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Acas digital advice evaluation 2018

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Alistair Kuechel, Matt Barnes, Siv Svanaes, Helen Rossiter
and Sam Whittaker

IFF Research

December 2018



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Acas Digital Advice Evaluation 2018

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Helen Rossiter and Sam Whittaker**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction and background

Acas (the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) provides a comprehensive range of free and impartial employment relations advice for employers and employees via two main channels: its helpline (telephone advice) and website (digital advice). This report concerns the latter. Previous research has been conducted by Acas to evaluate its website (2013) and helpline (2014), whereas this report describes the findings of the first dedicated evaluation of Acas digital advice (separate from its website as a whole). In addition to evaluating the outcomes and effectiveness of Acas digital advice for its users, the study sought to map user journeys, understand the differences between user groups and to create a series of baseline measures to support future evaluation. At the time of this research, Acas had begun the process of building a new, more straightforward and easily navigable website, in line with the Government Digital Strategy.

In order to obtain sample for this research, a 'pop-up' was set-up on the advice pages of the Acas website that invited users to opt-in to the research by providing contact details. A total of 7,468 users opted in to the survey and provided their contact details between 12 March and 18 April 2018. Between 19 March and 8 May 2018, 3,581 interviews were completed, providing a response rate of 48 per cent of those who had given their details to be contacted. These interviews included 2,498 online responses and 1,083 telephone interviews.

Profile of Acas digital advice users

The survey achieved a relatively even split of employer-side and employee-side survey respondents. Just under half (48 per cent) were employer-side, including those using Acas digital advice in their role as a line manager, HR professional or business owner; a similar proportion (46 per cent) were employee-side users. This differs from the observed profile in previous evaluations of the Acas helpline, where a markedly higher proportion of users were employees.

Most users had visited the advice pages with a specific workplace query that they wanted to find the answer to (64 per cent), while just under a third of users (30 per cent) had wanted to find information about a particular topic more generally. However, there were differences between the two main user groups, with employee-side users being significantly more likely to have visited the advice pages with a specific workplace query in mind (76 per cent compared with 56 per cent of employer-side users). By contrast, employer-side users were more likely to have visited the advice pages for more general information about a topic (36 per cent compared with 19 per cent of employee-side users).

Users reported looking for advice on a wide range of employment relations topics, the most commonly mentioned being discipline, dismissal and grievance (37 per cent), followed by contracts and working arrangements (34 per cent) absence, sickness, health and well-being (25 per cent). Topics mentioned less frequently were managing staff (10 per cent) and family friendly and parental rights (nine per cent). Web analytics show a broad alignment between the spread of individual pages actually viewed around the sampling period and the distribution of topic areas selected by respondents in the survey, suggesting that the achieved sample can be considered broadly representative in this regard.

Employee-side users were more likely than employer-side users to seek advice on discipline, dismissal and grievance (45 per cent) whereas employer-side users were more likely to be looking for advice on absence, sickness, health and well-being (27 per cent).

The reason most commonly given for using Acas digital advice was 'to solve a problem at work' (59 per cent), followed by those seeking reassurance that they had 'taken the right course of action' (43 per cent). Employee-side users were more likely to have visited these pages in order to solve a problem at work (72 per cent compared with 52 per cent of employer-side), whereas employer-side users were more likely to use the pages for post hoc reassurance (46 per cent compared with 43 per cent of employee-side users).

The majority of all users (77 per cent) had used the Acas website before; this was more likely to be the case amongst employer-side users than employee-side users (91 per cent compared with 61 per cent).

User journeys towards Acas digital advice

More than half of all users (58 per cent) reported having used another source of advice before reaching Acas, the most common starting point being Gov.uk (consulted first by 28 per cent of all users). However, employer-side users were significantly more likely than their employee-side counterparts to have gone directly to Acas advice pages (46 per cent compared with 39 per cent).

Over half of all users (54 per cent) arrived at the Acas advice pages from another Acas source, either having been directed there by an Acas email newsletter, a member of Acas staff or, most commonly (41 per cent), through browsing / searching elsewhere on the Acas website. Employer-side users were more likely to have reached the advice pages through an Acas source (66 per cent compared with 43 per cent of employee-side users).

The majority of users accessed Acas digital advice through a work or personal computer (81 per cent). Eleven per cent did so using a mobile phone and eight per cent accessed the pages through a tablet. Employee-side users were significantly more likely to have accessed the advice pages through a mobile/tablet (34 per cent compared with four per cent of employer-side users). However, web analytics for the entire Acas website during the sample frame building period show a more balanced picture (56 per cent desktop, 37 per cent mobile, 8 per cent tablet), suggesting an under representation of mobile users in the survey.

A slight majority of respondents (54 per cent) confirmed not having used any other Acas tools to help them resolve the main topic that they were searching for advice on. The Acas resources that were most often used in combination with digital advice pages were its automated FAQ tool 'Helpline Online' (used by 22 per cent) and the Acas telephone Helpline (used by 19 per cent). Of the latter, a larger proportion of users went on to call the helpline *after* accessing Acas digital advice (14 per cent of all users) than called beforehand (three per cent; with a further three per cent calling before *and* after). Timing aside, employee-side users were significantly more likely to have called the Acas helpline at any point (29 per cent compared with 11 per cent of employer side users).

Digital advice users who subsequently called the helpline most commonly did so either because they wanted to confirm the information (48 per cent of this sub-group), because they judged that not enough detail was provided by the digital advice (45 per cent) or simply because they could not find the information/advice that they had been seeking on the Acas website (39 per cent).

User assessments of Acas digital advice

The majority of users who agreed to take part in this survey were very positive about Acas digital advice in terms of:

- ***The extent to which it helped them to solve a problem:*** 86 per cent of users looking to solve a problem reported that the advice had achieved this (to varying extents);
- ***The extent to which it reassured them of the right course of action:*** 96 per cent of users looking for reassurance judged that the advice had achieved this (to varying extents);
- ***Ease of access¹:*** 82 per cent of all users found accessing advice on the Acas website to be easy overall. This comprised 43 per cent of users who found it *very* easy and 39 per cent who found it *fairly* easy to access Acas digital advice; and
- ***Overall satisfaction:*** 86 per cent of all users were satisfied, with 52 per cent being *very* satisfied (and only a minority, 6 per cent, dissatisfied).

Taken as a proportion of *all users* (i.e. the total survey population), over two-thirds (68 per cent) stated that Acas digital advice had helped them solve a problem at work or reassured them that they have taken the right course of action (a key performance measure for Acas digital advice).

Across all four key measures listed above, employer-side users were generally more positive than employee-side users. For example, 90 per cent of employer-side users were satisfied overall compared with 81 per cent of employee-side users.

Across several of these measures, users who read the digital advice using a desktop computer were significantly more likely to be positive about it than users who did so using a mobile phone or tablet – although this finding is to some extent confounded by the fact that the majority of all those using mobile phones/tablets were employee-side users who, as already noted, were less satisfied overall. Moreover, further analysis, controlling for device type, found that long-form advice added intrinsic value for users over short-form advice (that is, aside from device used). For instance, computer users who read long-form advice were significantly more likely to be satisfied with the advice that they read (92 per cent) than those who read short-form advice on the computer (87 per cent).

Several significant differences by advice topic were also in evidence. For instance those seeking advice about managing staff were significantly more likely than other users to be satisfied with the digital advice they looked at. By contrast, users seeking advice about discipline, dismissal and grievance were significantly more likely to be dissatisfied with the advice than other users. These were also topics more likely to be accessed by employer-side and employee-side users, respectively.

In the context of overall positive feedback, the large majority of all users:

- ***Were likely to recommend the advice to another person or colleague:*** 95 per cent of all users; and
- ***Were likely to use the advice again:*** again, 95 per cent of all users.

¹ N.B. Using a sampling 'pop-up' with a 30 second trigger will unavoidably have excluded from the study any person who was unable to satisfactorily locate digital advice during the sample-frame building period.

The majority of users also judged that the length of the digital advice offered by Acas had been 'about right' (81 per cent). For the minority of users who felt that the length of advice had *not* been appropriate, most believed that it was too short (11 per cent), rather than too long (three per cent). Those users who also called the Acas helpline in addition to reading digital advice were significantly less likely to feel that the length of the latter had been appropriate (68 per cent) and these users were particularly likely to feel that the advice was too brief (16 per cent).

Wider engagement with Acas digital advice and actions prompted

Users reported having engaged with Acas digital advice in a number of different ways. Most respondents (95 per cent) confirmed having read Acas digital advice on-screen; 65 per cent did so *thoroughly* whereas 33 per cent of users *skim-read* the information on-screen. Elsewhere, 23 per cent of users reported having downloaded or saved the advice as a PDF; 16 per cent printed advice directly from the webpage and 11 per cent printed a PDF. Other, less common, interactions included copying and pasting the text into a document (nine per cent), bookmarking the page in a browser (nine per cent) and emailing the page (six per cent).

Most users (59 per cent) read Acas digital advice in a single sitting, rather than spread across multiple sittings (39 per cent). The most common amount of time spent reading the advice was 10 to 30 minutes (52 per cent), with 79 per cent of users in all having spent 10 minutes or longer (17 per cent spent between 30 minutes and an hour on the website, and nine per cent of users spent over an hour).

Forty-six per cent of all users confirmed having shared the advice that they looked at with somebody else. Employer-side users were significantly more likely to do this (55 per cent) than employee-side users (37 per cent). Acas digital advice was shared with a variety of individuals. Most commonly, the information was shared with managers: 37 per cent of those who passed information on reported having shared it with senior managers and a further 26 per cent having shared it with their own line manager.

Most users (78%) took some form of action after reading Acas digital advice; only 22 per cent indicated that they took no further action whatsoever. The most common action taken was discussing the problem with management (42 per cent), followed by applying or implementing changes (24 per cent) and seeking advice or assistance from another source (23 per cent). Less common actions were for users to re-visit the Acas website (16 per cent) and for employees to submit a grievance to their employer (10 per cent).

All users were asked whether, as a result of their having referred to the Acas advice, any existing policies at their workplace had been or would be updated or improved, or whether any new policies had been or would be implemented. Taken as a proportion of *all users* (i.e. the total survey population), 43 per cent confirmed that the advice had helped them to amend *or* introduce a policy (a key performance measure for Acas digital advice). As might be expected, it was more common for users to have *updated* existing policies than implemented (or set in train plans to implement) entirely new policies; moreover, it was significantly more likely for employer-side users to confirm having done so (56 per cent updated a policy; 47 per cent implement a new one).

Prior to visiting the Acas website, the vast majority of users had not interacted with the Employment Tribunals process in any sense. Just seven per cent of employer-side users referred to Acas advice in response to concerns that one of their employees may consider making a claim to the Employment Tribunal. Similarly, only four per cent of employee-side users confirmed having made an Early Conciliation notification/ Employment Tribunal claim

before referring to Acas digital advice. A further eight per cent of employee-side users confirmed having made an EC notification/EC claim *after* consulting the Acas digital advice, with a further 28 per cent of employee-side users indicating that they had future plans to do so.

Where users looked for information elsewhere after reading Acas digital advice, most commonly this was to confirm the information that they had read on the Acas website (53 per cent). Furthermore, half of users who sought advice elsewhere explained that they had always planned to use other sources in combination with Acas digital advice (48 per cent). Less positively, two-fifths of users (41 per cent) reported looking elsewhere because they did not feel that the Acas digital advice had provided enough detail and 29 per cent could not locate the information that they were looking for on the Acas website.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and objectives

Acas (the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) provides a comprehensive range of free and impartial employment relations advice for employers and employees. It does this through two main channels; via its telephone helpline and digital advice on its website. Both provide information and advice to employees, employers, their representatives and a range of other stakeholders, notably HR professionals.

At the time of this research (2018), Acas had begun the process of building a new website, in line with the Government Digital Strategy, which followed the 2012 Budget commitment to digital services being the 'default' and has been developed across government and associated bodies such as Acas. The Government Digital Strategy seeks to make digital services straightforward and easy to navigate so that they are the preferred channel for users.

Conversely, digital advice on the *Acas current* website – the focus of this evaluation – is centred on an 'A-Z' page which presents an alphabetised menu of employment relations subjects where Acas advice is available (e.g. 'Redundancy', 'National Minimum Wage', 'Discipline & grievances at work', 'TUPE', 'Holidays' etc.). Each headline subject leads through to digital advice on that specific topic, presented as 'short form' advice on the website itself in HTML. In many cases, more in-depth advice can be downloaded from the page in the form of a PDF guide.

Previous research has been conducted by Acas to evaluate its written guidance and publications (in 2010, when hard copy written guidance, distributed by post, comprised a sizeable proportion of guidance requested), website (in 2013, focussing on user experiences of the website in general, rather than guidance in particular) and telephone helpline (most recently in 2014). This is the first targeted evaluation of digital advice contained on the website. It did not seek to evaluate the website as a whole, nor wider advisory content hosted on the Acas website (e.g. Helpline Online, E-Learning and Tools & Templates, none of which fall within the scope of this study):

The key objectives of this research were to:

- Evaluate short and long-form written digital advice on the Acas website (including assessment of user motivations, ease of access, satisfaction and perceptions of usefulness, actions prompted etc.)
- Map end-to-end user journeys of Acas online content, to support more informed estimates regarding how users engage with multiple Acas digital services in relation to single issues
- Understand the differences between different users of the website, in particular employers and employees with different personal and organisational characteristics (notably user age and enterprise size)
- Create a series of future baseline measures to support future evaluation of Acas' new website

1.2 Methodology and response rate

In order to obtain sample for this research, a 'pop-up' survey invite was set up on the advice pages of the Acas website that invited users to opt-in to the research by providing contact details.

This 'pop-up' appeared for all users that remained on the A-Z contents page or any of the in-scope guidance pages for a period of 30 seconds. The 'pop-up' briefly introduced the survey and provided a form for users to fill in their contact details. This approach was designed in order to access users of the digital advice on the Acas website while causing the minimum possible disruption to their user experience and journey.

This process collected a total of 7,468 users that opted-in to the survey and provided their contact details between 12 March and 18 April 2018. In order to ascertain the opt-in rate, it is first necessary to estimate the number of users who viewed advice pages during this period: the total number of users who visited the entire Acas website during this date range was 877,283²; of which 58.5% can be estimated to have viewed in-scope 'advice' pages, giving a population of 509,701³. Dividing this figure by the number of times the average user visited the website across the period (1.51) gives the number of users exposed to the invite. Using this proxy, a total of 337,551 were shown the pop-up, demonstrating an opt-in rate of 2.21 per cent. This estimate is likely to be a considerable underestimate for reasons noted in the footnotes below, and also since it fails to account for the fact that pop-ups were not triggered on page visits less than 30 seconds.

Mainstage fieldwork began 19 March and closed 8 May 2018. Users were initially invited to take part in the survey online, before being contacted over the phone one week after their initial invite to complete the survey online. Users were grouped into batches to ensure that all of the sample was contacted an equal number of times and in an even and consistent way. All email invites were sent to each user an equal number of times and no user was given priority over any other. Over the fieldwork period, 3,581 interviews were completed, providing a response rate of 48 per cent. These interviews broke down to include 2,498 online responses to the survey and 1,083 telephone interviews.

1.3 Sample representativeness

It is important to acknowledge that the lack of any comprehensive sample frame and hence the use of a 'pop-up' with a 30 second trigger unavoidably biases the achieved sample to some degree, since it excludes from the parameters of the study any person who was unable to satisfactorily locate advice during the sample-frame building period. By definition, any person who failed to navigate to the digital advice they were seeking will not have activated the pop-up and hence could not be invited to take part in the study. This is particularly relevant when considering results that relate to navigability and ease of access since all those answering *were able* to access digital advice.

Notwithstanding the lack of a sample frame against which to assess the representativeness of our achieved sample, it is nevertheless possible to make some indicative comparisons with web analytics that are used to track and report traffic to the Acas website, restricting our attention to analytics for the sample-frame building timeframe.

² Based on unique devices visiting the website, hence likely to be an overestimate of the number of individuals and, accordingly, likely to ultimately result in an underestimated opt-in rate.

³ In fact, 58.5% of Acas desktop site users viewed advice pages during 12 March – 18 April 2018. This is based on the number of desktop site users who viewed a page with 'advice' in the page title during their session, which is likely to result in an underestimate. Equivalent mobile site data is unavailable, so the calculation necessarily assumes equivalence across platforms.

- Seventy per cent of the 3,581 digital advice users surveyed were female and 29 per cent were male. By comparison, web analytics data show a somewhat more even gender balance (56 per cent female, 44 per cent male).
- In terms of age, 52 per cent of those surveyed were 35-54, 38 per cent were 55+ and just six per cent were aged 18-34. This suggests an over-representation of older users compared to web analytics, which show that 46 per cent of users of the website were aged 35-54, 14 per cent 55+ and 40 per cent were aged 18-34.
- Ninety six per cent of those surveyed confirmed that English was their first or main language, aligning closely to the 97 per cent whose computer language settings were shown by web analytics to have been set to English.

It should be noted that these discrepancies between results from our survey and web analytics may in part reflect the fact that the latter relate to the *entire* Acas website rather than the specific digital advice pages at issue, making the comparison a rather blunt one.

1.4 Terminology and reporting conventions

For the purposes of analysis users of the Acas website have been categorised into the following sub-groups:

- **Employer-side users:** respondents who identified themselves as looking for advice either in their role as a 'line manager', 'HR professional', 'business owner / senior manager' or as an 'outside representative looking for advice on behalf of an employer'.
- **Employee-side users:** respondents who have identified themselves as looking for advice either as an 'employee / worker', 'a former employee / worker', or 'on behalf of an employee / worker'.

1.5 Approach to analysis

All the results that follow have been significance tested (using T-tests). Significance testing is used to analyse the margin of error for each subgroup to help determine the degree of confidence with which one can assert that any differences are genuine and not due to chance. Throughout the report, where differences in findings between sub-groups are reported, these are statistically significant at the 95 per cent confidence level unless otherwise stated.

All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. Where the sum of percentages exceeds 100 per cent on any single response questions, this is due to rounding.

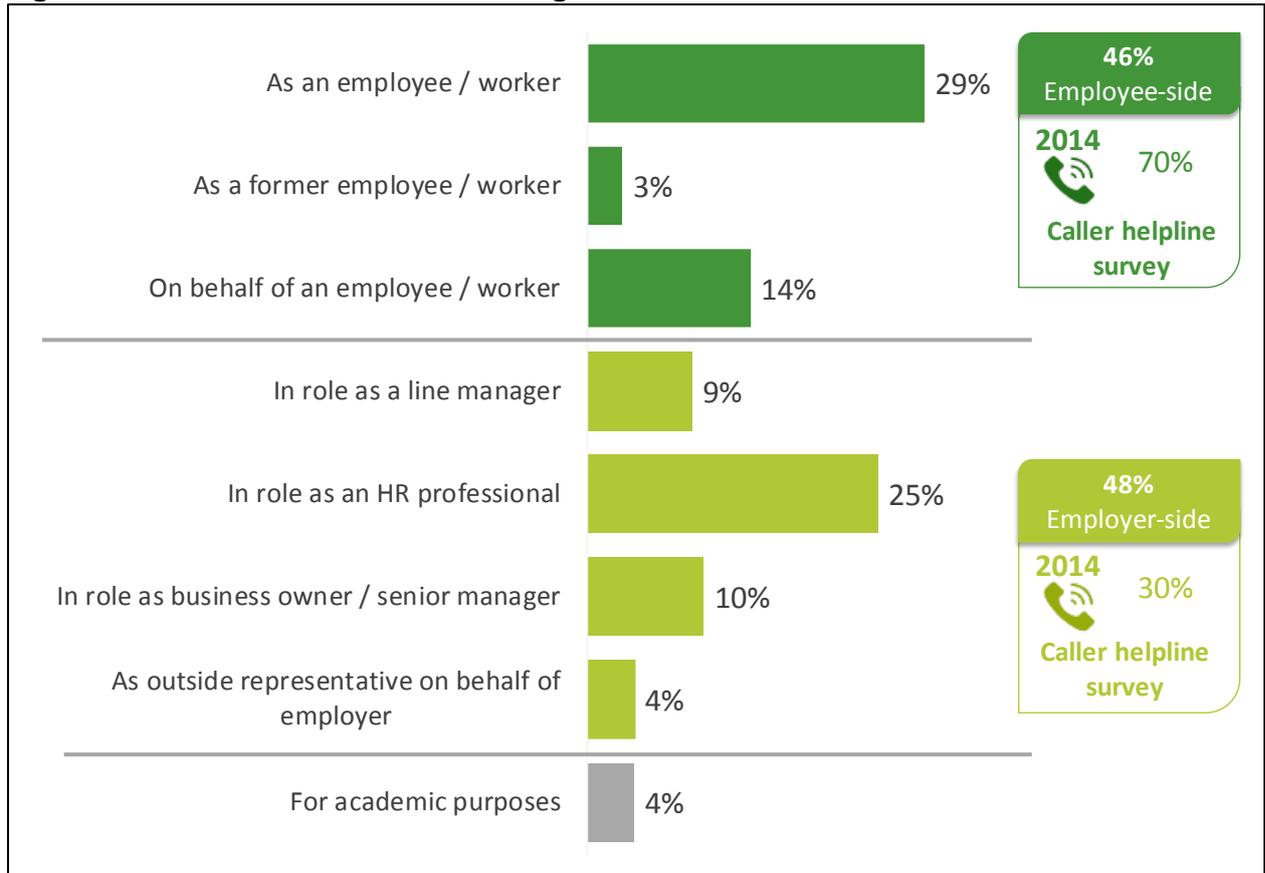
Where comparisons are made with previous Acas surveys, such as the 2014 telephone helpline survey and the 2010 written guidance evaluation, it should be noted that the mode of data collection has changed from a paper survey or telephone survey to a methodology that includes online and telephone elements. However, consistency has been preserved where possible, for example, where answer options were listed on a paper survey, they were read out over the phone or presented to users on screen.

2. PROFILE OF USERS AND REASONS FOR USING ACAS DIGITAL ADVICE

2.1 Users of Acas digital advice

There was a relatively even distribution of users between employer-side and employee-side. Just under half (48 per cent) were employer-side, including in a role as a line manager, HR professional or business owner. Forty six per cent were employee-side users. This is further broken down in figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1 Profile of users of Acas digital advice



Q: A3. And in what role/ capacity were you looking for information on the Acas website...? Base: All (3,581).

There was a spread of job roles among employer-side users, with 'HR professional' being the most frequently cited role in which these users were looking for advice (25 per cent of all employer-side users). This was followed by one-in-ten using Acas digital advice in their role as a business owner or senior manager (10 per cent) and a similar proportion in their role as a line manager (nine per cent).

