHO HAVE VISITED THE WEBSITE (CODE 1 AT Q7)

Q26. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Acas website?

READ OUT. SINGLE CODE EACH. ROTATE STATEMENTS. REVERSE SCALE 1-5.

Strongly agree
Tend to agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Tend to disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know

I trust the accuracy of the information on the Acas website

I consider the information on the Acas website to be impartial

I think that the information on the Acas website is up-to-date

I find the information on the Acas website provides enough depth

After visiting the Acas website, I feel more confident about decisions I take in my day-to-day job

ASK ALL WHO HAVE VISITED THE WEBSITE (CODE 1 AT Q7)

Q27. Which of the following statements most closely reflects your view about the Acas website?

READ OUT. SINGLE CODE. REVERSE SCALE 1-3.

The Acas website is designed primarily for employers

The Acas website is designed for both employers and employees
The Acas website is designed primarily for employees
Don't know

Q28. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the Acas website?

READ OUT. SINGLE CODE. REVERSE SCALE 1-5.

Very satisfied
Fairly satisfied
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
Fairly dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied
Don't know

Q29. What, if anything, do you think would improve the Acas website?

PLEASE WRITE IN ANSWER IN FULL

Q31. What, if anything, do you like the most about the Acas website?

PLEASE WRITE IN ANSWER IN FULL

Q32a. Have you downloaded any guidance publications or booklets from the Acas website?

Yes
No
Don't know

ASK ALL WHO HAVE DOWNLOADED PUBLICATIONS OR BOOKLETS (CODE 1 AT Q32a)

Q32b. Now, thinking specifically about the most recent guidance publication or booklet you have downloaded from the Acas website, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with each of the following aspects?

Ease of finding the publication
Ease of downloading the publication
Design and layout of the publication
Quality of advice/information given
Ease of understanding language/terminology

READ OUT. SINGLE CODE EACH. ROTATE STATEMENTS. REVERSE SCALE 1-5.

Very satisfied
Fairly satisfied
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
Fairly dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied
Don't know/not applicable

ASK ALL CODED 1 AT Q7

Q33. Now I want you to think more generally about all of the Acas information and guidance (including downloadable publications or booklets as well as other website guidance sections) you have accessed from the Acas website in the last 12 months. Which, if any, of the following, have you used this for?

PROMPTED LIST. CODE ALL THAT APPLY.

For general information
To seek advice or information on how to deal with a specific situation/ problem at work
To provide information/advice to others on how to solve a problem at work
To self-train on HR/personnel matters
To help draw up/ amend a company policy
To reassure staff/senior management about a particular course of action
To hand out to members of staff
To hand out to members of the public
To answer queries from senior management
To answer queries from staff
To help review or revise a company policy
To train/educate staff with HR role/responsibility
Other (please specify)
Don't know
None of these

Other sources of contact

ASK ALL

Q34. Which, if any, other Acas services have you used in the last 12 months, or you plan to use in the next 12 months?

READ OUT. CODE ALL THAT APPLY (*used=1; plan to use=2*)

Acas' Employment Rights Helpline
Collective conciliation for resolving an industrial dispute
Acas mediation to help resolve a dispute between individual workers
Acas open access training course for yourself or a member of staff
Acas' conciliation service for an Employment Tribunal case (either individual conciliation or Pre Claim Conciliation)
Bespoke Acas workplace training course delivered within your workplace
On-site joint management and employee Acas workplace project to improve relationships
Some other way
No other Acas services
Don't know/ can't remember

ALL THOSE CODED 1 AT Q7 WHO HAVE USED AT LEAST ONE SERVICE ASK ONLY FOR SERVICES MENTIONED

Q34a. And of these services, which, if any, have you used as a direct result of visiting the Acas website?

Acas' Employment Rights Helpline
Collective conciliation for resolving an industrial dispute
Acas mediation to help resolve a dispute between individual workers
Acas open access training course for yourself or a member of staff
Acas' conciliation service for an Employment Tribunal case (either individual conciliation or Pre Claim Conciliation)
Bespoke Acas workplace training course delivered within your workplace
On-site joint management and employee Acas workplace project to improve relationships
Some other way

No other Acas services
Don't know/ can't remember
(1=yes, 2=no, 3= don't know/can't remember)

Demographics
ASK ALL.

Q35. Do you work in the.....?

SINGLE CODE

Private sector
Public sector
Not-for-profit/voluntary sector
Other (please specify)
Don't know

Q36. What is the main business activity of your organisation?

PROBE FULLY. CODE BELOW.

Manufacturing
Electricity, gas & water supply
Construction
Wholesale and retail trade
Hotels and restaurants
Transport
Financial services
Other business services
Public authorities
Education
Health
Other organisations (SPECIFY)
Don't know/Refused

Q37. Can you confirm that your organisation is based in <INSERT REGION FROM SAMPLE>? READ OUT

IF RESPONDENT ANSWER IS NO PLEASE PROBE: **In what region is your enterprise based?** CODE INTO FOLLOWING OPTIONS

IF NECESSARY: **I mean the region where the largest number of your organisation's employees work.**

East Midlands
East of England
London
North East
North West
South East
South West
West Midlands
Yorkshire and Humber
Scotland
Wales
Don't know/refused/other

In order to make sure the Acas website provides a good service to all those who may need to use it, we would like to ask you some questions about yourself.

ASK ALL

Q38. How old are you?

SINGLE CODE. NO RESPONSE ALLOWED

Under 18
18-24
25-34
35-44
45 -54
55-64
65+

Q39. CODE GENDER. DO NOT READ OUT

SINGLE CODE.

Male
Female

Q40. Do you have any long-term illness, health problem or disability? By long-term we mean that it can be expected to last for more than a year

Yes
No
Prefer not to say

Q41. Can I just check, is English is your first language?

SINGLE CODE ONLY.

Yes
No
Don't know
Prefer not to say

Recontact question

ASK ALL WHO HAVE USED THE ACAS WEBSITE

Q42. Ipsos MORI will be conducting follow up research on this topic for Acas in the next three months and would like to talk to some respondents in more detail about some of the issues we have talked about today. Would you be willing for Ipsos MORI working on behalf of Acas to contact you about this research? INTERVIEWER NOTE: RESPONDENTS WILL ONLY BE RECONTACTED BY IPSOS MORI FOR THE PURPOSES OF WORK RELATED TO THIS RESEARCH AS A RESULT OF AGREEMENT. *SINGLE CODE ONLY*

Yes
No

**Acas website evaluation
Employee Topic guide**

Key Themes	Specific Question Areas	Timings (approximate)
General introductions	<p>Introduce self, Ipsos MORI</p> <p>Thank participants for agreeing to be interviewed; mention should take around 30 minutes and that we will send them £30 as a thank you for their time.</p> <p>Introduce today's topic</p> <p>"Today I'd like to talk about your experience of using the Acas website. I'm interested in knowing everything about your experience – how you came to the site, and how easy it was to navigate, as well as the usefulness of any information you took from it"</p> <p>Anonymity of respondents, confidentiality of responses and compliance with MRS (Market Research Society) code of conduct.</p> <p>Request permission to record interview for internal use</p>	5 mins
Background and first contact	<p>Firstly, please give me a little bit of background about your work/employment situation at the time you visited the Acas website.</p> <p>PROBE ON:</p> <p>Employment status, any problems faced. Note that this may be sensitive so stress anonymity.</p> <p>How well would you say you know Acas? What is your relationship with Acas? What are your perceptions/experiences of Acas?</p> <p>And how did you first come to use the Acas website?</p> <p>PROBE AS NECESSARY:</p>	5 mins

Key Themes	Specific Question Areas	Timings (approximate)
	<p>How did you hear about the Acas website?</p> <p>Was it easy to find?</p> <p>Which, if any, other Acas services have you used?</p> <p>What, if any, other sources of information on employment relations do you use?</p> <p>How do the other sources you have used compare with the Acas website?</p> <p>PROBE ON:</p> <p>Are they similar to the Acas website, or do they offer something else?</p> <p>And how frequently do you use the Acas website?</p> <p>PROBE: One-off employment issue or if more regular use – either as part of an ongoing problem or because of interest.</p> <p>Has using the website once prompted you to return to it on other occasions?</p>	
<p>Last experience of the website</p>	<p>What were you looking for the last time you visited the website?</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: If last visit was not significant, probe for last significant visit to the website.</p> <p>Specific information about a particular issue</p> <p>General information</p>	<p>10 mins</p>

Key Themes	Specific Question Areas	Timings (approximate)
	<p>PROBE IF NECESSAERY: What topic was this information on?</p> <p>Was this for you or for someone else? Who else?</p> <p>Can you talk me through your process for finding the information you were looking for?</p> <p>Which particular sections of the website did you use?</p> <p>PROMPT: For example the A-Z guidance section, or the tools and resources section</p> <p>Why did you use this section and not others? Did visiting one part of the website encourage you to go to other parts?</p> <p>What other sections of the website have you used?</p> <p>What did you do with the information that you found?</p> <p>PROBE FOR SPECIFIC DETAILS: Printed off specific information; used information in general; to inform further action; helped me feel more confident about my position</p> <p>Did you go on to use any other Acas services?</p> <p>If, so what services did you use? Were these different services or did you need further information in addition to that obtained from the website?</p> <p>How much did you trust the information you took from the Acas website?</p> <p>PROBE ON:</p> <p>Would you trust the information provided more or less if it came from another source?</p>	