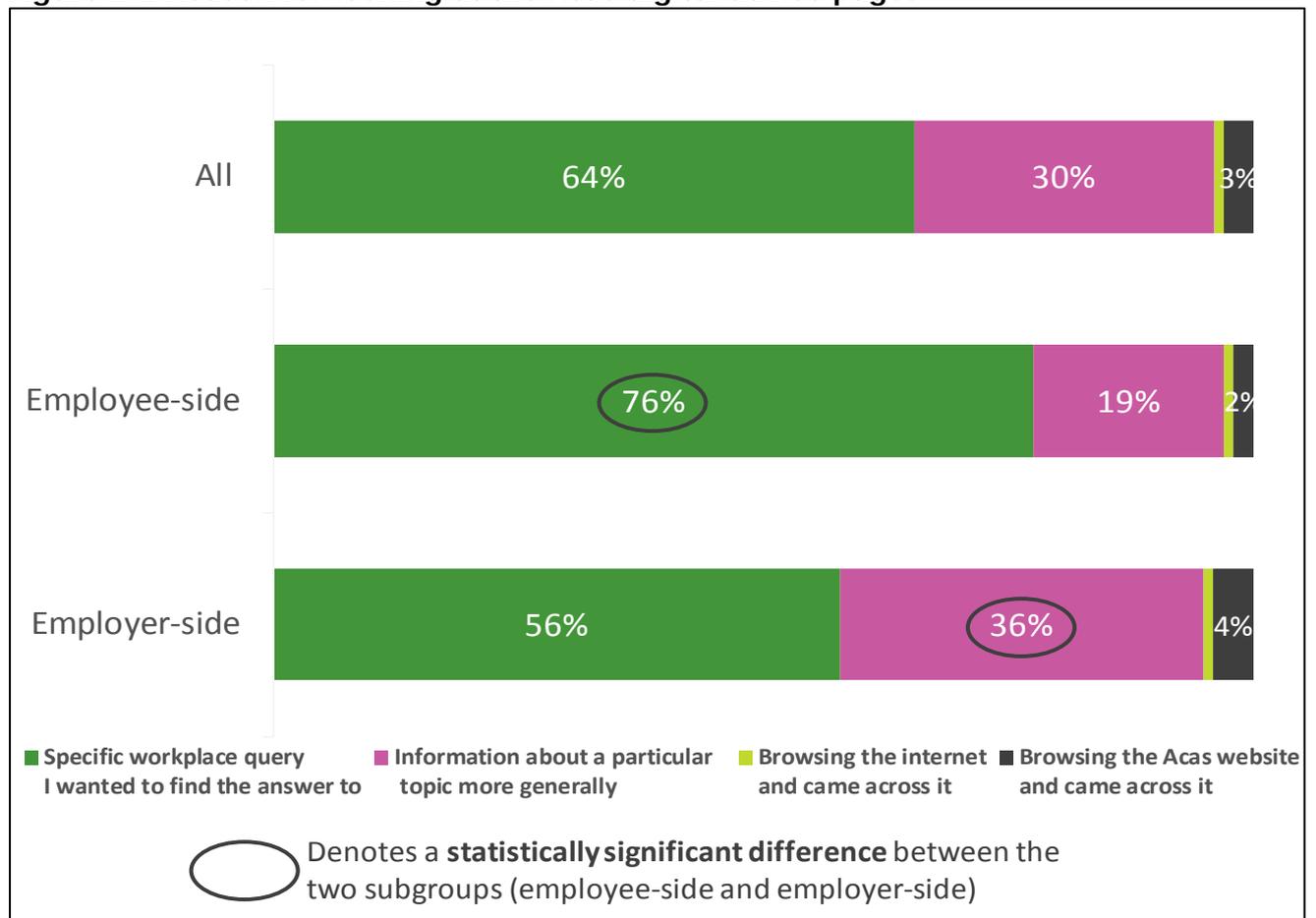
This profile of users differed substantially from the profile of callers in the 2014 helpline survey, with a much larger proportion of digital advice users falling into the employer-side category than in the 2014 helpline survey, perhaps indicative of a mode preference among employers for web-based, rather than telephone-based, Acas advice.

Almost eight in ten (79 per cent) digital advice users were visiting the website on their own behalf. By comparison, in the 2014 caller helpline survey, 87 per cent of callers had been calling on their own behalf.

2.2 Reason for looking at Acas digital advice

Users tended to have visited the Acas digital advice pages with a specific workplace query that they wanted to find the answer to (64 per cent of all users). A smaller proportion (30 per cent) had visited the advice pages to get information about a particular topic more generally. A minority (four per cent) were browsing the internet or Acas website and came across the advice pages without having sought out a particular topic or query. This is illustrated in figure 2.2 below.

Figure 2.2 Reason for looking at the Acas digital advice pages



Q: A1. When you visited the Acas website on [DATE], which of the following best describes your reason for looking at its digital advice...? Base: All (3,581), employee-side (1,659), employer-side (1,717).

Both employee-side and employer-side users most commonly cited that they visited the website with a specific workplace query they wanted to find the answer to. However, there were differences between the two user groups; employee-side users were more likely to have visited the advice pages with a specific workplace query that they wanted to find the answer to (76 per cent compared with 56 per cent of employer-side users). By contrast, employer-side users were more likely than to have visited the advice pages for information about a particular topic more generally (36 per cent compared with 19 per cent of employee-side users). Furthermore, those visiting the advice pages on behalf of a third party were more likely to have had a specific workplace query than those visiting on their own behalf (67 per cent compared with 63 per cent).

Within employer-side users, some roles were more likely to have had a specific workplace query than others. Those in their role as a HR professional (57 per cent), business owner or senior manager (56 per cent) or as an employer representative (64 per cent) were more likely than those visiting as a line manager (49 per cent) to have a specific workplace query.

Certain topics were more likely to be associated with a *specific* workplace query; those looking for information on *holidays and working time* (75 per cent), *discipline, dismissal and grievance* (71 per cent), and *contracts and working arrangements* (69 per cent) were more likely to be looking for an answer to a specific workplace query. Whereas, users looking for information on topics including *managing staff* (48 per cent); and *diversity, equality and discrimination* (38 per cent); were more likely to be looking for information about a particular topic more generally (compared with 30 per cent overall).

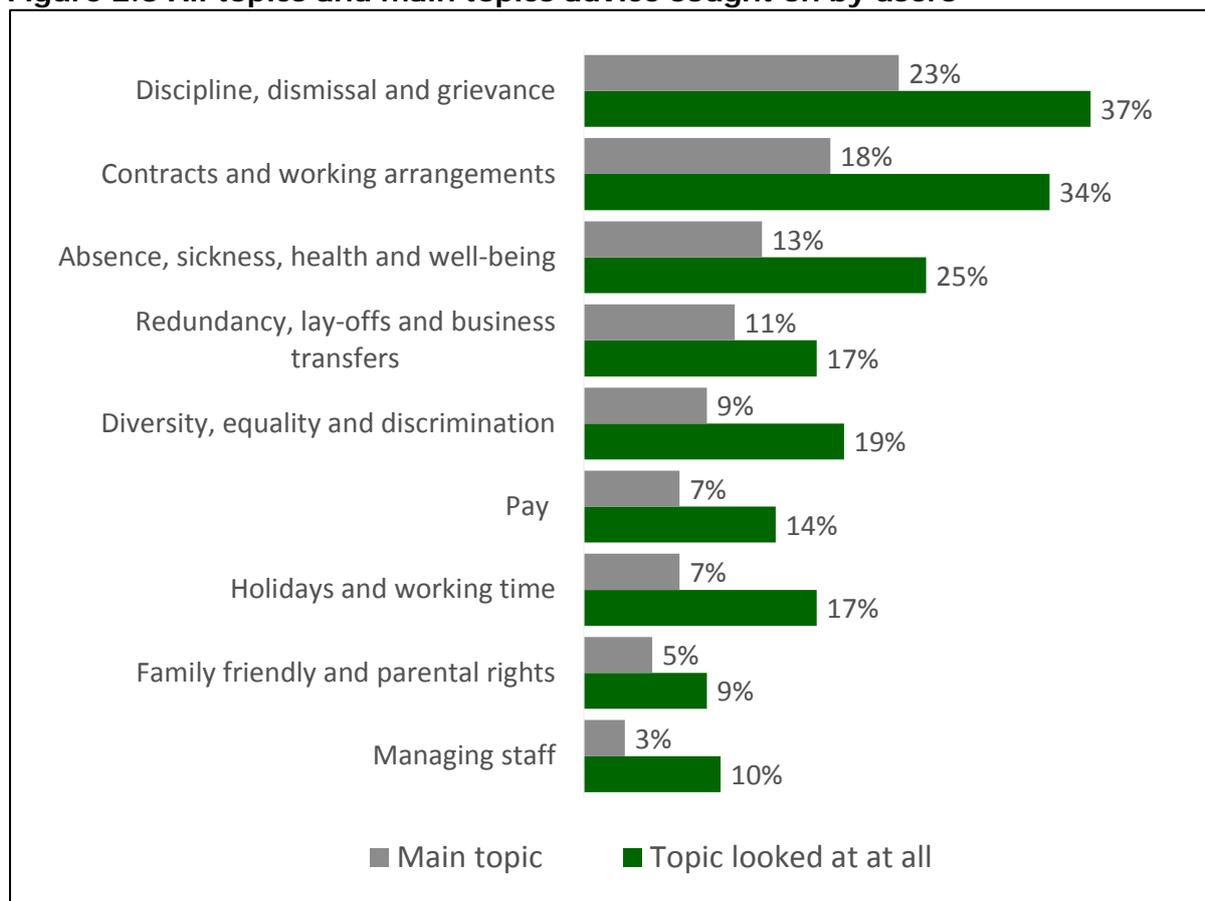
Users who accessed the advice pages via a mobile or tablet were more likely to have had a specific workplace query (74 per cent compared with 61 per cent of those that used a desktop computer). However, this is likely to be because the majority of mobile/tablet users were employees (who were the most likely to have had a specific workplace query).

2.3 Topics of Acas digital advice

Acas digital advice is presented across approximately 150 specific topic areas, presented on the Acas website in the form of an 'A to Z' list. For the purposes of analysis, these topic areas were synthesised into nine overarching topic areas (which are shown in figure 2.3 overleaf). Users who completed the survey indicated all of the topic areas they looked for information on, as well as the main topic.

The most common topic which users looked for advice on was *discipline, dismissal and grievance* (37 per cent), followed by *contracts and working arrangements* (34 per cent) and *absence, sickness, health and well-being* (25 per cent). Topics mentioned less frequently were *family friendly and parental rights* (nine per cent) and *managing staff* (10 per cent). Figure 2.3 below breaks this down in more detail, along with the main topic they looked for advice on.

Figure 2.3 All topics and main topics advice sought on by users

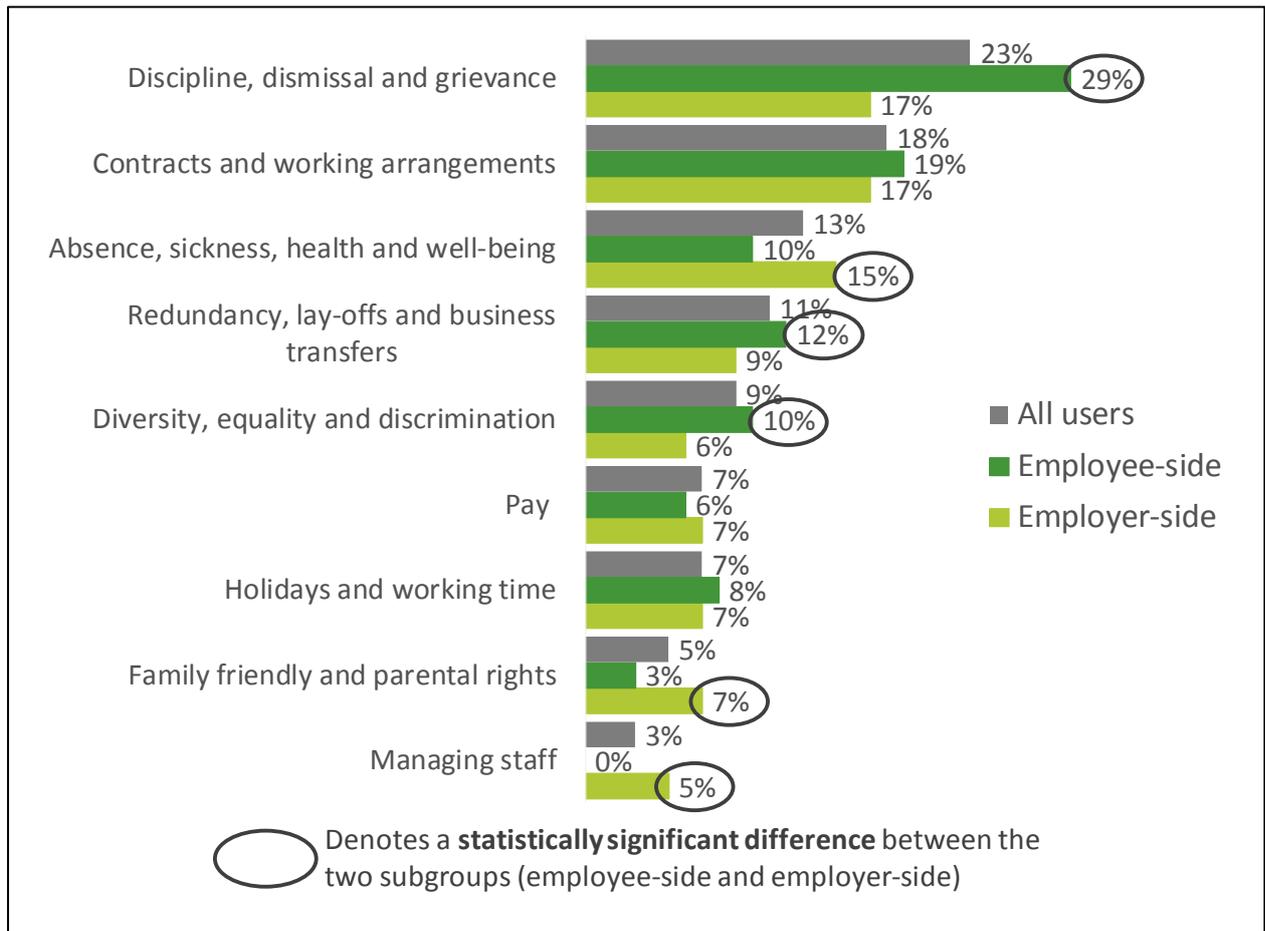


Q: A2a/A2b. When you visited the Acas website on [INSERT DATE], a) Which of the following topics did you look for advice on? b) And of these topics, which would you say was the main topic you looked for advice on? Base: All (3,581).

As a point of reference, it is possible to back code the c.150 individual advice pages into the same code frame that was presented to survey respondents (illustrated in Fig 2.3). We can then compare the aggregate number of page views from Acas web analytics for the period March-April 2018 to the spread of topics selected by users in the survey. The results are necessarily approximate but serve as a guide to the representativeness of the survey in respect of advice topic. Here, a broad alignment between the two sets of data is in evidence; for instance 'Discipline and Grievance' emerges as the most common topic in both cases; similarly 'Managing staff', 'Family friendly and parental rights', 'Holidays and working time' were the three least common topics according to aggregated analytics (again, mirroring the spread of survey responses). However, 'Pay' and 'Diversity, equality and discrimination' are found to be somewhat underrepresented in the survey and 'Contracts' and 'Absence' somewhat overrepresented. A full mapping is presented at Appendix A.

Users also indicated the *main* topic on which they looked for advice when using the digital advice pages. The top three main topics mentioned were consistent with the top three most commonly mentioned when indicating all topics. Almost a quarter (23 per cent) of all users gave the main topic as *discipline, dismissal and grievance*. Employee-side users were more likely to have looked mainly at *discipline, dismissal and grievance* advice than employer-side users (29 per cent compared with 17 per cent). This is shown in figure 2.4 below.

Figure 2.4 Main topics advice sought on by employee-side and employer-side users



Q: A2b. When you visited the Acas website on [INSERT DATE], which would you say was the main topic you looked for advice on? Base: All (3,581), employee-side (1,659), employer-side (1,717).

Further differences between types of user are also shown in figure 2.4 (above): as well as *discipline, dismissal and grievance*, employee-side users were also more likely than employer-side users to have given the main topic as *redundancy, lay-offs and business transfers* (12 per cent compared with nine per cent) and *diversity, equality and discrimination* (10 per cent compared with six per cent). Conversely, employer-side users were more likely to have looked mainly for advice on *absence, sickness, health and well-being* (15 per cent compared with 10 per cent), *family friendly and parental rights* (seven per cent compared with three per cent) and *managing staff* (five per cent compared with zero per cent).

There were also notable differences in main topic by the type of query users had; those who had a *specific* workplace query that they wanted to find the answer to were more likely than other users to have looked for advice on *discipline, dismissal and grievance* (25 per cent), *contract and working arrangements* (19 per cent) and *holidays and working time* (nine per cent). Conversely, those looking to find information about a particular topic more generally were more likely to have sought advice on *diversity, equality and discrimination* (11 per cent) and *managing staff* (five per cent) as their main topic, perhaps reflecting the broadness of these subject area groupings.

There were some topic differences with regard to how users viewed the advice pages; most notably, there was an association between looking for advice on discipline, dismissal

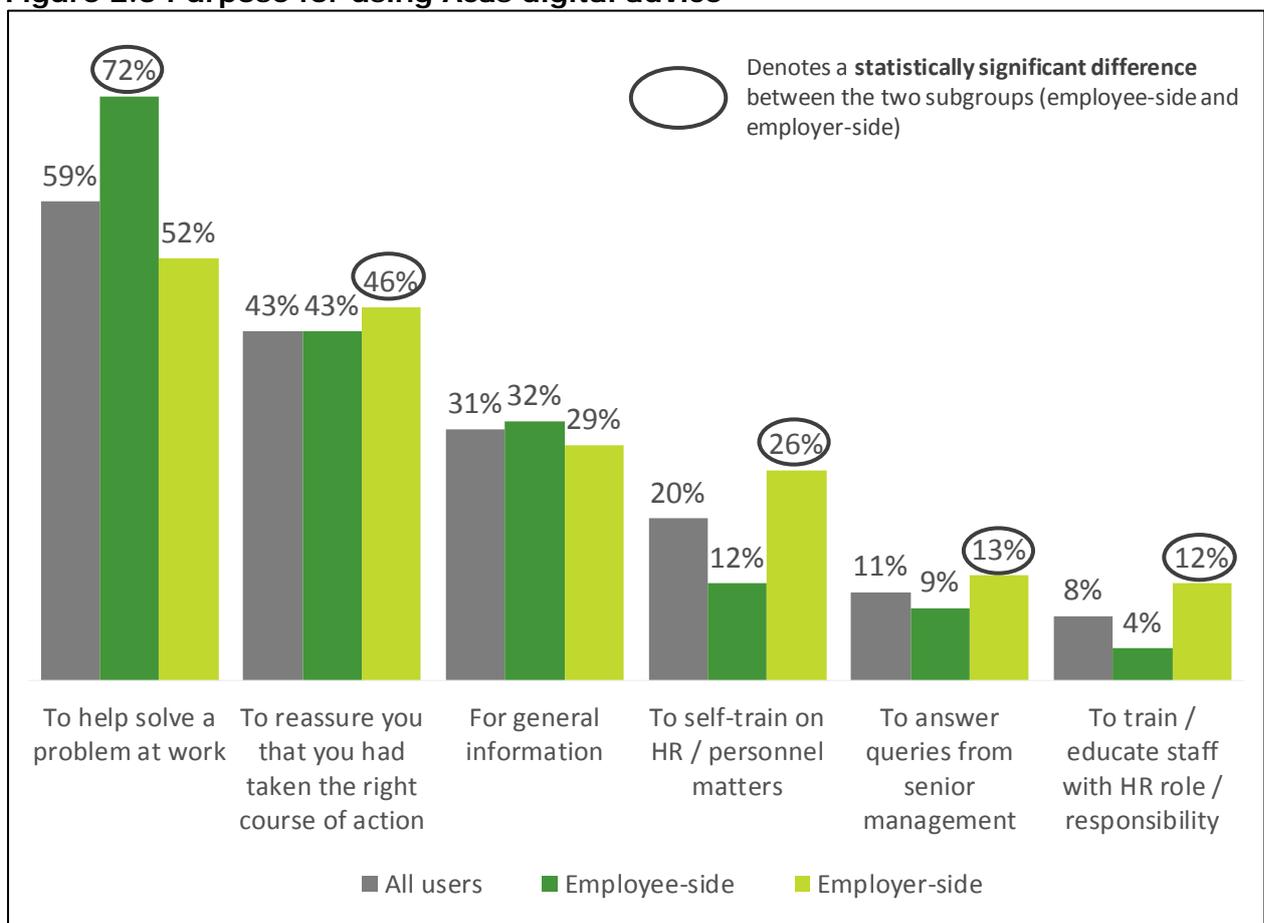
and grievance and diversity, equality and discrimination and use of long-form advice. Full details are presented at Section 5.1, which looks at different modes of Acas digital advice consumption.

There were no significant differences between age groups with respect to the main topic that users were looking for advice on.

2.4 Purpose that Acas digital advice was being used for

Respondents were asked to say what specifically they were using the advice for. The main answer given was 'to help solve a problem at work' (59 per cent), followed by users seeking reassurance that they 'had taken the right course of action' (43 per cent). Other response options are detailed in figure 2.5 below.

Figure 2.5 Purpose for using Acas digital advice



Q: D4. And thinking about the advice on the Acas website that you referred to on [INSERT DATE FROM SAMPLE], what did you use it for? Base: All (3,581), employee-side (1,659), employer-side (1,717).

Employee-side users were more likely than employer-side users to have looked at the advice pages in order to help solve a problem at work (72 per cent compared with 52 per cent of employer-side users). Conversely employer-side users were more likely than employee-side users to have looked at the advice pages to reassure them that they had taken the right course of action (46 per cent compared with 43 per cent), to self-train on HR or personnel matters (26 per cent compared with 12 per cent), answer queries from senior management (13 per cent compared with nine per cent) and to train or educate staff with HR role or responsibility (12 per cent compared with four per cent).

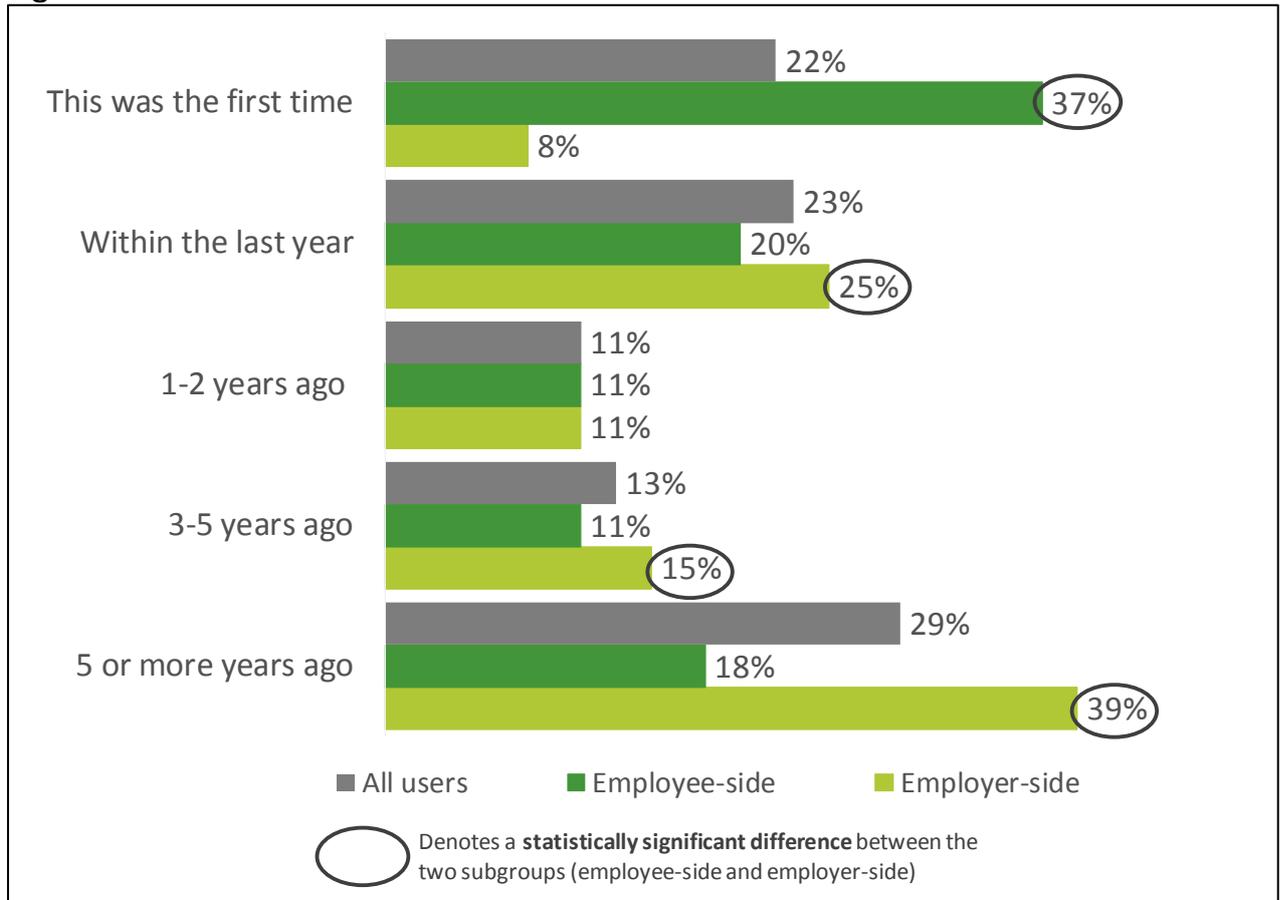
There were no significant differences between age groups regarding the primary reason that users gave for consulting Acas digital advice.

Users with a specific workplace query were not only more likely to report that they were using the advice to help solve a problem at work, but they were also more likely to report using it for reassurance that they had already taken the right course of action (71 per cent and 46 per cent respectively, compared with 59 per cent and 43 per cent overall). Users looking for advice on *holiday and working time* (70 per cent), *discipline, dismissal and grievance* (64 per cent) and *contracts and working arrangements* (64 per cent) were more likely to be looking for advice to help solve a problem at work. Those looking for advice on *discipline dismissal and grievance* were also more likely to have been using the advice for reassurance that they had taken the right course of action (50 per cent).

2.5 Previous use of the Acas website

The majority of users (77 per cent) confirmed having used the Acas website before; this was more likely to be the case amongst employer-side users than employee-side users (91 per cent compared with 61 per cent). This may simply be a reflection of the fact that employers are more commonly exposed to situations that necessitate employment relations advice, given the one-to-many nature of the employment relationship. Employer-side users also had a more historic relationship with the Acas website, with 39 per cent having visited the website for the first time over five years ago. However, only just under a fifth (18 per cent) of employee-side users first visited the website that long ago. A full breakdown of when users first visited the Acas website is detailed in figure 2.6 overleaf.

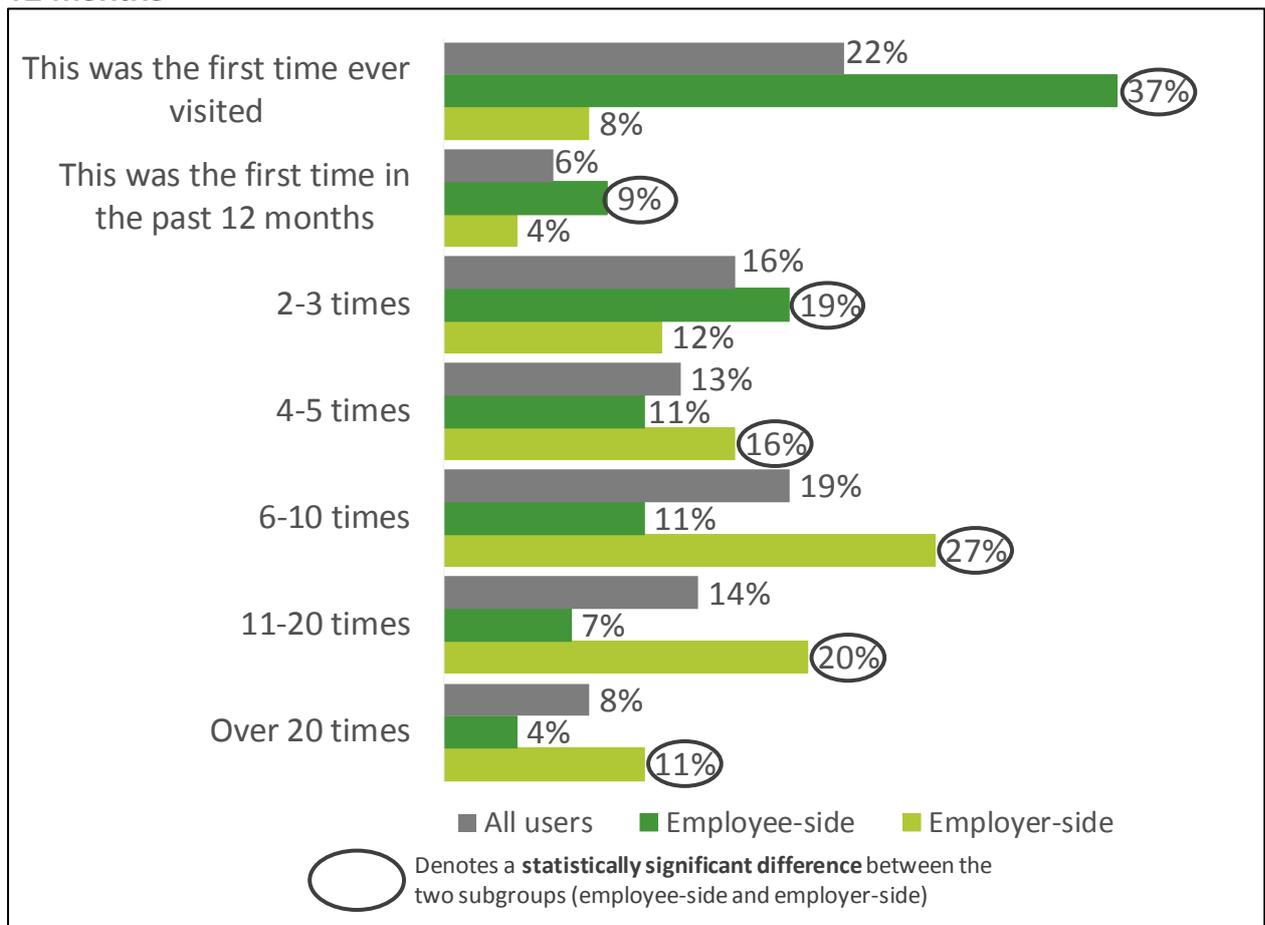
Figure 2.6 When users first visited the Acas website



Q: B2. Thinking back, when was the first time you ever looked at advice on the Acas website? Base: All (3,581), employee-side (1,659), employer-side (1,717).

Similar patterns are present in terms of the number of times users reported having visited the website in the past 12 months; employer-side users generally visited the website more times in this time period than employee-side users. Around one in ten (11 per cent) employer-side users had visited the website over 20 times in the past 12 months (compared with four per cent of employee-side users). Further breakdown of these significant differences can be seen in figure 2.7 overleaf.

Figure 2.7 The number of times users have visited the Acas website *in the past 12 months*



Q: B3. Including when you looked at Acas advice on [INSERT DATE FROM SAMPLE], approximately how many times in the last 12 months have you referred to advice on the Acas website?? Base: All (3,581), employee-side (1,659), employer-side (1,717).

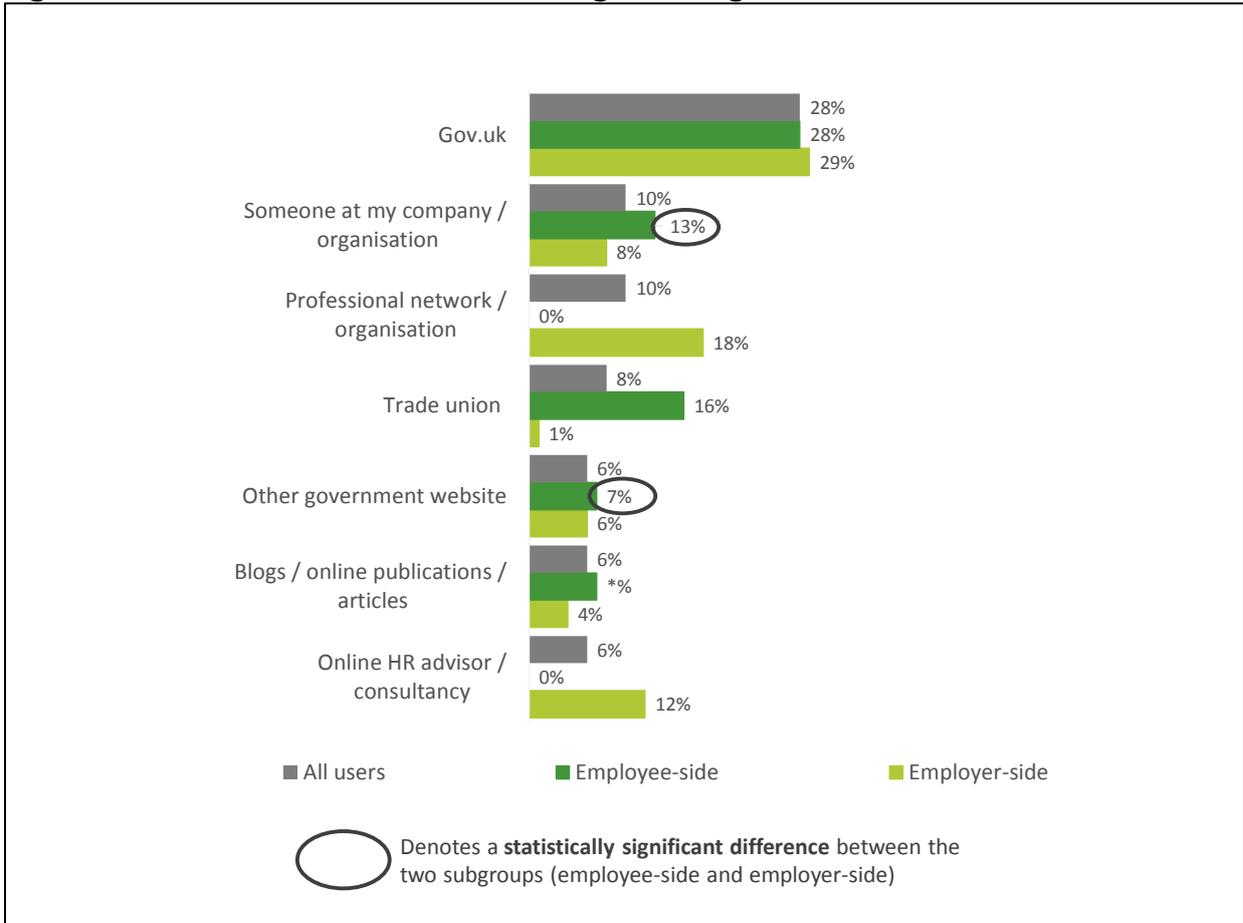
Certain topics were associated with more frequent or repeat use of Acas digital advice; these were, unsurprisingly, topics that employers more commonly sought advice on, including *managing staff* (13 per cent had used the website over 20 times in the past 12 months) and *family friendly and parental rights* (21 per cent between 11 and 20 times). Users looking for advice on these topics were also more likely to have first used the website longer ago; 54 per cent of those looking for advice on *family friendly and parental rights* and 48 per cent of those looking for advice on *managing staff* had used the website for the first time over 3 years ago (compared with 42 per cent overall).

3. ACAS DIGITAL ADVICE USER JOURNEYS

3.1 Use of external sources of information prior to Acas digital advice

Over half of all Acas digital advice users (58 per cent) reported having used another source of advice *before* they reached the Acas advice pages. However, employer-side users were significantly more likely than employee-side users to have gone directly to the Acas advice pages (46 per cent compared with 39 per cent). The most common starting point was GOV.UK (visited by 28 per cent of all users before reaching Acas).

Figure 3.1 Sources used before reaching Acas digital advice



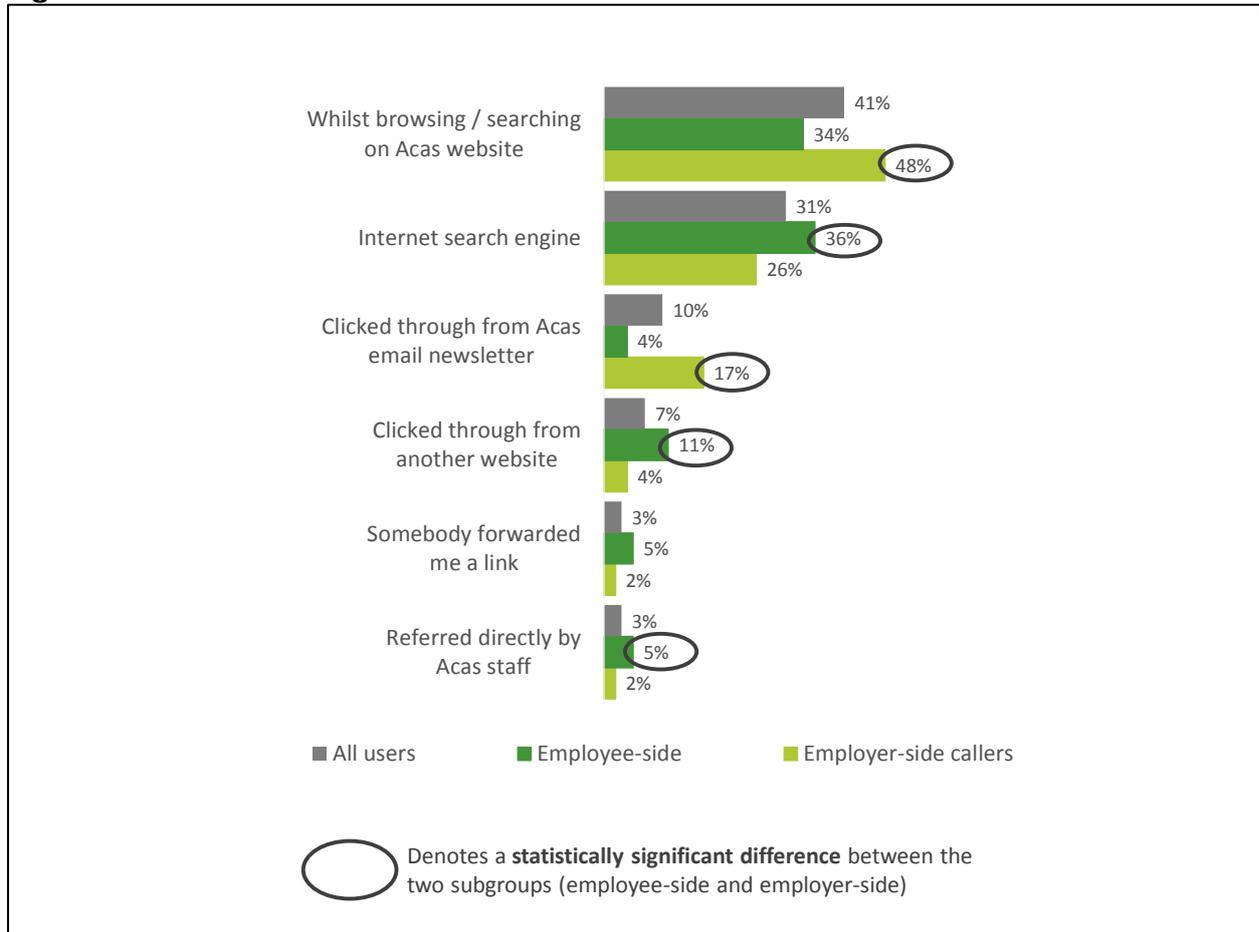
Q: B6. Before reaching the Acas advice pages, did you first look for the information from any of the following? All (3,581); Employee-side (1,659); Employer-side (1,717).

Employee-side users were significantly more likely than employer-side users to have consulted someone at their organisation (13 per cent compared with eight per cent) and referred to blogs and publications (seven per cent compared with four per cent) before reaching Acas. For their part, employer-side users reported having previously consulted professional networks or organisations (18 per cent of employer-side users), online HR resources (12 per cent of employer-side users), external HR advisors and consultancies (four per cent of employer-side users) and employer associations (two per cent of employer-side users). In terms of employee-side users, 16 per cent had previously consulted trade unions or trade union representatives, 11 per cent used the Citizens Advice Website and five per cent visited a Citizens Advice office. In addition to the sources illustrated at Figure 3.1, small numbers of users also confirmed having used social media (one per cent), called the Citizens Advice Helpline (one per cent), conducted a general

internet search (one per cent) and consulted various other sources before reaching the Acas digital advice pages.

Over half of all the users arrived at the Acas advice pages from another Acas source (54 per cent), this included being directed to them by another page on the Acas website, an Acas email newsletter or a member of Acas staff. This most commonly occurred through users browsing / searching on the Acas website (41 per cent).

Figure 3.2 Route taken to arrive at Acas website



Q: B4. How did you reach the advice on the Acas website? Please indicate the final step you completed before arriving at the advice on the Acas website. Base: All (3,581); Employee-side (1,659); Employer-side (1,717).

Employer-side users were significantly more likely than employee-side users to have arrived at the advice pages through browsing or searching the Acas website (48 per cent compared with 34 per cent) or clicking on a link in an Acas email newsletter (17 per cent compared with four per cent). Conversely, employee-side users were significantly more likely to have reached the advice pages through non-Acas routes, with the exception of direct referrals by Acas staff (five per cent and two per cent respectively). Employee-side users were significantly more likely to have been directed to the advice pages by an internet search engine (36 per cent compared with 26 per cent) or to have clicked through from another website (17 per cent compared with four per cent).

First-time Acas website users were significantly more likely to have arrived at the Acas advice pages from an Acas source (62 per cent) than users that had used the Acas website before (28 per cent).

In addition to the routes taken to arrive at the Acas website highlighted in Figure 3.2, a small number of individuals also arrived at the Acas website through other routes such as being referred to it by somebody else (two per cent) or through social media (one per cent).

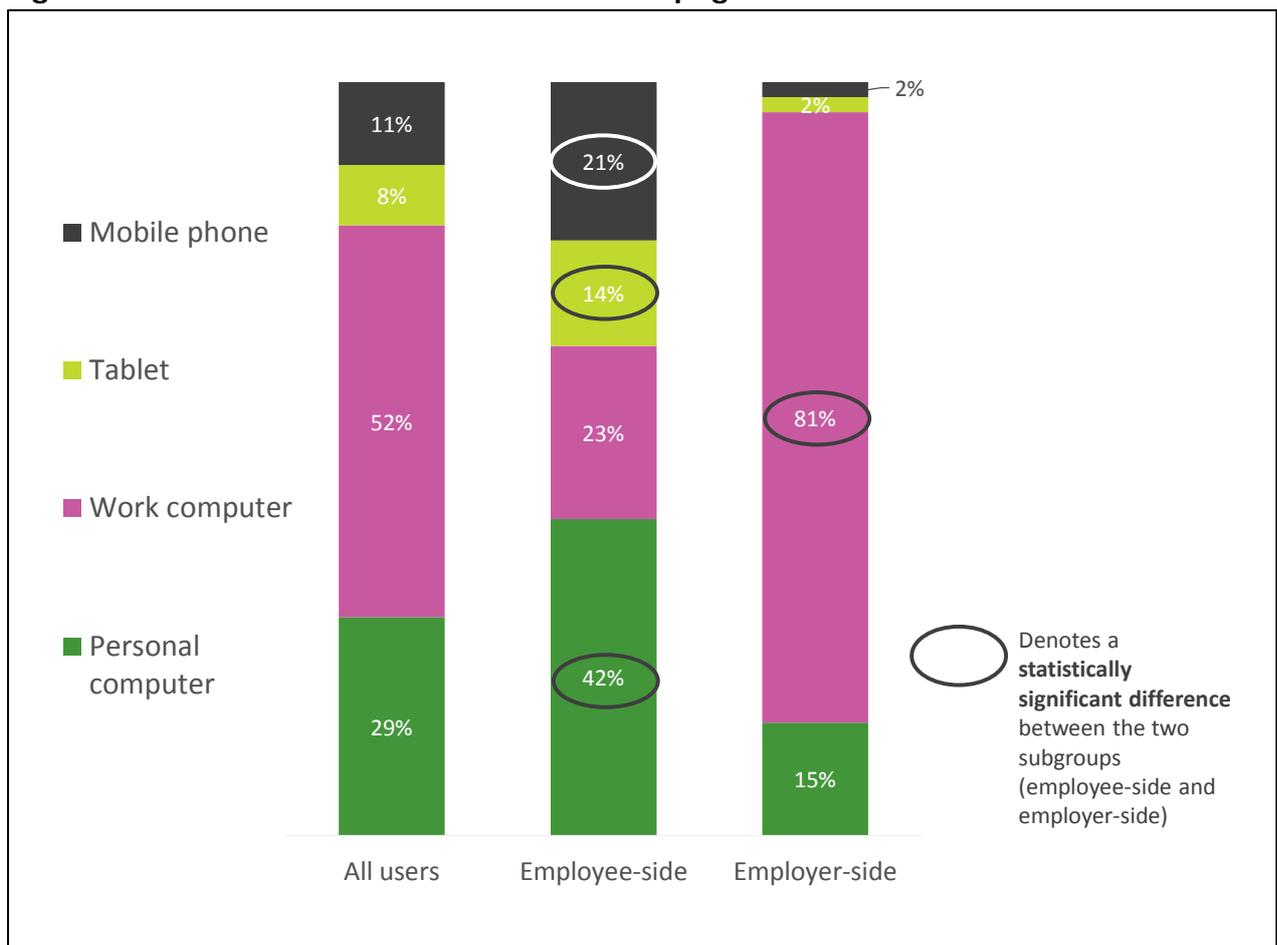
Although the age profile of Acas website users did not play a significant role in user journeys to the Acas advice pages in most cases, users over the age of 55 were significantly more likely to have reached the advice pages through an Acas source (57 per cent) than users aged 18-34 (49 per cent) or those aged 35-54 (53 per cent).