Key Themes	Specific Question Areas	Timings (approximate)
	<p>What type of people do you think the information is aimed at?</p> <p>PROMPT (if necessary): For example, employers/employees, union/non-union members, men/women, older/younger workers etc</p> <p>Why/why not? Who did you feel it was aimed at?</p>	
<p>General perceptions of content and ease of navigation</p>	<p>Generally speaking, how useful did you find the Acas website?</p> <p>PROBE AS NECESSARY:</p> <p>Did you find everything you were looking for? Why/Why not?</p> <p>What would have made your experience better?</p> <p>How easy did you find navigating the Acas website?</p> <p>PROBE ON: Search function</p> <p>PROBE ON: Menu navigation</p> <p>Have you ever had issues with accessing any part of Acas' website or the website in general?</p> <p>PROBE FOR: Accessibility of website itself rather than browser issues (e.g. variable font sizes, simplified versions for slower connections)</p>	<p>5 mins</p>
<p>Views of online resources available through the Acas website</p>	<p>Have you downloaded any pdfs or viewed guidance pages?</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: If necessary: for example the A-Z guidance pages, or the topic-based advice and guidance pages (e.g. parents and carers, redundancy and notice) and Acas guidance</p>	<p>5 mins</p>

Key Themes	Specific Question Areas	Timings (approximate)
	<p>booklets downloadable in pdf format.</p> <p>What was the publication/guidance about? How easy/difficult was this? Why do you say that? Where you specifically looking to download a publication when you visited the website?</p> <p>How useful have they been for you?</p> <p>PROBE ON:</p> <p>Was there enough detail? Was the information presented clearly?</p> <p>IF DOWNLOADED – what did you think of the information you downloaded?</p> <p>What did you do with the information you obtained?</p> <p>PROBE FOR SPECIFIC DETAILS: Printed off specific information; used information in general; to inform further action; helped me feel more confident about my position</p> <p>What actions did you take as a result of using the Acas website?</p> <p>PROBE FOR SPECIFIC DETAILS: for example: to deal with a particular problem at work, to go on and utilise other Acas services, to discuss with other colleagues/managers/HR representatives at work</p>	
Wrap up	<p>Overall, what do you like most about the Acas website?</p> <p>And what would you most like to see changed about the Acas website?</p>	5 mins

Key Themes	Specific Question Areas	Timings (approximate)
	Do you have any further comments? Thank and close	

**Acas website evaluation
Employer Topic guide**

Key Themes	Specific Question Areas	Timings (approximate)
General introductions	<p>Introduce self, Ipsos MORI</p> <p>Thank participants for agreeing to be interviewed; mention should take around 30 minutes and that we will send them £50 as a thank you for their time.</p> <p>Introduce today's topic</p> <p>"Today I'd like to talk about your experience of using the Acas website. I'm interested in knowing everything about your experience, why it is that you use Acas, and the Acas website specifically, and how easy it was to navigate the site, as well as the usefulness of any information you took from it"</p> <p>Anonymity of respondents, confidentiality of responses and compliance with MRS (Market Research Society) code of conduct.</p> <p>Request permission to record interview for internal use</p>	5 mins
Background and general contact	<p>Firstly, please give me a little bit of background about your current job role.</p> <p>PROBE ON:</p> <p>Job title, length of time in role, what the business does, how many employees.</p> <p>How well would you say you know Acas? How did you first come across Acas? What is your relationship with Acas now? What are your perceptions/experiences of Acas?</p> <p>And how did you first come to use the Acas website?</p> <p>PROBE AS NECESSARY:</p> <p>How did you hear about the Acas website?</p>	10 mins

Key Themes	Specific Question Areas	Timings (approximate)
	<p>Was it easy to find?</p> <p>Which, if any, other Acas services have you used?</p> <p>Do you use the website in preference to other forms of contact with Acas? How does the website compare with other services they offer?</p> <p>What other sources of help or advice would you have considered if the Acas website did not exist? The Acas helpline? Other websites?</p> <p>What, if any, other sources of information on employment relations do you use in addition to the Acas website?</p> <p>How do the other sources you have used compare with the Acas website?</p> <p>PROBE ON:</p> <p>Are they similar to the Acas website, or do they offer something else?</p> <p>And how frequently do you use the Acas website in your professional role?</p> <p>PROBE: One-off employment issue or more regular use – either as part of an ongoing problem or because of interest.</p> <p>Has using the website once prompted you to return to it on other occasions?</p>	
Last experience of the	What were you looking for the last time you visited the website in your professional role?	10 mins