3.2 Devices used to access Acas digital advice

A large majority of users accessed the Acas advice pages through a work or personal computer (81 per cent). Eleven per cent accessed the pages through a mobile phone and eight per cent accessed the pages through a tablet.

As a point of reference, during the sample frame building period timeframe, web analytics for the entire Acas website (rather than the specific pages at issue) show a more balanced picture, with 56 per cent of visits from a desktop, 37 per cent from a mobile device and 8 per cent from a tablet, suggesting an under representation of mobile users in the survey.

Figure 3.3 What device did users access the pages on?



Q: B5. When you looked at the advice on the Acas website, what device were you using?
 All (3,581); Employee-side (1,659); Employer-side (1,717).

In the survey, perhaps not surprisingly, employer-side users were significantly more likely to have accessed the advice pages through a work computer (81 per cent compared with 23 per cent). In contrast, employees were significantly more likely to access the advice pages through a personal computer (42 per cent compared with 15 per cent), mobile phone (21 per cent compared with two per cent) and tablet (14 per cent compared with two per cent).

Age did influence the type of device used to view Acas digital advice. Users over the age of 55, in particular, were significantly more likely than other users to have viewed the website on their own personal computer (34 per cent) or a tablet (9 per cent), while being significantly less likely than average users to have used their work computer (47 per cent) or their mobile phone (8 per cent). Users aged 18-34 (19 per cent) and 35-54 (25 per cent) were significantly less likely than other users to have used their own PC. Users between 18 and 34 were significantly more likely to have used a mobile phone (20 per cent) than all other users, but significantly less likely to have used a tablet (3 per cent).

Users accessing digital advice on family friendly and parent rights (79 per cent), managing staff (66 per cent) and other reasons (78 per cent), were most likely to access this information through a work computer. However, those who were seeking information on discipline, dismissal and grievance (38 per cent) or diversity, equality and discrimination (34 per cent) were most likely to be using a personal computer.

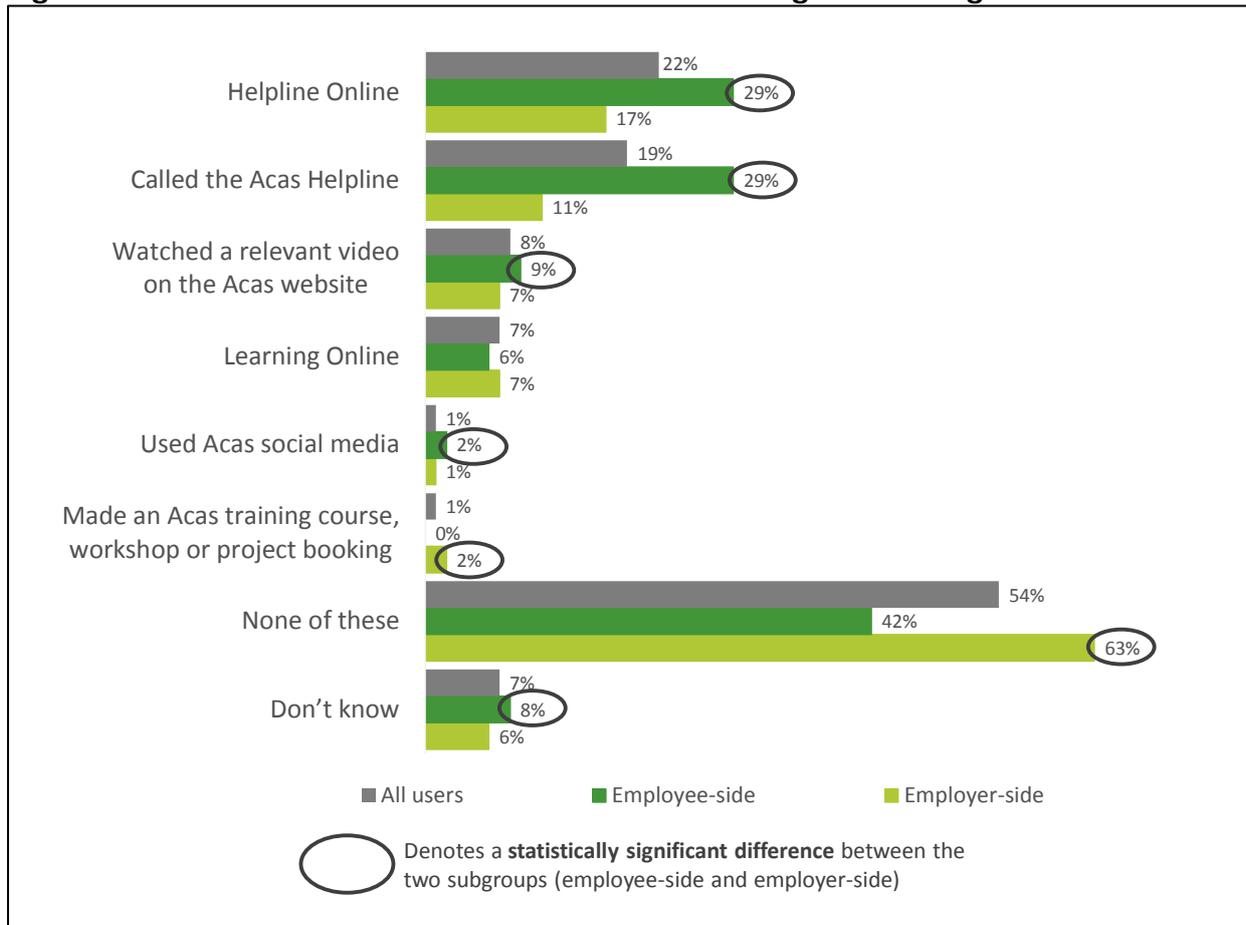
There was also significant variation in long-form vs short-form advice preference by device type, with desktop users being significantly likelier than mobile users to access long-form material: 29 per cent of those using a workplace or personal computer accessed long-form advice, compared to 19 per cent of mobile and tablet users. Chapter 4 (Sections 4.2 and 4.1) explores this relationship in more detail, particularly in relation to user satisfaction.

3.3 Other Acas tools used in combination with its digital advice

Acas provides advice in several ways other than its core range of advice on the website, with its telephone Helpline (19 per cent) and Helpline Online system (22 per cent) being the tools that were most often used in combination with digital advice pages: a fifth of respondents reported having also used these other sources when looking at the advice on the website. That said, a slight majority of respondents (54 per cent) confirmed not having used any other Acas tools to help them resolve the main topic that they were searching for advice on.

This was especially true of employer-side users, two-thirds of whom (63%) did not access any other Acas guidance to assist with the main topic on which they needed guidance. In contrast, employee-side users were significantly more likely to have accessed Helpline Online (29 per cent compared with 17 per cent), called the Acas Helpline (29 per cent compared with 11 per cent) and watched a relevant video on the Acas website (9 per cent compared with 7 per cent).

Figure 3.4 Which other tools were used when looking at Acas digital advice?



Q: B7a. When you looked at the advice on the Acas website, did you also use Helpline Online, an automated Q&A tool on the Acas website in relation to the same issue? B7b. When you looked at the advice on the Acas website, did you also use 'Learning OnLine', an e-learning resource on the Acas website in relation to the same issue? B7. When you looked at the advice on the Acas website, did you also use any of these other forms of advice from Acas in relation to the same issue? All (3,581); Employee-side (1,659); Employer-side (1,717).

Age did not play a significant role in likelihood of users to have used any of these other online tools.

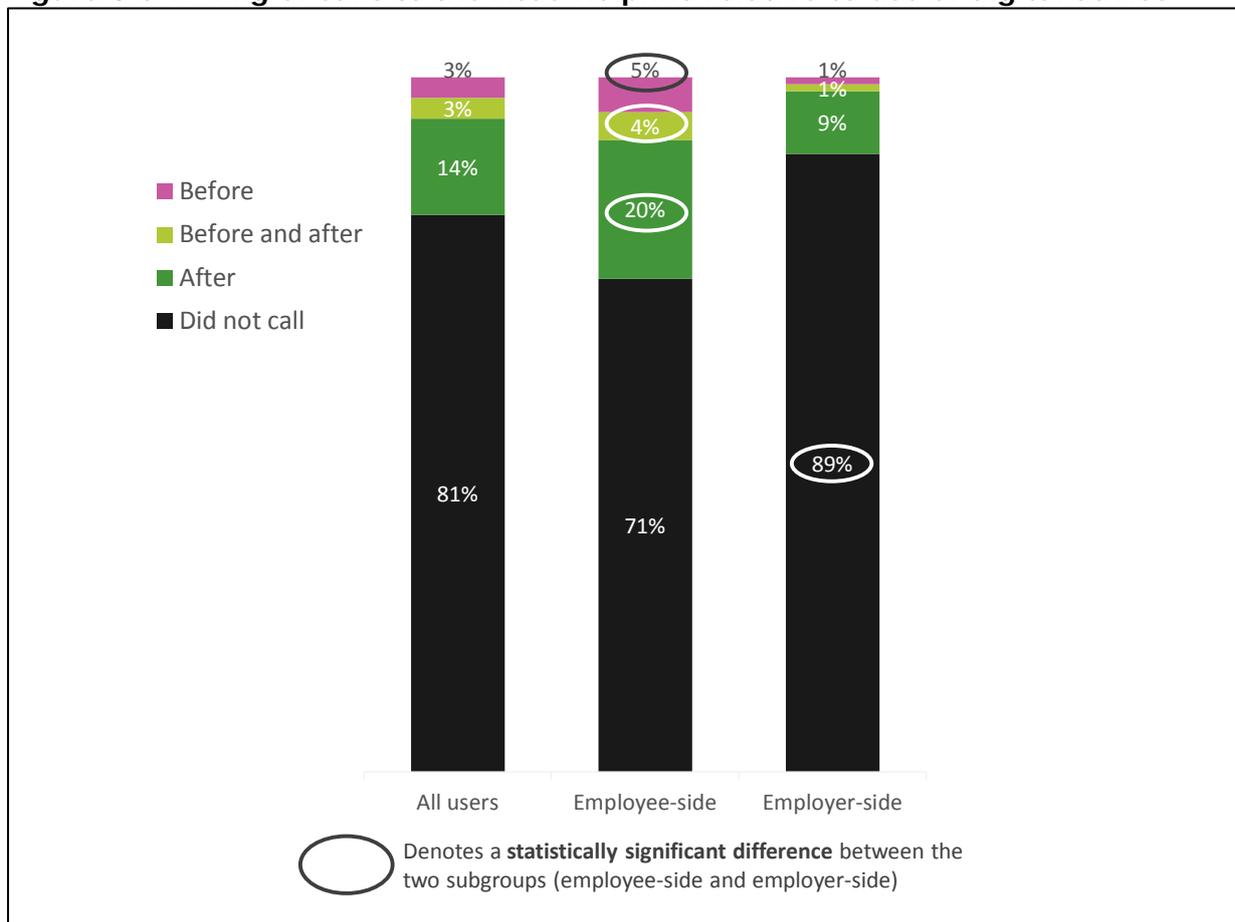
Helpline Online users were most commonly those whose advice seeking related to the main topics of discipline, dismissal and grievance (26 per cent), contracts and working arrangements (25 per cent) and redundancy, lay-offs and business transfers (25 per cent).

Users who called the Acas Helpline were also likely have searched for advice on the main topics of discipline, dismissal and grievance (25 per cent) and redundancy, lay-offs and business transfers (24 per cent) – and, to a lesser extent, pay (23 per cent) – perhaps suggesting that these subjects are particularly complicated to users, whose advice-seeking on these topics takes in multiple modes.

3.4 Use of Acas telephone Helpline in combination with digital advice

Of the 19 per cent of all users who called the Acas Helpline, the majority called the helpline *after* accessing Acas digital advice (17 per cent of all users), with six per cent having called before accessing the digital advice. There was some overlap here, with three per cent of users having called the helpline before and after they had accessed the Acas digital advice.

Figure 3.5 Timing of calls to the Acas Helpline relative to use of digital advice

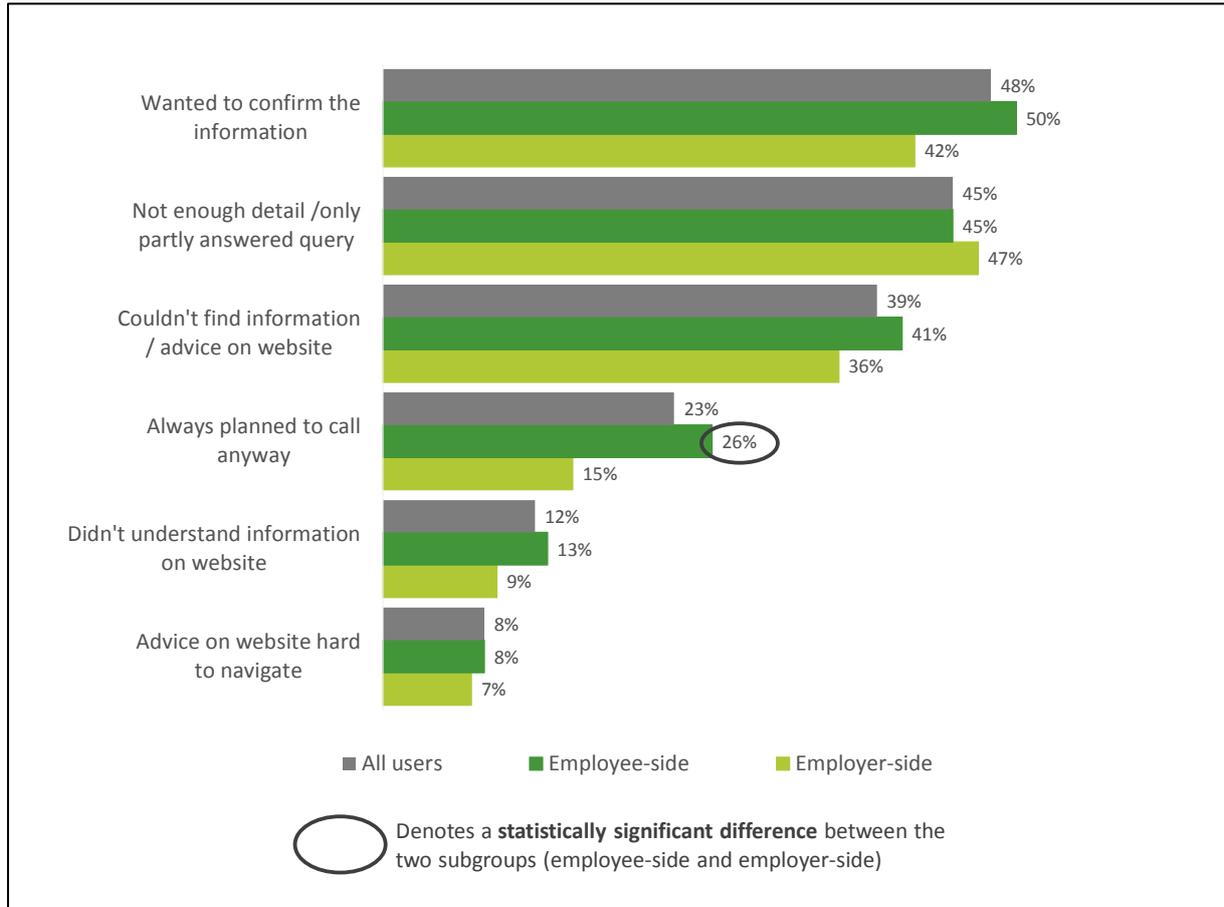


Q: B8. You said that you also called the Acas Helpline in addition to visiting the Acas website. Did you call before or after looking at advice on the website? Question base: All who had called the Acas Helpline (689); Employee-side (488); Employer-side (191). Figure 3.5 base: All users (3,581); Employee-side (1,659); Employer-side (1,717).

Employer-side users were significantly less likely to have called the Acas helpline than employee-side users (89 per cent compared with 71 per cent). The reverse is also true, with employee-side users being significantly more likely to have called the helpline, both before (nine per cent compared with two per cent) and after (24 per cent compared with ten per cent) accessing digital advice.

Focusing only on those digital advice users who called the Acas helpline after using the advice pages, they most commonly did so for the following three reasons: 1) they wanted to confirm information (48 per cent); 2) they judged that not enough detail was provided in the digital advice (45 per cent), or; 3) they could not find the information/advice that they were seeking on the Acas website (39 per cent).

Figure 3.6 Motivation for calling the Acas helpline after using digital advice



Q: B9. Why did you call the Acas Helpline after looking at the advice on the Acas website? All that called the Acas helpline after looking at advice on the Acas website (584); Employee-side (407); Employer-side (169).

When looking at the data broken down by user type, employee-side users emerge as being significantly more likely than employer-side users to have called because they always planned to call (26 per cent compared with 15 per cent).

4. USER PERCEPTIONS OF ACAS DIGITAL ADVICE

4.1 Extent to which advice helped to solve a problem or reassure users they had taken the right form of action

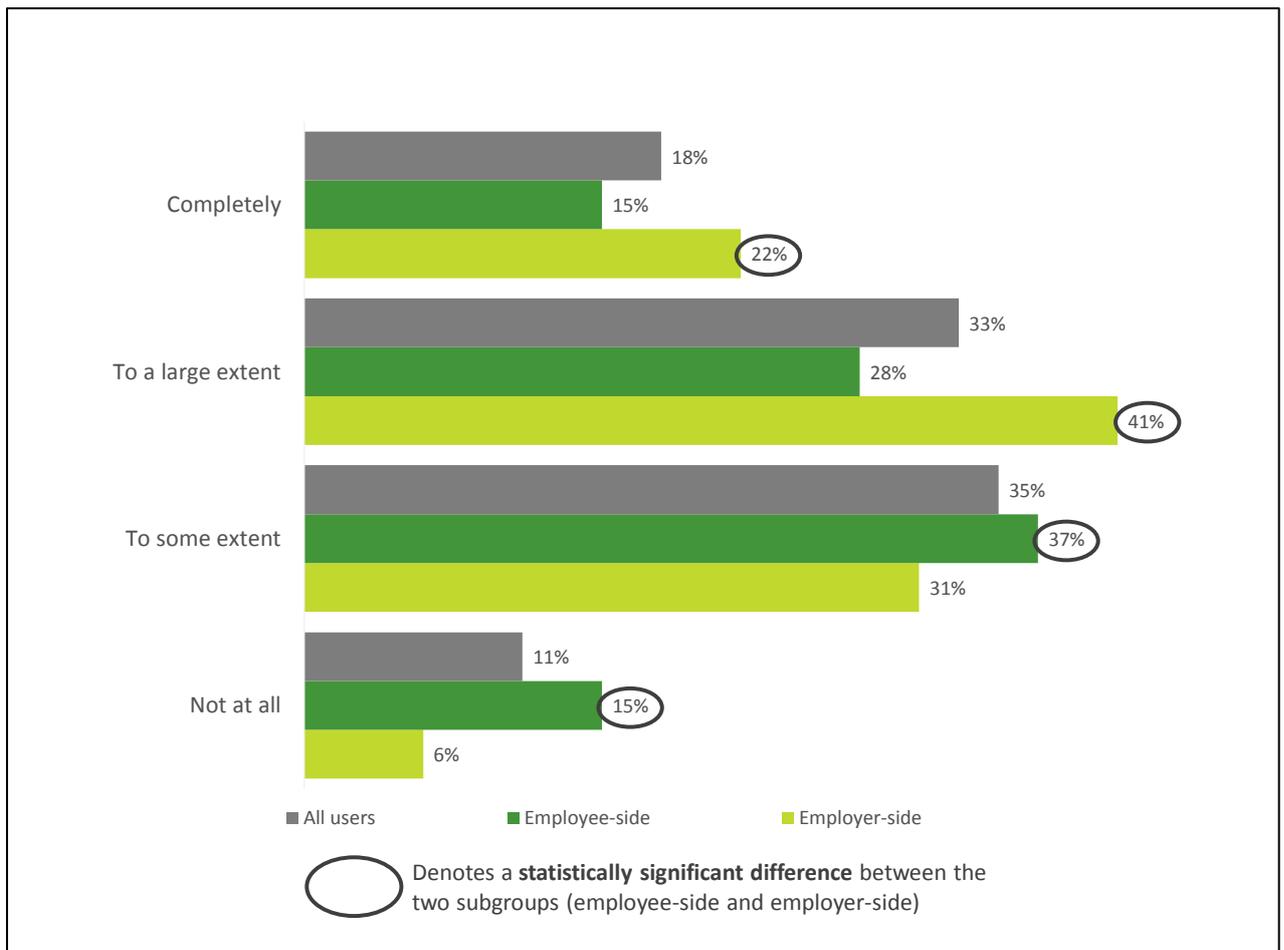
One of the key performance measures for Acas digital advice is the proportion of users who report that the advice '*helped them to solve a problem or reassured them of a course of action that they had already taken*'.

As illustrated in figures 4.1 and 4.2, substantial majorities of those who used the advice to solve a problem or for reassurance reported that the advice had succeeded on both of these fronts:

- 86 per cent of users who sought advice to solve a problem at work judged that the advice *had* helped them to solve that problem, at least to some extent (Figure 4.1), whereas;
- 96 per cent of users who were seeking reassurance regarding a course of action that they had already taken similarly felt that the advice *had* done so, again at least to some extent (Figure 4.2)

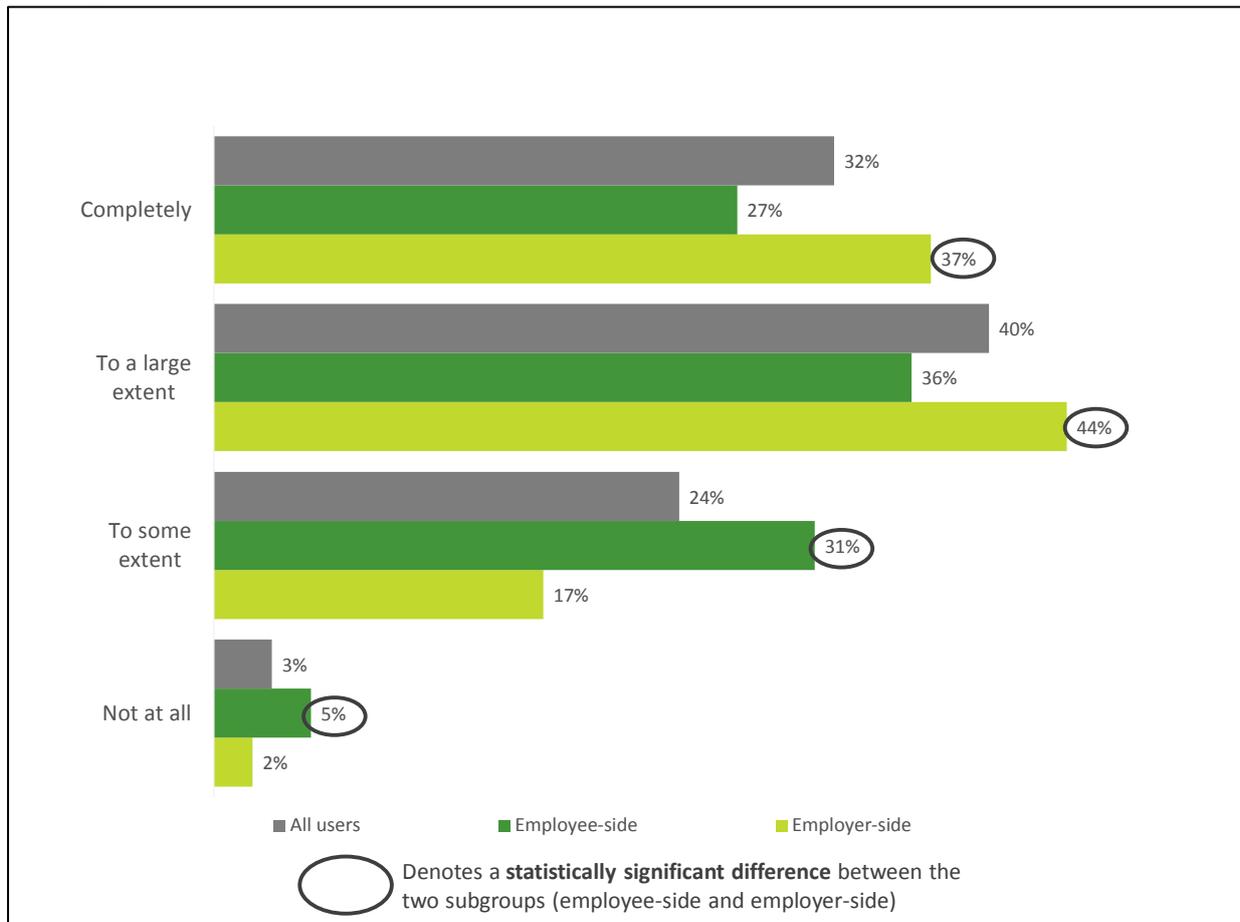
It is possible to widen the scope of this analysis and derive the proportion of *all* digital advice users surveyed for whom the advice helped them to solve a problem *or* reassured them of a course of action that they had already taken: this equates to 68 per cent *of the total survey population* (i.e. a base that includes users for whom problem-solving and/or reassurance were not reasons for using the advice in the first place; see Section 2.4 for the full spread of reasons given).

Figure 4.1 Extent to which the advice helped the user solve a problem at work



Q: You said that you used the advice to help solve a problem at work, to what extent did the advice help you do this? Base: employer-side users. Base: All (2064); Employee-side (1155); Employer-side (874).

Figure 4.2 Extent to which the advice reassured the user that they had taken the right form of action



Q: You said that you used the advice to reassure you that you had taken the right course of action, to what extent did the advice help you do this? Base: All (1540); Employee-side (710); Employer-side (793).

Employer-side users were significantly more likely than employee-side users to feel that Acas digital advice *had* succeeded in helping them to solve a problem at work, at least to some extent (94 per cent, compared to 80 per cent); they were also more likely to judge that it *had* reassured them that they had taken the right course of action (98 per cent, compared to 95 per cent).

Furthermore, employer-side users were significantly more likely to state that the advice had helped them to solve a problem at work *completely* (22 per cent) or *to a large extent* (41 per cent) than employee-side users (15 per cent and 28 per cent, respectively). Similar patterns operate in terms of the extent to which advice reassured users of their course of action; employee-side users were significantly more likely to feel that the advice had only reassured them of their course of action *to some extent* (31 per cent) or that it had *not reassured them at all* (five per cent) than employer-side users (17 per cent and two per cent respectively). These differences may of course reflect the degree of reassurance required by the two sets of users and the relative perceived complexity of their problems.

Users who read the advice on a computer were significantly more likely to have used the advice to successfully solve a problem at least to some extent (88 per cent) than those who read the advice on a mobile phone or tablet (79 per cent). This was also true of users who used the advice to reassure them of their course of action; 97 per cent of those using a computer felt reassured at least to some extent, compared with 94 per cent of mobile phone or tablet users. However, it should be noted, the majority of people who used mobile phones/tablets were employee-side users (who tended to be less satisfied overall).

When considering likelihood of having used the Acas advice to successfully solve a problem *at least to some extent*, stratified by device used and whether that individual was an employee-side or employer-side user, there are no statistically significant differences (employee side: computer 81%, mobile phone or tablet 78%; employer-side: computer 94%, mobile phone or tablet 88%). The same was not true regarding likelihood of having been reassured of one's course of action, however, with employee-side users being significantly more likely to report being reassured where they had used a computer (96%) compared to those using a mobile phone or tablet (92%). There were no significant differences in this regard for employer-side users (computer 98%, mobile phone or tablet 100%). However it is worth noting here the low base size of employer-side users who used a mobile phone or tablet; it is therefore difficult to portray a consistent picture regarding the influence of device used to read advice on its utility in terms of solving problems or reassuring people of their course of action. However, there is at least *some* association between device used and the utility of the advice, as demonstrated by the significant difference reported for employee-side users across different devices.

Users who read long-form advice (PDFs) on the Acas website were significantly more likely than other users to report that the advice had helped them to solve a problem at work (93 per cent compared to 84 per cent). It should be acknowledged here that, as previously discussed in Chapter 3, computer users were more likely than mobile/tablet users to read long-form advice (whereas mobile/tablet users were more likely to be using short/form advice). However, this association alone was not found to account for the higher levels of problem resolution reported by readers of long-form advice; rather, there is evidence to show that the *form* of the advice itself added value to these aspects of user experience, irrespective of device type used (this point is further explored at Section 4.2).

When stratifying user profile by age, there were no significant differences when considering the likelihood of the Acas advice having helped users to solve a problem at work or feel reassured of their course of action (where this had been their reason for accessing the advice).

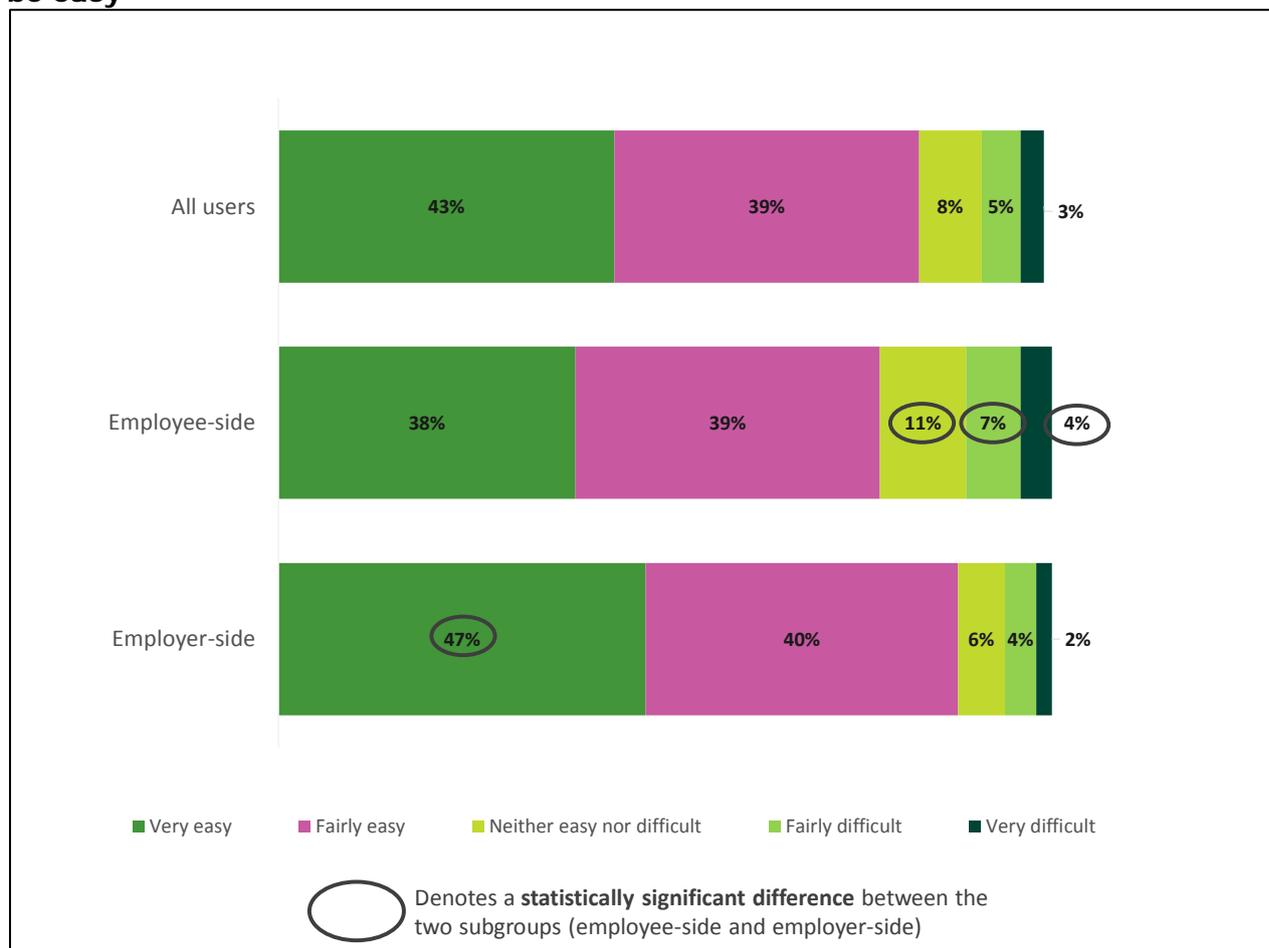
Users who visited the Acas website looking for advice generally rather than to deal with a specific workplace query were more likely to feel that the advice had succeeded in: helping them to solve a problem at work (93 per cent), and; providing the reassurance they were seeking (99 per cent) at least *to some extent*. This is perhaps not surprising in that these users might be expected to have had more generalised and hence readily solvable 'problems' in the first place.

Similarly, amongst users that were using advice to solve a problem at work, those who consulted advice relating to family friendly and parental rights related topics (97 per cent) were significantly more likely than all other users to report that they had successfully used the advice to solve a problem at work. Despite this, there were few other significant differences based upon the topic for which users were looking for advice.

4.2 Ease with which users accessed the advice⁴

Eighty two per cent of all users found accessing advice on the Acas website to be 'easy' overall, split fairly evenly between those judging it 'very easy' (43 per cent) and those deemed it 'fairly easy' (39 per cent). Just nine per cent of users reported finding the advice difficult to any degree.

Figure 4.3 Extent to which users found accessing advice on the Acas website to be easy



Q: Thinking about accessing the advice on the Acas website, how easy would you say it was to find the advice that you were looking for? Base: All (3581); Employee-side (1659); Employer-side (1717).

Employer-side users were significantly more likely to have found it easy (87 per cent) or very easy (47 per cent) to access advice than employee-side users (77 per cent and 38 per cent respectively). Furthermore, twelve per cent of employee-side users reported having found it 'difficult' to access advice on the Acas website, which remains a small minority, yet is nonetheless significantly more than for employer-side users (6 per cent).

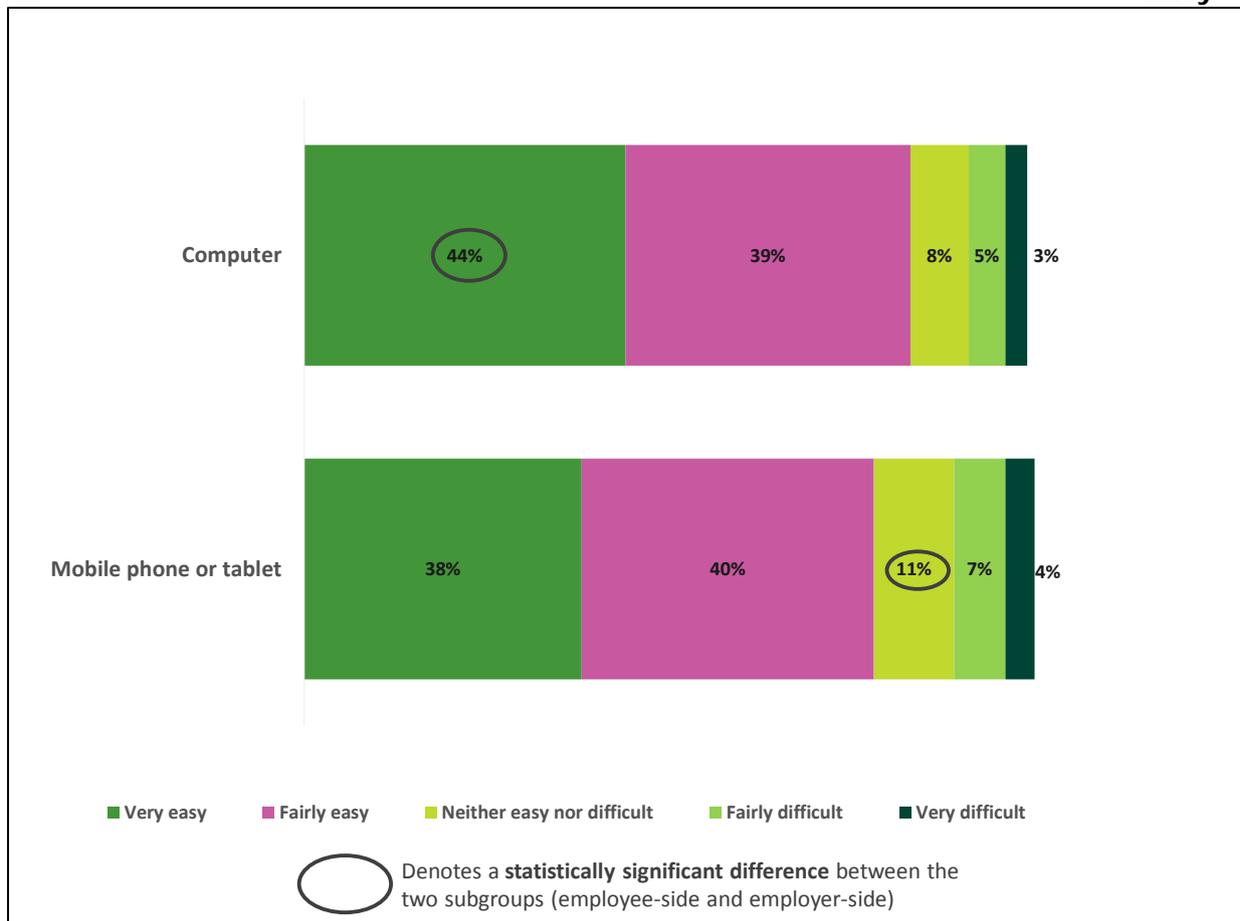
By topic, users who were looking for information about family friendly and parental rights (89 per cent) were especially likely to say that accessing advice on the Acas website had been easy. Contrastingly, users seeking advice about contracts and working arrangements

⁴ When considering these particular results, it bears repeating that the survey sample comprised only users who successfully accessed an in-scope advice page on the Acas website (and remained there for 30 seconds in order to trigger the pop-up invitation).

were significantly less likely to report that accessing this information had been very easy (39 per cent) than other users.

Users who read the advice on a computer were significantly more likely than mobile phone or tablet users to have found accessing the advice an 'easy process' (84 per cent compared with 77 per cent) and 'very easy' (44 per cent compared with 38 per cent). Furthermore, even when controlling for device, users who read long-form advice (PDFs) were significantly more likely to say that accessing advice had been easy (87 per cent; 50 per cent saying *very easy*). Similarly, users who ultimately went on to read the information thoroughly on-screen were significantly more likely than those who proceeded to skim-read the information on-screen to say that accessing the advice had been 'very easy' (46 per cent compared to 40 per cent) or indeed easy to any degree (84 per cent compared to 80 per cent). One possible explanation may be that users who find the information easily are predisposed to read it more thoroughly, whereas those who find it more difficult to locate the information are less inclined to make the same time commitment when they do find it.

Figure 4.4 Extent to which users found accessing advice on the Acas website to be easy

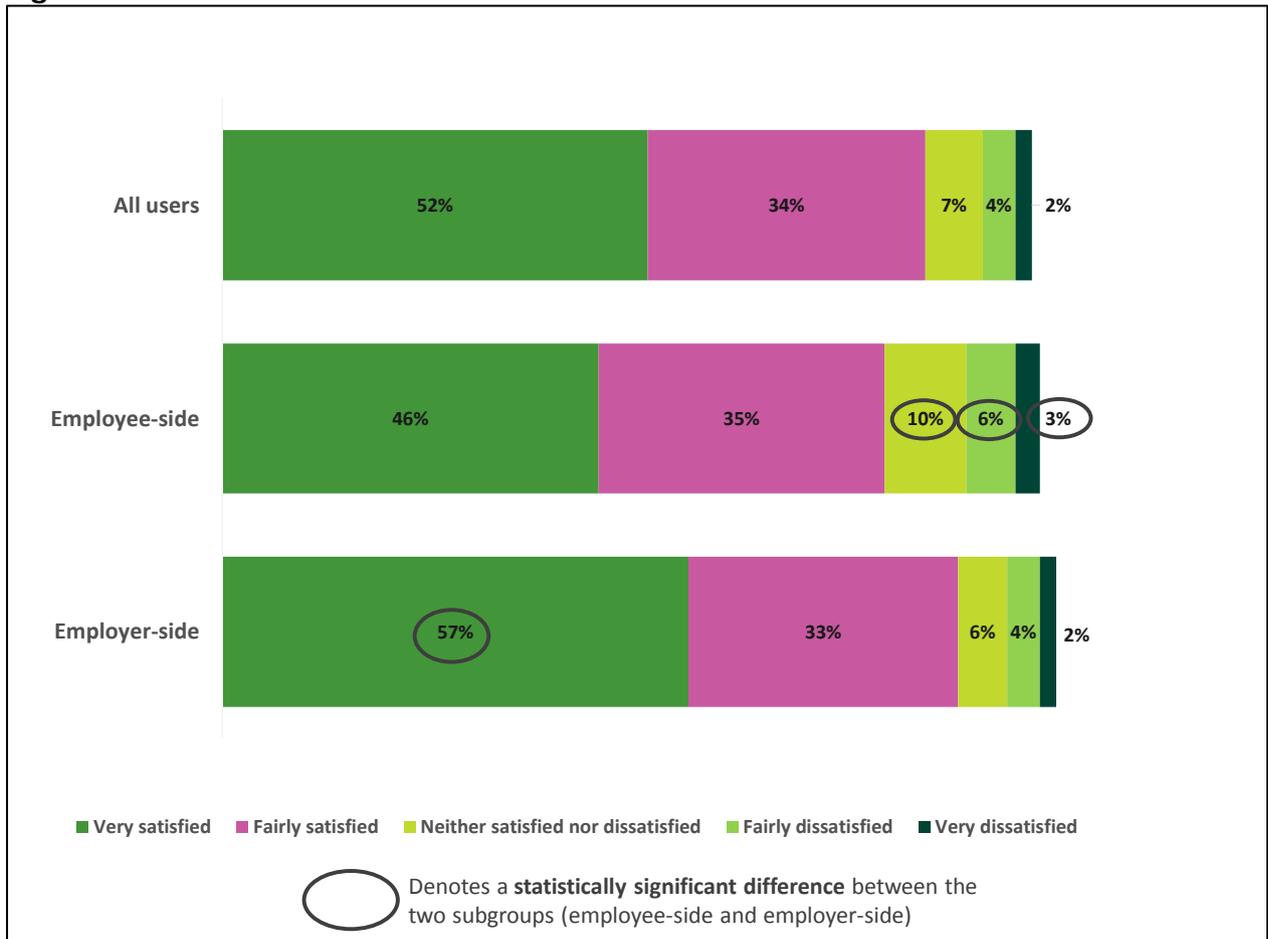


Q: Thinking about accessing the advice on the Acas website, how easy would you say it was to find the advice that you were looking for? Base: Computer users (2894); Mobile phone or tablet users (1717).

4.3 Satisfaction with Acas digital advice

The majority of users were satisfied with the digital advice that they looked at (86 per cent). Over half of all users were 'very satisfied' (52 per cent), with only 6 per cent of users indicating any degree of dissatisfaction. Employer-side users were significantly more likely to be satisfied with the advice to any extent (90 per cent) and also significantly more likely to have been *very* satisfied with the advice (57 per cent) than employee-side users (81 per cent and 46 per cent respectively). Conversely, employee-side users were significantly more likely to have been dissatisfied (9 per cent) or very dissatisfied (3 per cent) than employer-side users (4 per cent and 2 per cent respectively), albeit these remain small proportions. Satisfaction was not influenced by workplace size or organisation size, with no significant differences arising in either regard.

Figure 4.5 Overall satisfaction rates



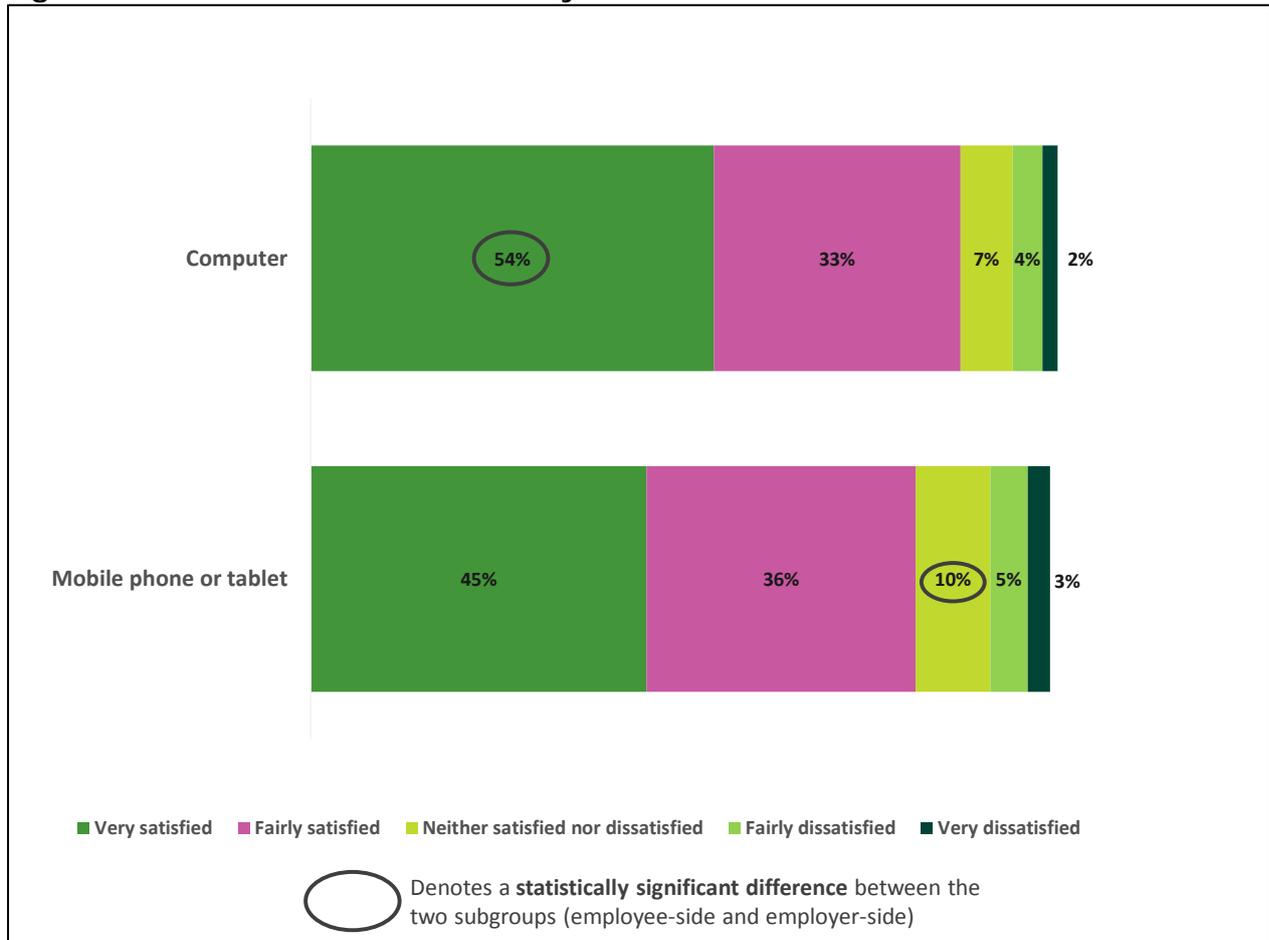
Q: Considering everything, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the Acas digital advice you looked at?
 Base: All (3581); Employee-side (1659); Employer-side (1717).