Key Themes	Specific Question Areas	Timings (approximate)
<p>website</p>	<p>MODERATOR NOTE: If last visit was not significant, probe for last significant visit to the website. Ensure that it is last significant, professional, visit.</p> <p>Specific information about a particular issue</p> <p>General information</p> <p>PROBE IF NECESSAERY: What topic was this information on?</p> <p>Was this for you or for someone else? Who else?</p> <p>Can you talk me through your process for finding the information you were looking for?</p> <p>Which particular sections of the website did you use?</p> <p>PROMPT: For example the A-Z guidance section, or the tools and resources section</p> <p>Why did you use this section and not others? Did visiting one part of the website encourage you to go to other parts?</p> <p>What other sections of the website have you used?</p> <p>What did you do with the information that you found?</p> <p>PROBE FOR SPECIFIC DETAILS: Printed off specific information; used information in general; to inform further action; helped me feel more confident about my position</p> <p>Did you go on to use any other Acas services as a result of your website visit?</p> <p>If, so what services did you use? Were these different services for a different problem or did you need further information in</p>	

Key Themes	Specific Question Areas	Timings (approximate)
	<p>addition to that obtained from the website?</p> <p>How much did you trust the information you took from the Acas website?</p> <p>PROBE ON:</p> <p>Would you trust the information provided more or less if it came from another source?</p> <p>What type of people do you think the information is aimed at?</p> <p>PROMPT (if necessary): For example, employers/employees, union/non-union members, men/women, older/younger workers etc</p> <p>Why/why not? Who did you feel it was aimed at?</p>	
<p>General perceptions of content and ease of navigation</p>	<p>Generally speaking, how useful did you find the Acas website?</p> <p>PROBE AS NECESSARY:</p> <p>Did you find everything you were looking for? Why/Why not? If not, what was it you were looking for?</p> <p>What would have made your experience better?</p> <p>How easy did you find navigating the Acas website?</p> <p>PROBE ON: Search function</p> <p>PROBE ON: Menu navigation</p> <p>Have you ever had issues with accessing any part of Acas'</p>	<p>5 mins</p>

Key Themes	Specific Question Areas	Timings (approximate)
	<p>website or the website in general?</p> <p>PROBE FOR: Accessibility of website itself rather than browser issues (e.g. variable font sizes, simplified versions for slower connections)</p> <p>Do you think the website covers some topics better than others? If so, which topics? Why/why not?</p> <p>Are there any topics you need/want that it doesn't cover?</p> <p>Thinking about the different sections of the website (such as the A-Z guidance or tools and resources) are there some sections you find more useful than others? If so, which? Why/why not?</p>	
<p>Views of online resources available through the Acas website</p>	<p>Have you downloaded any guidance pdfs or viewed guidance pages?</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: If necessary: for example the A-Z guidance pages, or the topic-based advice and guidance pages (e.g. parents and carers, redundancy and notice) and Acas guidance booklets downloadable in pdf format.</p> <p>What was the publication/guidance about? How easy/difficult was this? Why do you say that? Where you specifically looking to download a publication when you visited the website?</p> <p>How useful have they been for you?</p> <p>PROBE ON:</p>	<p>5 mins</p>

Key Themes	Specific Question Areas	Timings (approximate)
	<p>Was there enough detail? Was the information presented clearly?</p> <p>IF DOWNLOADED – what did you think of the information you downloaded?</p> <p>What did you do with the information you obtained?</p> <p>PROBE FOR SPECIFIC DETAILS: Printed off specific information; used information in general; to inform further action; helped me feel more confident about my position</p> <p>What actions did you take as a result of using the Acas website?</p> <p>PROBE FOR SPECIFIC DETAILS: for example: to deal with a particular problem at work, to go on and utilise other Acas services, to discuss with other colleagues/managers/HR representatives at work</p> <p>Were there any outcomes from these actions that could be partly attributed to the Acas website – for example a) lower absence rates b) higher or lower discipline and grievance cases c) lower employment tribunal cases d) increase in staff numbers? If so, to what extent did the website play a part in this positive outcome?</p>	
Wrap up	<p>Overall, what do you like most about the Acas website?</p> <p>And what would you most like to see changed about the Acas website?</p> <p>Do you have any further comments?</p> <p>Thank and close</p>	5 mins