There were few significant differences in satisfaction based upon the topic users were seeking advice on. Those looking for advice on managing staff, however, were significantly more likely than all other users to register satisfaction with the advice that they accessed (93 per cent). Similarly, users reading advice regarding absence, sickness, health and well-being (four per cent) or redundancy, lay-offs and business transfers (four per cent) were significantly *less likely* to be *dissatisfied* with the advice they looked at. Conversely, users seeking advice about discipline, dismissal and grievance were significantly more likely to be dissatisfied with that advice (eight per cent) than other users, although again, this remains a small minority.

First-time users were significantly more likely to report being satisfied with the advice that they looked at (88 per cent) than repeat users of the website (77 per cent). Similarly, users who accessed the advice on a computer (87 per cent) were significantly more likely to be satisfied with the advice that they accessed than mobile phone or tablet users (81 per cent). Once again, those who read the information thoroughly on-screen (87 per cent) were significantly more likely to report being satisfied with the advice than users who skim-read the advice on-screen (84 per cent), although this relationship might feasibly be operating in either direction (i.e. not being satisfied with the advice may cause the reader to skim it, or skimming it may result in a less satisfactory experience). Users who read long-form advice (PDFs) were also significantly more likely to be satisfied with the advice that they accessed (91 per cent) than all other users.

Moreover, further analysis controlling for device type found that long-form advice added *intrinsic* value for users over short-form advice; that is to say, people reading long-form PDFs were not simply more satisfied *because* they were computer-users (as previously highlighted in Chapter 3 at Section 3.2). For instance, computer users who read long-form advice were significantly more likely to be satisfied with the advice that they read (92 per cent) than those that who read short-form advice on the computer (87 per cent). However, there were no equivalent *significant* differences when considering mobile or tablet users and whether they had read long-form advice (85 per cent satisfied) or exclusively short form advice (81 per cent satisfied). There were also no *significant* differences among computer users when considering levels of satisfaction by whether they skim-read the information on screen (88 per cent) or read it thoroughly on-screen (86 per cent). Whereas mobile phone or tablet users *were* significantly more likely to be satisfied if they read the information thoroughly (84 per cent) than if they skim-read it (75 per cent).

Figure 4.6 Overall user satisfaction by device used



Q: Considering everything, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the Acas digital advice you looked at?
 Base: Computer users (2894); Mobile phone or tablet users (1717).

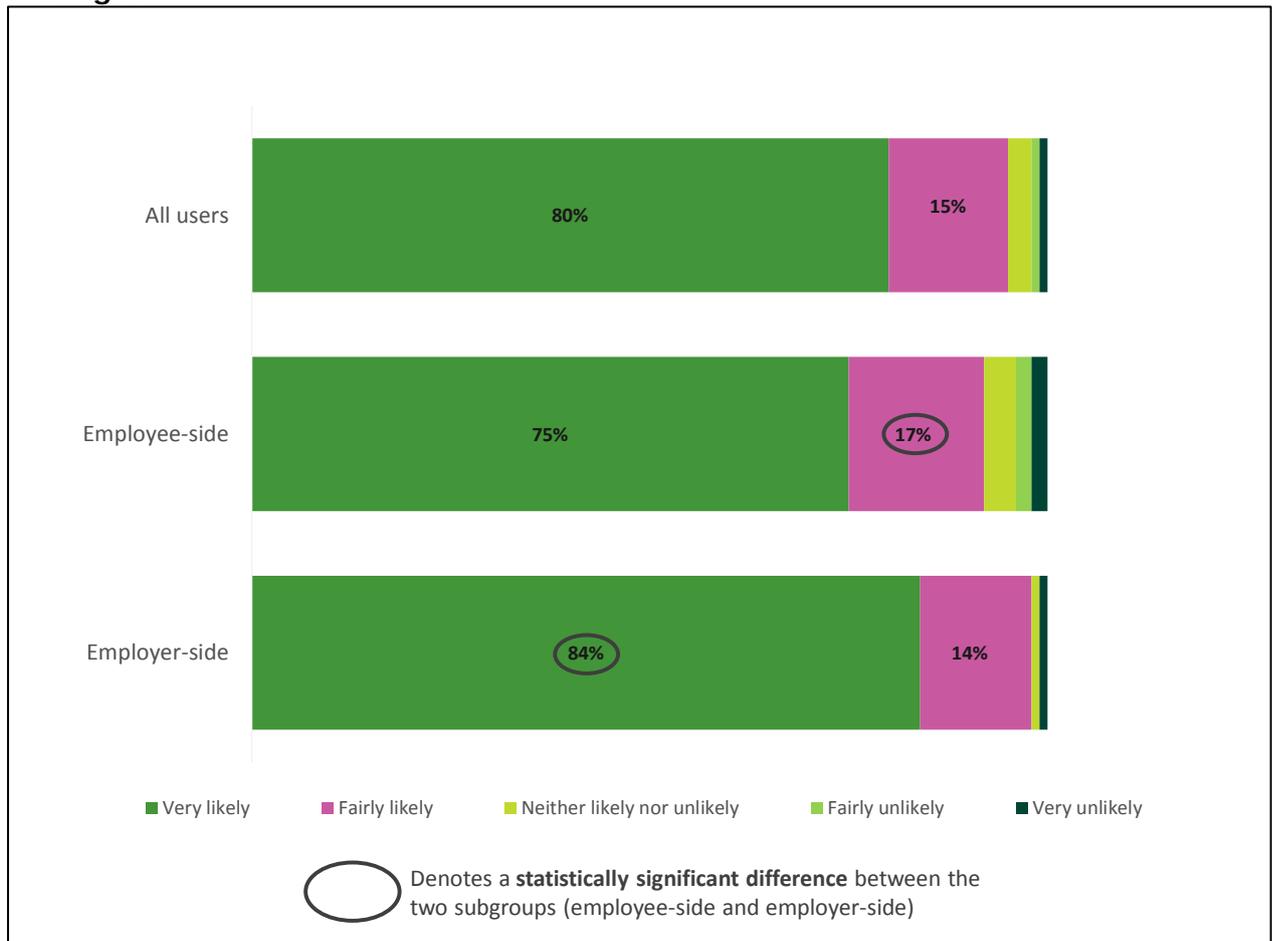
Unsurprisingly, problem resolution was strongly linked to user satisfaction. Of those respondents who were using the advice to help solve a problem at work, users who judged that the advice *had* solved their problem (at least to some extent) were significantly more likely to be satisfied (91 per cent) than users who did not feel that their problem had been solved at all (26 per cent).

4.4 Likelihood of recommending and reusing Acas digital advice

The vast majority of users of Acas digital advice were likely to recommend the advice to another person (95 per cent). Within this group, 80 per cent reported that they were 'very likely' to recommend Acas advice to somebody else and 15 per cent reported that they were 'fairly likely' to do so. Just two per cent of all users stated that they would be unlikely to recommend Acas advice to a friend or work colleague.

As with satisfaction, employers were significantly more likely to state that they would recommend the advice to a friend or work colleague; 97 per cent of employer-side users reported that they would do so, while 92 per cent of employee-side users said the same. It was also more common for employer-side users to be 'very likely' to recommend Acas digital advice (84 per cent) than it was for employee-side users (75 per cent), reflecting the pattern of satisfaction reported in the previous section.

Figure 4.7 Likelihood of recommending Acas advice to a friend or work colleague

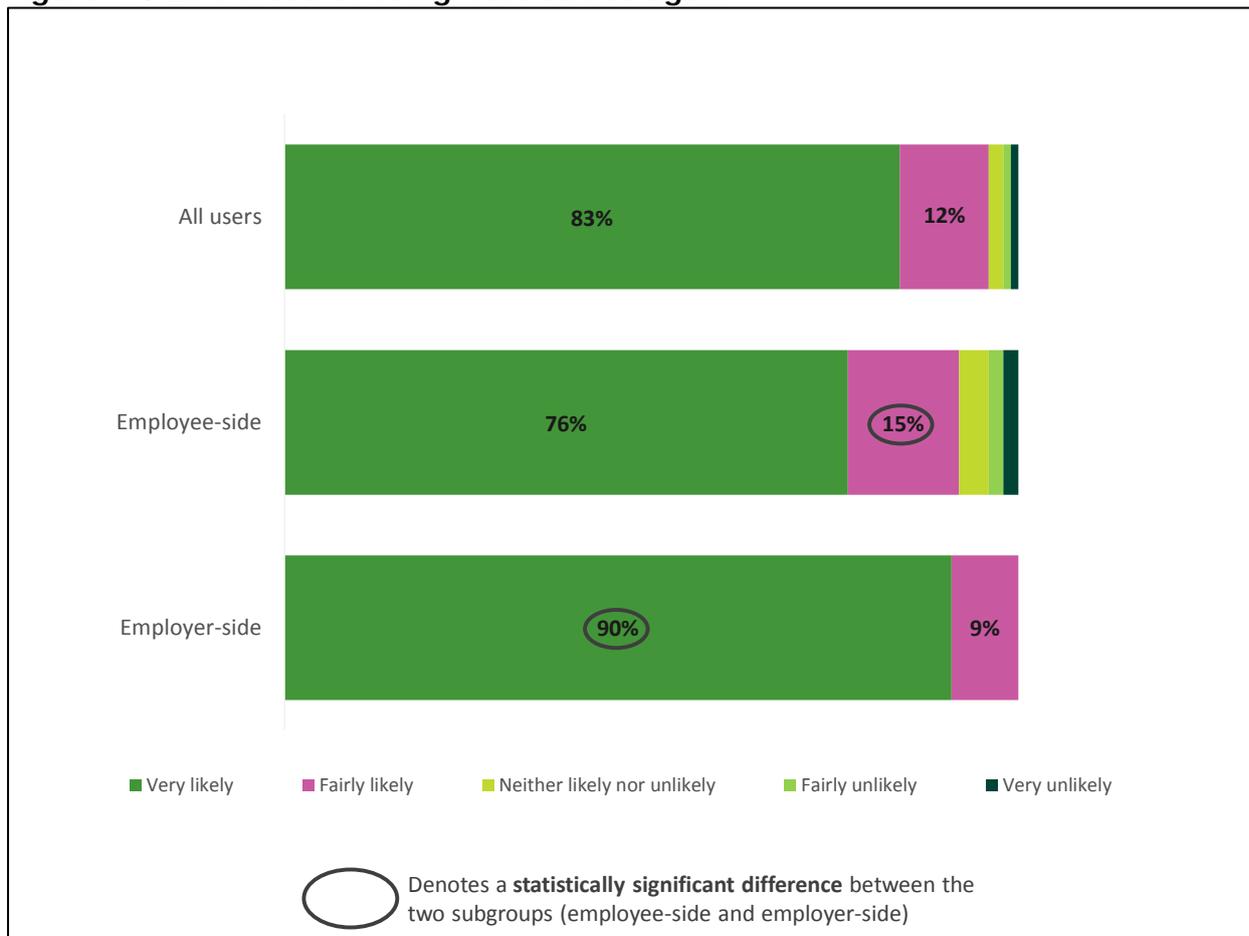


Q: How likely are you to recommend Acas advice to a friend or work colleague? Base: All (3581); Employee-side (1659); Employer-side (1717).

The overwhelming majority (95 per cent) of users indicated that they were likely to use Acas digital advice again, at some point in the future: 83 per cent of all users said that they were 'very' likely to use the advice again, with a further 12 per cent being 'fairly' likely to do so. Just two per cent of all users of Acas digital advice judged that they were unlikely to use it again in the future.

As with satisfaction and likelihood to recommend to others, employer-side users were more likely to state that they would use Acas advice again: 99 per cent of all employer-side users stated that they were likely to use Acas advice again in the future, compared with 91 per cent of employee-side users. Meanwhile 90 per cent of all employer-side users reported that were 'very likely' to use Acas advice again, while 76 per cent of those on the employee-side said the same. Just one per cent of all employer-side users and three per cent of their employee-side counterparts said that they were unlikely to use Acas advice again (the difference here between the groups was significant, although both proportions are extremely low).

Figure 4.8 Likelihood of using Acas advice again



Q: How likely are you to use Acas advice again? Base: All (3581); Employee-side (1659); Employer-side (1717).

There were no significant differences when considering the different age profiles of users in terms of their likelihood to recommend Acas advice to a friend or work colleague and only very small differences in respect of users' own likelihood to use Acas digital advice again, with those between the age of 35 and 54 being significantly more likely (96 per cent) than users over the age of 55 (94 per cent) to envisage being likely to use it again in the future.

Users who were visiting the Acas website to read about discipline, dismissal and grievance (93 per cent) or pay (92 per cent) were significantly less likely to state that they would use the Acas advice again. Conversely, 99 per cent of users visiting the website for advice about family friendly and parental rights stated that they were likely to use the advice again. Of course, this may be a reflection of the fact that any self-assessment of a person's likelihood to reuse advice in the future will in part be driven by their anticipation of being in a situation where they would even *require* that advice again.

Users who visited the Acas website on a computer were significantly more likely to say that they were likely to use Acas advice again (96 per cent) than those visiting on a mobile phone or tablet (93 per cent), although the difference here was modest. Mirroring earlier satisfaction findings, users who read long-form advice (PDFs) on the Acas website were significantly more likely to report that they were likely to use Acas digital advice again (98 per cent) than other users.

4.5 Agreement with statements describing Acas digital advice

When presented with a series of positive statements about Acas digital advice, the majority of users expressed agreement.

- 92 per cent of users agreed that *the Acas website was trustworthy*
- 89 per cent of users agreed that *the information was presented in an impartial way* and that *it was presented in a way that was easily understood*.
- 86 per cent of users agreed that *the website was up to date*
- 85 per cent agreed that *it was valuable to them*
- 74 per cent of all users felt that *the advice helped them to decide what to do next*
- 73 per cent felt that *it had given them the confidence to deal with similar issues in the future*
- 71 per cent of users felt that *the advice had addressed their enquiry in full*.
- Finally, 70 per cent of users agreed that *the advice was their main source of information on the issue*.

There were several significant differences between employer-side users and employee-side users; employer-side users were significantly more likely to have agreed to each of the statements presented except that *the Acas website was their main source of information on this issue* (employee-side 73 per cent, employer-side 69 per cent); in this instance employee-side users were significantly more likely to agree.

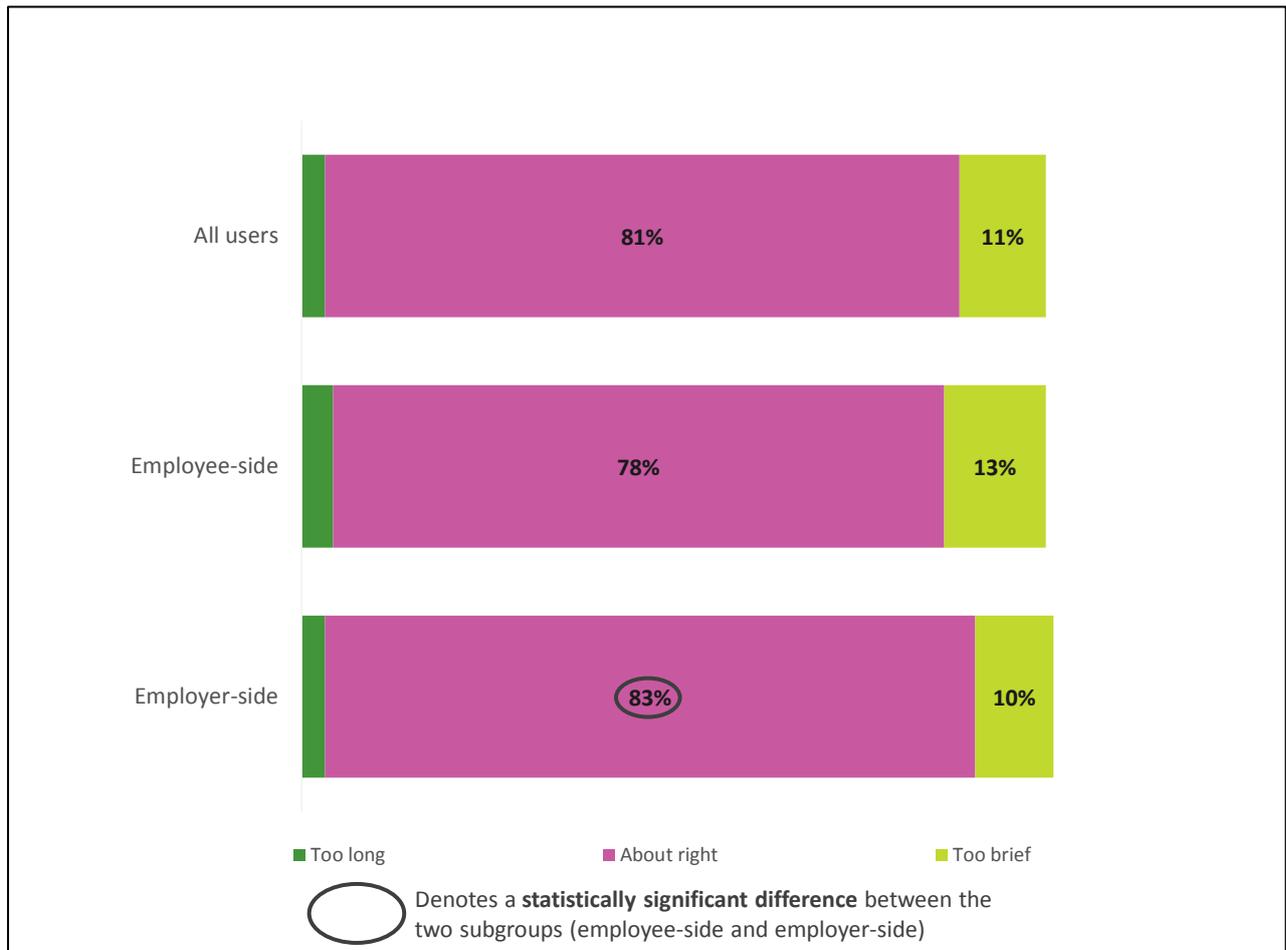
When grouping users by topic, there were some significant differences regarding their likelihood to agree with these statements. The most common difference related to users visiting the page regarding family friendly and parental rights. These individuals were significantly more likely than other users to agree that *the advice was trustworthy* (96 per cent compared with 92 per cent overall), *was up to date* (92 per cent compared with 86 per cent overall), *was valuable to them* (90 per cent compared with 85 per cent overall), that *the advice helped them to decide what to do next* (82 per cent compared with 74 per cent overall) and that *it gave them confidence to deal with similar issues in the future* (80 per cent compared with 73 per cent overall).

In addition to these differences, users looking for advice relating to absence, sickness and health were more likely to agree that *the Acas website was trustworthy* than other users (94 per cent compared with 92 per cent overall) and that *it was presented in an impartial way* (93 per cent compared with 89 per cent overall). Users who visited the website regarding holidays and working time (78 per cent) and pay (77 per cent) were both more likely than other users to agree that *the Acas website was the main source of information for this employment related issue* (compared with 70 per cent overall). Users who were reading about holidays and working time related issues were also significantly more likely than other users to have agreed that the advice was presented in an impartial way (93 per cent compared with 89 per cent overall).

4.6 Appropriateness of the length of advice

The majority of users felt that the length of the advice offered by Acas was about right (81 per cent). If users felt that the advice was of an inappropriate length, it was more common for them to say that it was too brief (11 per cent) than too long (three per cent). Employer-side users were significantly more likely to have described the length as being appropriate (83 per cent) than employee-side users (78 per cent). Employee-side users were significantly more likely to describe the advice as too brief (13 per cent) or too long (four per cent) than employer-side users (10 per cent and three per cent respectively).

Figure 4.9 Views regarding the appropriateness of the length of Acas digital advice



Q: Would you say that the length of the Acas digital advice that you read was...? Base: All (3581); Employee-side (1659); Employer-side (1717).

When considering judgements about the length of advice by the topic at issue, few significant differences arose. Users looking for advice about pay were significantly less likely to have thought that it was too long (one per cent) than other users. Conversely, users who read advice about absence, sickness, health and well-being were significantly more likely to have felt that it was about the right length (85 per cent) than other users.

Perhaps not surprisingly, users who also called the Acas helpline were significantly less likely to say that the length of the digital advice was appropriate (68 per cent). As might be expected, these individuals were more likely to feel that the advice was too brief (16 per cent) rather than too long (seven per cent).

Repeat users of the Acas website were significantly more likely feel that advice was 'about the right length' (82 per cent) than first-time users of the website (76 per cent). And first time-users were significantly more likely to judge that the advice was too long (five per cent) than repeat users (three per cent).

As might be expected, users who confirmed having downloaded long-form advice (PDFs) were significantly more likely than others to assert that the length of the Acas digital advice they read was too long (four per cent), although even here the proportion is very small indeed.

Finally, users who were generally dissatisfied with the advice received were significantly more likely than other users to say that it was too brief (42 per cent) or, to a lesser extent, too long (nine per cent); so too were users who felt that their problem had not been solved (33 per cent and eight per cent respectively).

5. ENGAGEMENT WITH ACAS DIGITAL ADVICE AND ACTIONS TAKEN THEREAFTER

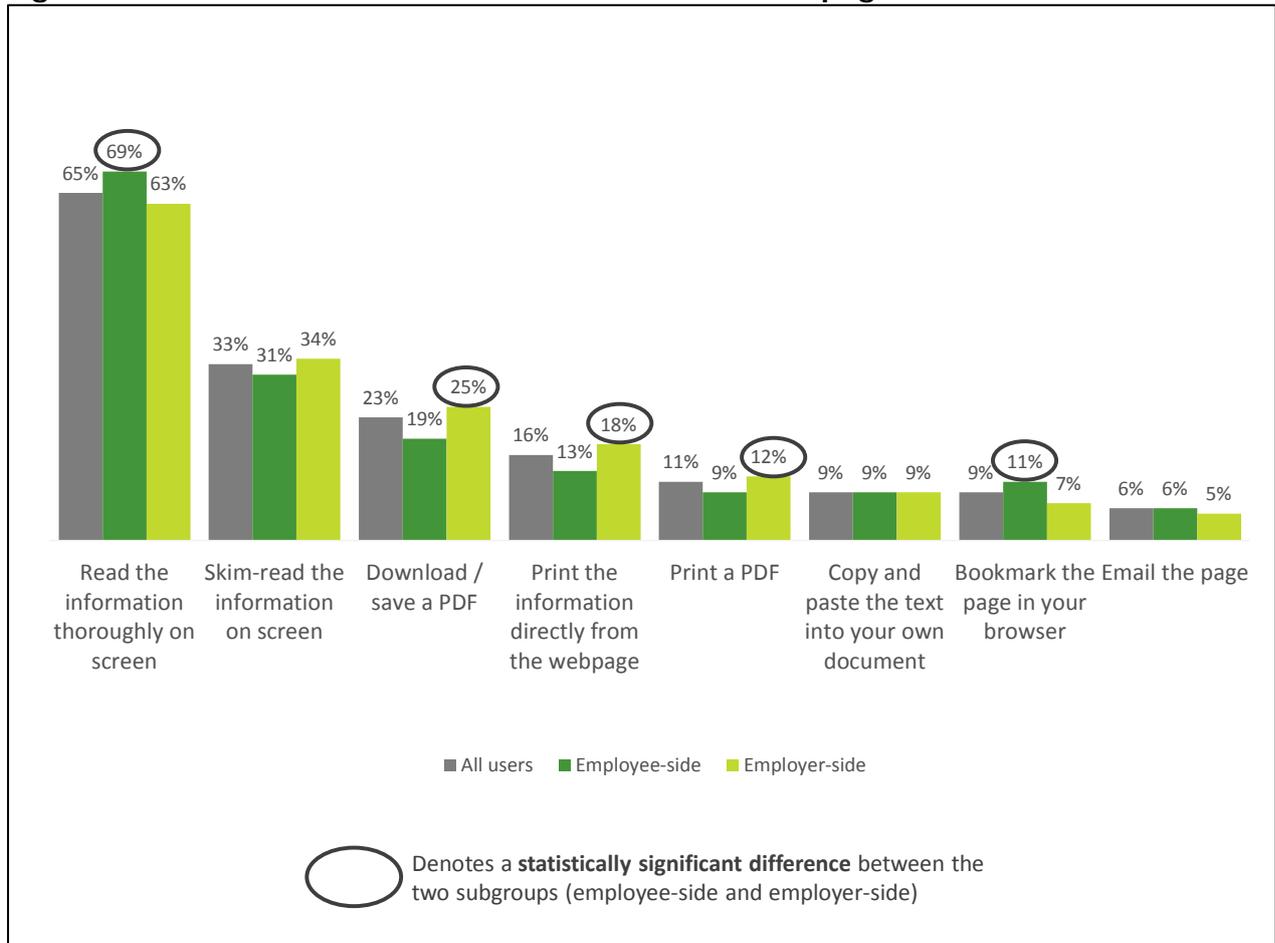
5.1 Modes of Acas digital advice consumption

Users reported having engaged with Acas digital advice in a number of different ways. The majority of users confirmed having viewed the digital advice at issue 'on-screen' rather than offline; 65 per cent of users read the information *thoroughly* on screen and a further 33 per cent of users described themselves as having *skim-read* the information on screen. Twenty-three per cent of users downloaded or saved a PDF (i.e. long-form advice). Less common was for user to print physical copies; 23 per cent printed the information directly from the webpage and 11 per cent printed a PDF. Other, less common, ways of having engaged with content were to have copied and pasted the text into a document (nine per cent), bookmarked the page in a browser (nine per cent) and emailed the page (six per cent).⁵

There were some significant differences between employee-side and employer-side users in the way that each group viewed Acas advice pages. Employee-side users were significantly more likely to have read the information thoroughly on-screen (69 per cent) or to have bookmarked the page in their browser (11 per cent) than employer-side users (63 per cent and seven per cent respectively). Conversely, employer-side users were significantly more likely to have downloaded or saved a PDF (25 per cent), printed the information directly from the webpage (18 per cent) or printed a PDF (12 per cent) than employee-side users (19 per cent, 13 per cent and nine per cent respectively). Employer-side users were also significantly more likely (25 per cent) to have printed the information out than employee-side users (18 per cent), perhaps signalling their intention to treat it as a longer-term resource.

⁵ These responses were not mutually exclusive and so sum to more than 100 per cent.

Figure 5.1 How Acas website users viewed the advice pages



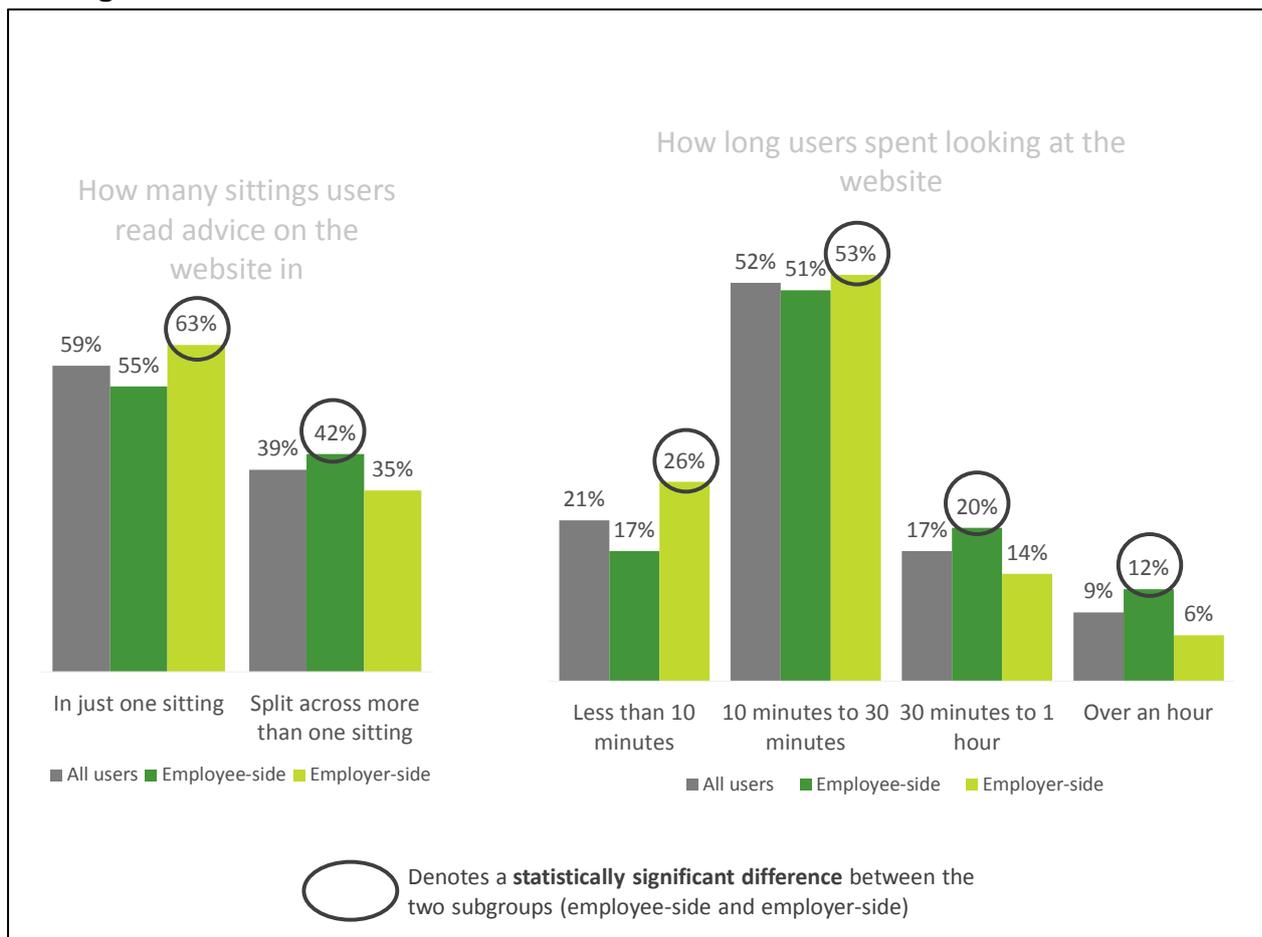
Q: Firstly, thinking about when you were looking at the advice on the Acas website, did you...? Base: All (3581); Employee-side (1659); Employer-side (1717).

Users who visited the website for advice relating to diversity, equality and discrimination (30 per cent) or discipline, dismissal and grievance (26 per cent) were significantly more likely than others to have downloaded or saved a PDF. Similarly, users looking for advice relating to discipline, dismissal and grievance (14 per cent) were significantly more likely to print a PDF, perhaps indicating a need for using this particular material in offline settings (e.g. to take physical copies to disciplinary meetings). Users looking for advice regarding pay (13 per cent) were significantly less likely to have downloaded or saved a PDF, while users looking for advice regarding contracts and working arrangements (eight per cent) or holidays and working time (three per cent) were significantly less likely than other users to have downloaded or saved a PDF. Users looking for information relating to holidays and working time were also significantly less likely to have printed the information out (15 per cent).

5.2 Duration of engagement with advice and number of sittings

Fifty-nine per cent of users viewed the information on the Acas advice pages in one sitting rather than across multiple sittings (39 per cent). The most common amount of time spent reading the advice was 10 to 30 minutes (52 per cent), with 79 per cent of users spending 10 minutes or longer on the Acas website in total (17 per cent spent between 30 minutes and an hour on the website, and nine per cent of users spent over an hour).

Figure 5.2 Number of sittings taken to view advice and total time taken spent looking at Acas website



Q: Thinking about when you looked at the advice, did you refer to it ...? and In total, how long would you say you spent reading the advice? Base: All (3581); Employee-side (1659); Employer-side (1717).

Employer-side users tended to consume advice for shorter time periods and split across fewer sittings than their employee-side counterparts. The former were significantly more likely to have consulted Acas advice in just one sitting (63 per cent) than employee-side users (55 per cent), with employee-side users being significantly more likely to have consulted the advice across multiple sittings (42 per cent) than employer-side users (35 per cent). Employer-side users were also significantly more likely to have spent less than 10 minutes consulting the advice (26 per cent) or for between 10 and 30 minutes (53 per cent) than employee-side users (17 per cent and 51 per cent respectively). Conversely, employee-side users were significantly more likely to have spent 30 minutes to an hour (20 per cent) or over an hour (12 per cent) than employer-side users (14 per cent and six per cent respectively).

Several significant topic-related differences are in evidence: users who were looking for advice regarding holidays and working time (73 per cent), family friendly and parental rights (72 per cent), pay (71 per cent) and contracts and working arrangements (62 per cent) were all significantly more likely to have read advice on the Acas website in just one sitting. Similarly, users reading about family friendly and parental rights (33 per cent) or holidays and working time (32 per cent) were significantly more likely to spend less than 10 minutes reading the advice. On the other hand, users who were looking for advice relating to discipline, dismissal and grievance (50 per cent), diversity, equality and discrimination (47 per cent) and redundancy, lay-offs and business transfers (47 per cent) were significantly more likely to view the advice across more than one sitting. Users looking for advice relating to diversity, equality and discrimination (17 per cent) or discipline, dismissal and grievance (13 per cent) were also significantly more likely than all other users to report having spent more than an hour reading the advice.

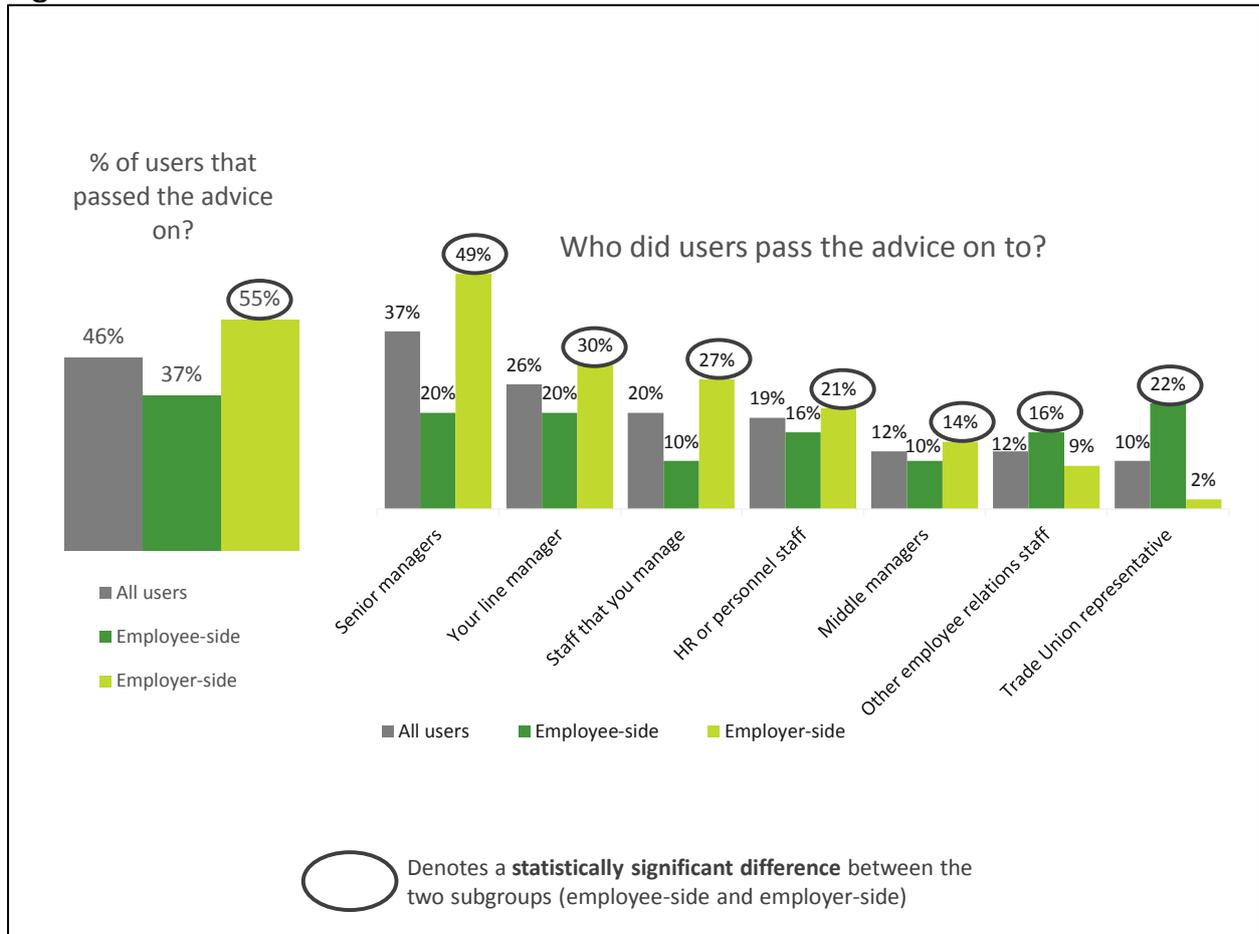
As stands to reason, users who spent more than an hour reading the advice were significantly more likely to say that it was too long (8 per cent) than those who spent less than an hour reading the advice (3 per cent).

Users who viewed the advice on a computer were significantly more likely (60 per cent) to have done so in just one sitting than users who viewed the advice on a mobile phone or tablet (53 per cent), while mobile phone users were also significantly more likely to have viewed the advice in more than one sitting (44 per cent) than computer users (38 per cent). Perhaps unsurprisingly, 55 per cent of users who read long-form formats of the advice (PDFs) read the information in more than one sitting; significantly more than other users.

5.3 Whether users share the advice and who they share it with

In all, 46 per cent of users shared the advice that they looked at with somebody else. Employer-side users were significantly more likely to do this (55 per cent) than employee-side users (37 per cent). Most commonly, the information was shared with managers: 37 per cent of users who shared information with others passed it on to senior managers and 26 per cent shared with their own line manager. Twenty per cent of users who shared the information did so with staff that they manage and another 19 per cent shared it with HR or personnel staff. It was less common for users who shared the advice to do so with middle managers (12 per cent), other employee relations staff (12 per cent) or a Trade Union Representative (10 per cent), even if the proportions sharing advice with these individuals are themselves not insignificant.

Figure 5.3 Whether and with whom advice was shared



Q: Thinking about the advice on the Acas website that you referred to, have you forwarded or passed this information on to others in your organisation? All (3581); Employee-side (1659); Employer-side (1717). Who did you forward or pass this onto? If they have passed the information on to others in their organisation. (1634); Employee-side (609); Employer-side (943).

Employer-side users were significantly more likely to share the advice with each type of individual, except for a Trade Union representative (employee side 22 per cent, employer-side two per cent) or 'other employee relations staff' (employee-side 16 per cent, employer-side nine per cent), employee-side users being significantly more likely to share information with these two sources. It is worth highlighting here that employee-side users were also significantly more likely to have contacted a Trade Union *before* visiting Acas digital advice pages (16 per cent) than employer-side users (one per cent), which may be a factor in this difference.

Users looking for advice regarding family friendly and parental rights (57 per cent) and holidays and working time (54 per cent) were significantly more likely to have passed on to others the information that they read, while those looking for information relating to discipline, dismissal and grievance (40 per cent) were significantly less likely to have done so. Users who had previously used the Acas website were significantly more likely to share the information (50 per cent) than first-time users of the Acas website (32 per cent).

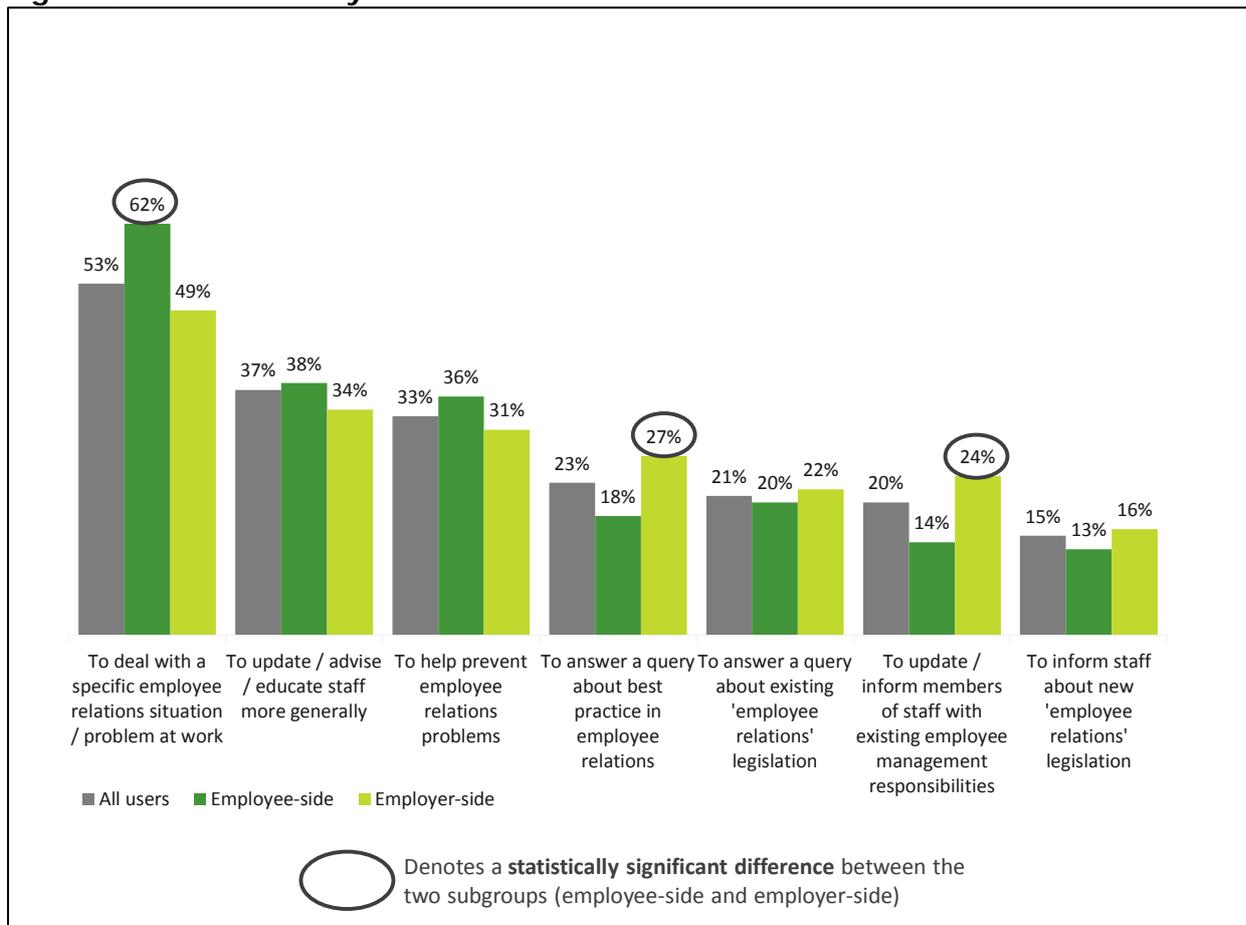
Advice sharing with trade union representatives and subordinates varied by topic along the lines that would be expected: users looking for information regarding discipline, dismissal and grievance were both significantly more likely than other users to share the advice with a Trade Union representative (16 per cent) and significantly less likely to share it with staff who they manage (15 per cent). Users reading information about diversity,

equality and discrimination (18 per cent) were also significantly more likely to have shared the advice with a Trade Union representative. Elsewhere, those reading about family friendly and parental rights issues were significantly more likely to share the advice with staff that they manage (31 per cent) and human resources or personnel staff (27 per cent). Users reading about topics relating to managing staff (23 per cent) were significantly more likely than others to share the advice with junior managers or supervisors in their place of work.

5.4 Reasons for sharing Acas digital advice

The most common reason given for sharing advice was to deal with a specific employee relation situation at work (53 per cent). However, there were a range of specific, general and preventative reasons given for passing information on. For example, the next two most common reasons given for sharing advice were to update, advise or educate staff generally (37 per cent), and to help prevent employee relations problems (33 per cent). Users also shared advice for reasons including answering a query about best practice in employee relations (23 per cent), answering a query about existing employee relations legislation (21 per cent), updating or informing members of staff with employee management responsibilities (20 per cent), and informing staff about new employee relations legislation (15 per cent).

Figure 5.4 Reasons why users shared Acas advice



Q. Why did you pass this information on to these people? If they have passed the information on to others in their organisation. (1634); Employee-side (609); Employer-side (943).

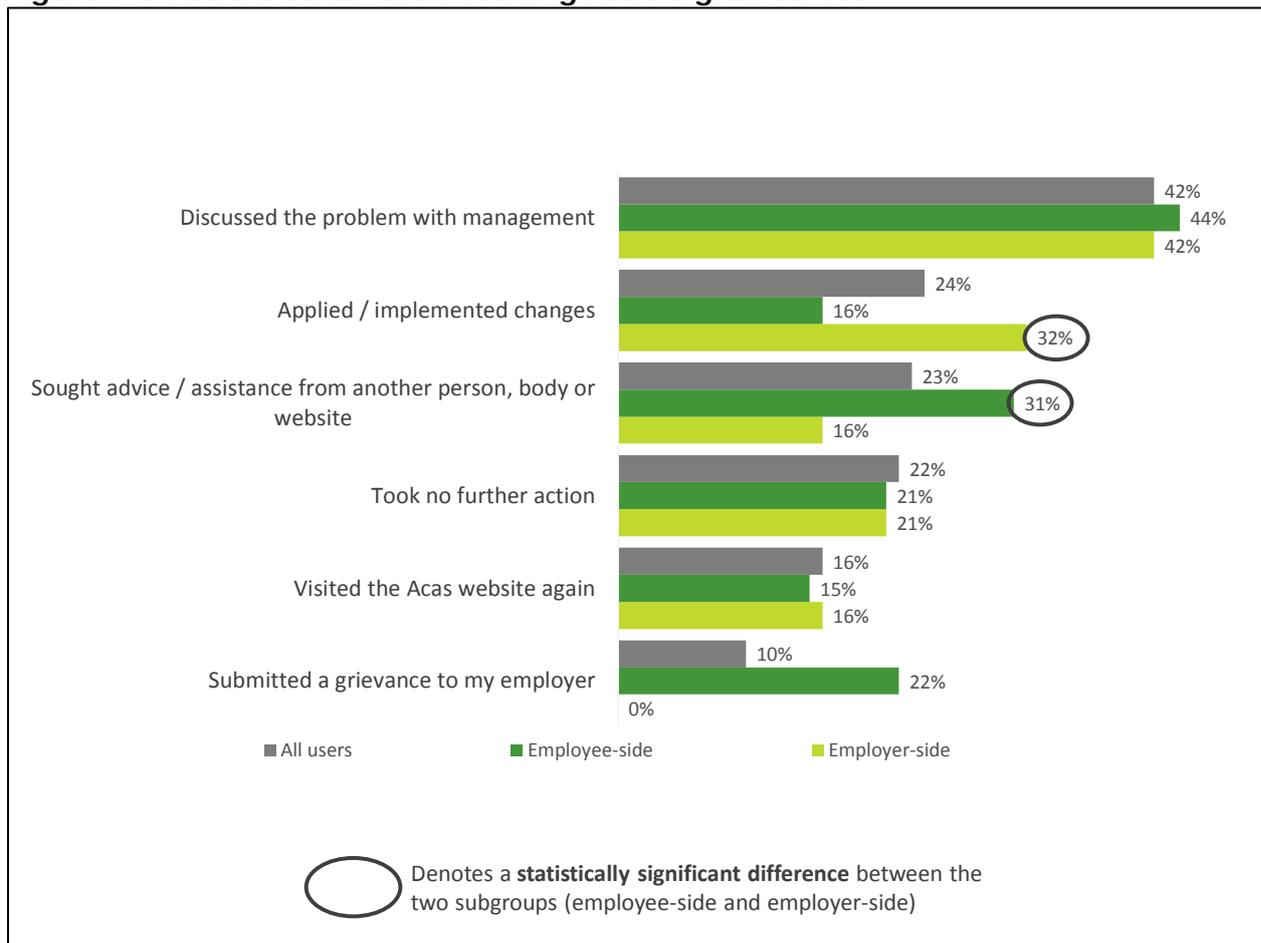
Reasons given for sharing varied by topic in some cases. For instance, users who were reading about absence, sickness, health and well-being were significantly more likely than other users to share Acas digital advice in order to deal with a specific employee relations situation at work (61 per cent) or to help prevent employee relations problems (39 per cent), perhaps reflecting the acute *and* recurring nature of staff absence as problem for many organisations. Elsewhere, users who were reading about discipline, dismissal and grievance were notable in two ways: first, they were significantly *more* likely than others to have shared the advice in order to deal with a specific employee relations problem (67 per cent), and; second, they were significantly *less* likely than others to have done so in order to answer a query about existing legislation (16 per cent) or to inform staff about new legislation (10 per cent).

Meanwhile, those who were reading about redundancy, lay-offs and business transfer-related topics were significantly more likely than other users to have shared information in order to deal with a specific employee relations problem at work (64 per cent). Users looking for advice about family friendly and parental rights (33 per cent) or holidays and working time (31 per cent) were significantly more likely to have shared advice to answer a query about existing employee relations. And perhaps unsurprisingly, users who were reading about managing staff were significantly more likely than other website users to have shared information to update and inform members of staff with existing employee management responsibilities (39 per cent) or to prepare members of staff for new employee management responsibilities (36 per cent).

5.5 Actions taken after reading Acas digital advice

The majority of users (78%) took some form of action after reading Acas digital advice; only 22 per cent indicated that they took no further action whatsoever. The most common action taken was discussing the problem with management (42 per cent), followed by applying or implementing changes (24 per cent) and seeking advice or assistance from another source (23 per cent). Less common actions were for users to re-visit the Acas website (16 per cent) and to submit a grievance to their employer (10 per cent).

Figure 5.5 Actions taken after reading Acas digital advice



Q. Since you looked at advice on the Acas website, what further actions have you or the person you were looking at the advice on behalf of pursued? All (3581); Employee-side (1659); Employer-side (1717).

Several differences by user type are in evidence. First, employer-side users were significantly more likely to report having 'applied / implemented changes recommended in the Acas advice' (32 per cent) than employee-side users (16 per cent) after reading Acas digital advice; perhaps not surprising given this group's greater facility to enact many forms of workplace change. Employee-side users for their part were significantly more likely to have gone on to seek advice from another source (31 per cent) than employer-side users (16 per cent). Employee-side users were also asked if they had submitted a grievance to their employer since looking at advice on the Acas website; more than a fifth confirmed having done so (22 per cent). Employer-side users, for their part, were asked if they had taken any formal disciplinary action since looking at advice on the Acas website; just 7% of employer-side users reported having done so.

The profile of employee-side users who submitted a grievance to their employer after reading Acas advice was quite varied. Those who read about discipline, dismissal and grievance (20 per cent) and diversity, equality and discrimination (14 per cent) were significantly more likely to have submitted a grievance, as might be expected given how closely these subjects align with the action taken. Contrastingly, users looking for advice about contracts and working arrangements (six per cent), family friendly and parental rights (one per cent) and managing staff (one per cent) were significantly less likely than other users to have submitted a grievance since consulting Acas advice.

5.6 Workplace policy change effected by having read Acas digital advice

One of the key performance measures for Acas digital advice is the proportion of users who are '*helped to amend or introduce a policy*'. To this end, all users were asked whether, as a result of their having referred to the Acas advice:

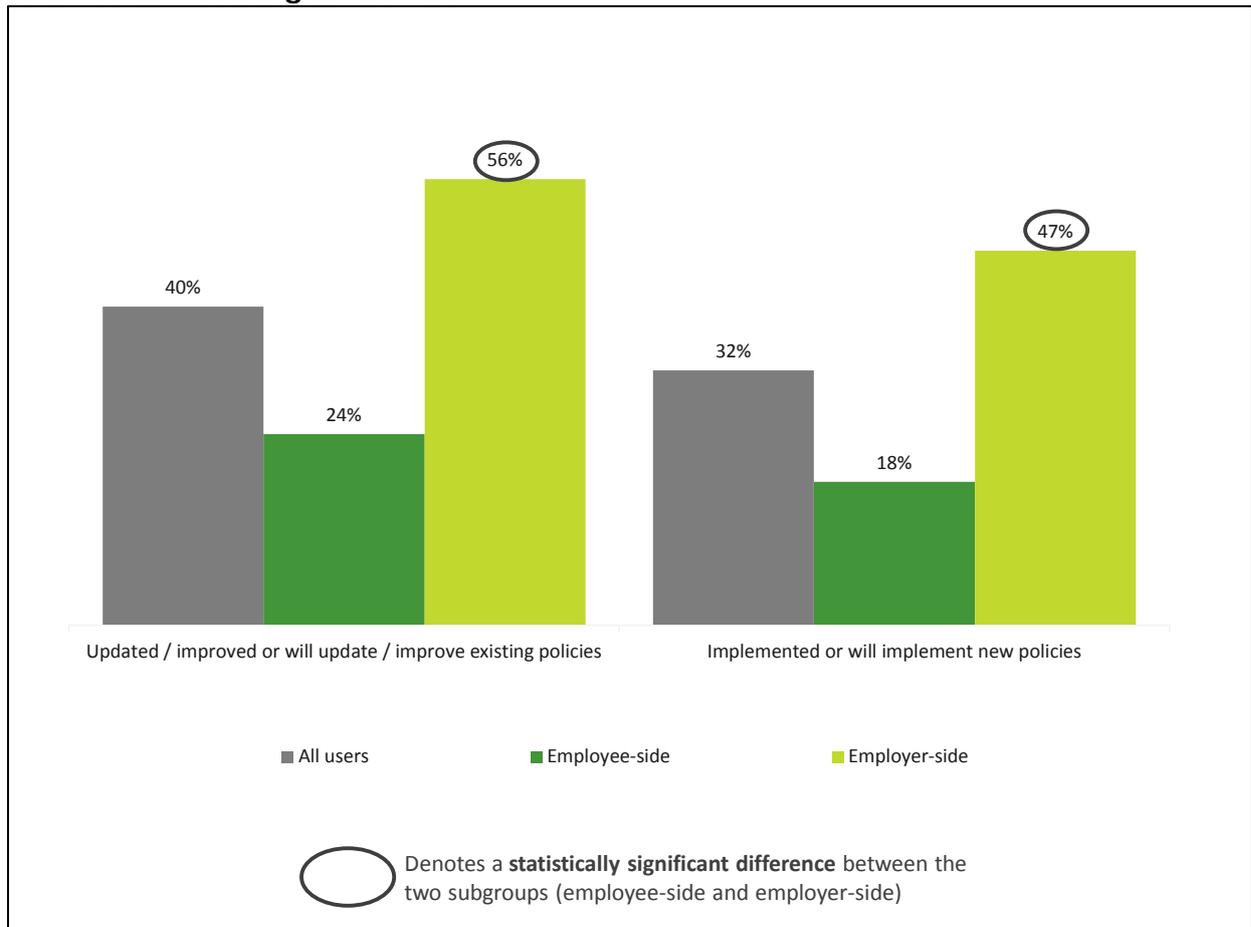
- a) any existing policies at their workplace had been or would be updated or improved, and;
- b) any new policies had been or would be implemented at their workplace

After reading the advice, it was more common for users to have updated or improved existing policies or to have plans to do so (40 per cent) than it was for them to have implemented entirely new policies or to have the plans to do so (32 per cent), although the short time lag (in some cases a little as one week) between reading the advice and being surveyed may be a significant factor here.

In both instances it was significantly more likely for employer-side users to report a policy change as having been made/planned; 56 per cent of employer-side users reported that existing policies had been or would be updated as a result of their having consulted Acas advice, compared to 24 per cent of employee-side users. Similarly, 47 per cent of employer-side users reported that new policies had been or would be implemented as a result of their having read Acas digital advice, compared to 18 per cent of employee-side users. These differences are not surprising given the greater direct influence that many employers will have to effect organisational policy change, relative to that of employees – although the question wording did account for this fact (i.e. it did not ask whether the reader had *personally* effected any policy change).

It is possible to widen the scope of this analysis and derive the proportion of all digital advice users surveyed for whom the advice helped them to amend *or* introduce a policy: this equates to 43 per cent of the total survey population (a combination of those whose workplaces had already done so and those whose workplaces had plans to do so).

Figure 5.6 Policy change at users' workplaces as a result of their having referred to Acas digital advice



Q. Which of the following have happened or are due to happen at your workplace or the workplace of the person you were referring the advice on behalf of as a result of you having referred to the Acas advice? All (3581); Employee-side (1659); Employer-side (1717).

The likelihood of workplace policies having been updated or introduced (or for plans to do either being put in place) as a result of referring to Acas advice varied by workplace size. Simply put: policy change resulting from having referred to Acas advice was most likely in smaller businesses. Businesses with fewer than ten employees (update existing policies 44%; implement new 35%) and those with 10 to 49 employees (update existing policies 45%; implement new 37%) were significantly more likely to have updated (or to have plans to update) or to have implemented new policies (or to have the plans to implement new policies) than businesses with 250 or more employees (update existing policies 37%; implement new 29%).

There was a good deal of variation in these data by advice topic. Users reading about topics regarding family friendly and parental rights (52 per cent) and contracts and working arrangements (44 per cent) were significantly more likely than other users to report existing policies being updated or improved (or for plans for this to happen). Contrastingly, users looking for advice regarding discipline, dismissal and grievance (32 per cent) or redundancy, lay-offs and business transfers (26 per cent) were significantly less likely to report existing policies having been updated (or for plans to this effect). Elsewhere, users having looked for advice about absence, sickness, health and well-being (37 per cent) and contracts and working arrangements (36 per cent) were significantly more likely to report the (planned) implementation of *new* policies at their workplace as a result of their having read the advice. It was significantly less likely for users reading about

discipline, dismissal and grievance (26 per cent) or redundancy, lay-offs and business transfers (20 per cent) report the (planned) implementation of new workplace policies than the average Acas digital advice reader.

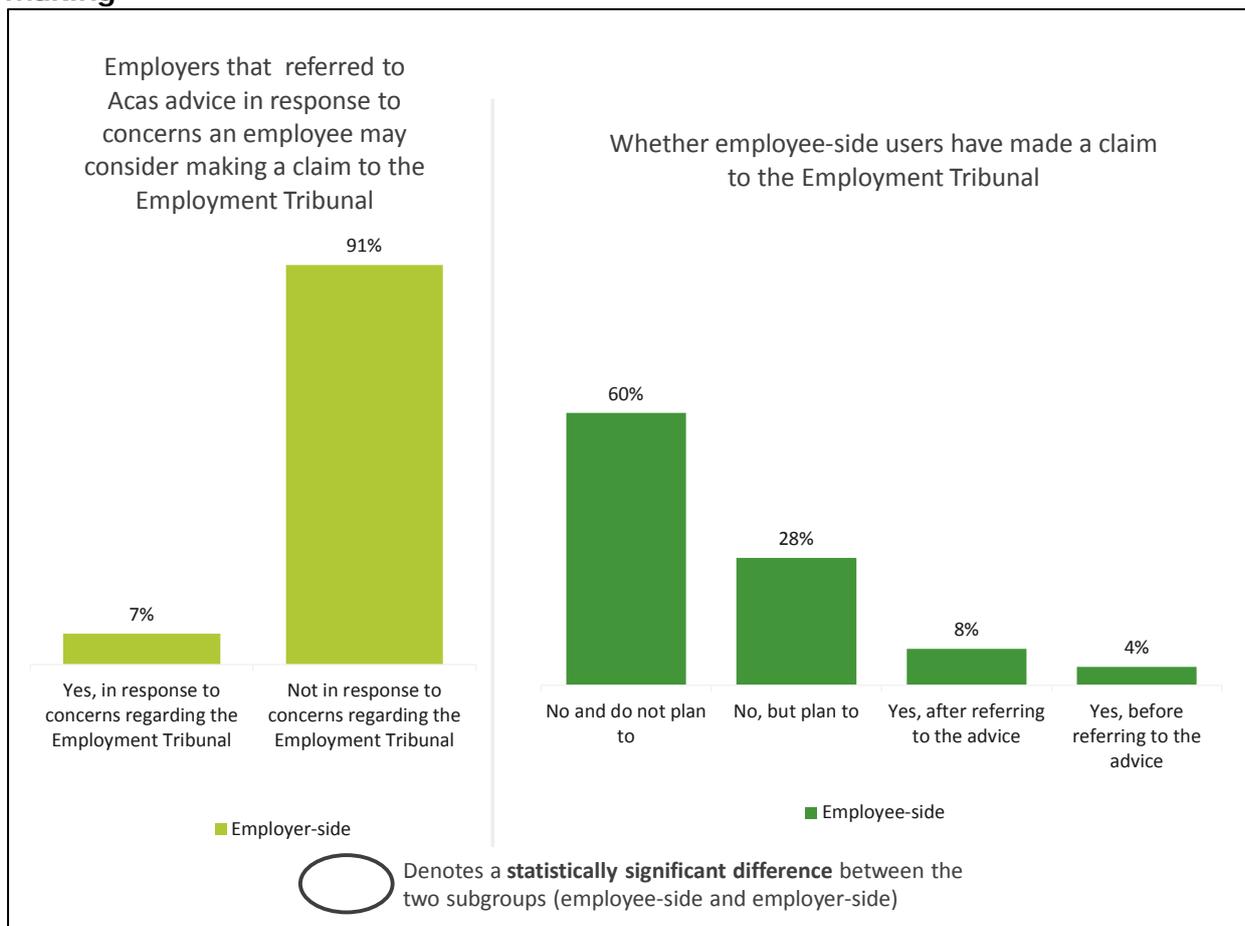
Users who felt that the advice had allowed them to solve their problem were significantly more likely to have updated or improved existing policies (44 per cent) or to have implemented new policies (34 per cent) than other users. Similarly, users who were generally satisfied with the advice were also significantly more likely to have updated (43 per cent) or implemented new policies (34 per cent) than the average Acas website user.

5.7 User interaction with the Employment Tribunals process

Prior to visiting the Acas website, the vast majority of users had not interacted with the Employment Tribunals process in any sense (either in the form of employees making Early Conciliation (EC) notifications to Acas or lodging ET claims, or in the form of employers reacting to concerns that employees may be considering these forms of action). Just seven per cent of employer-side users referred to Acas advice in response to concerns that one of their employees may consider making a claim to the Employment Tribunal. Similarly, only four per cent of employee-side users confirmed having made an EC notification/ET claim *before* referring to Acas digital advice.

A further eight per cent of employee-side users confirmed having made an EC notification/EC claim *after* consulting the Acas digital advice, with a further 28 per cent of employee-side users indicating that they had future plans to do so. It should be noted here that the process for initiating an ET claim is the notification of one's intention to bring a claim by means of submitting an online EC form via the Acas website.

Figure 5.7 Use of Acas digital advice in relation to Employment Tribunal claim-making



Q. When you referred to advice on the Acas website, was it in response to concerns that one or more of your employees or the employees of the person you were looking at the advice on behalf of, was considering making a claim to the Employment Tribunal? If employer, manager or employer representative (793). Have you made a claim to the Employment Tribunal and/or made an Early Conciliation (EC) notification to Acas, either before or after referring to advice on the Acas website? If not an employer or looking at the advice on behalf of an employer. (1600).

Employer-side users who were looking for advice regarding discipline, dismissal and grievance were significantly more likely (23 per cent) than other employer-side Acas website users to have referred to Acas advice in relation to concerns regarding the Employment Tribunal. Conversely, employer-side users who were visiting the website in relation to holidays and working time were significantly less likely to have been looking for advice in relation to concerns regarding the Employment Tribunal (one per cent) than other employer-side Acas website users.

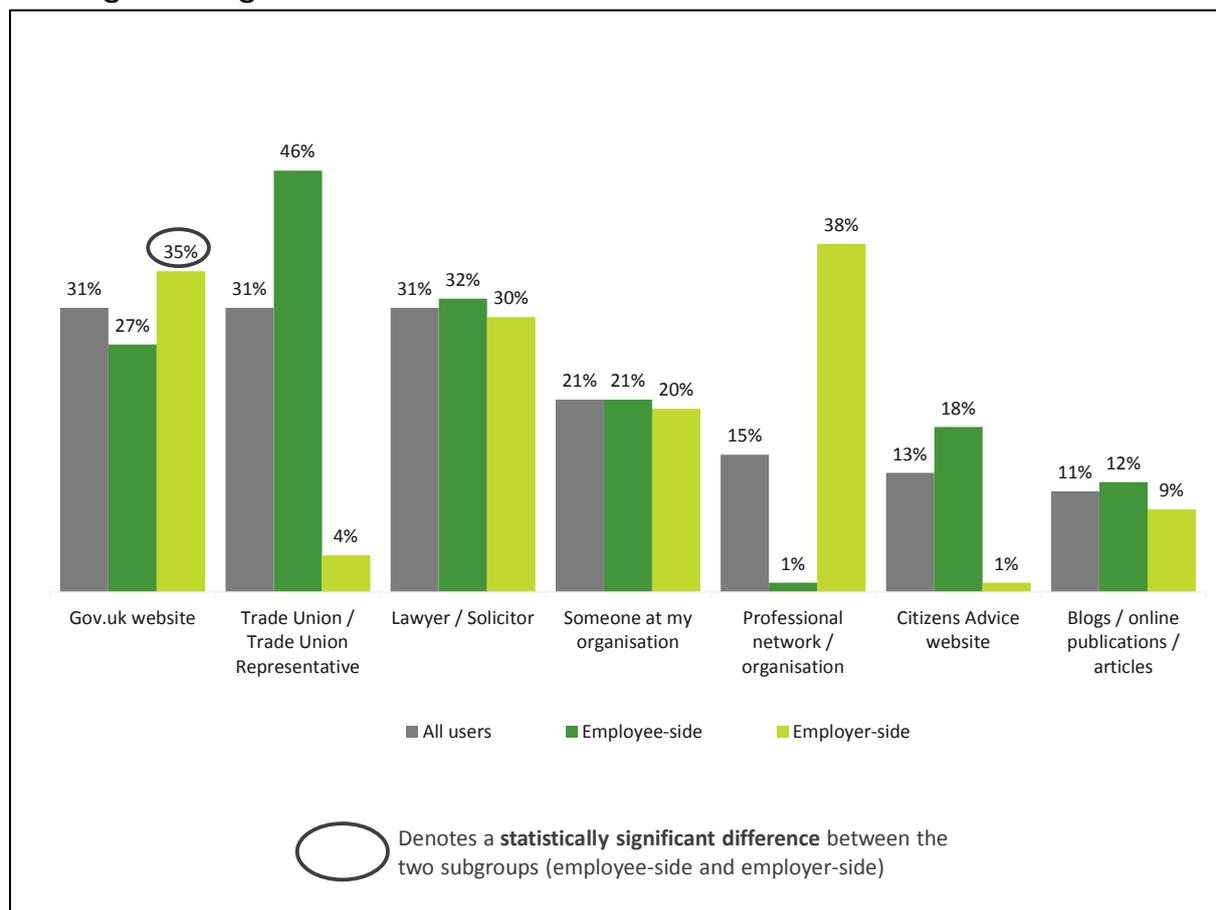
Employees who were referring to Acas digital advice about diversity, equality and discrimination (18 per cent) and discipline, dismissal and grievance (15 per cent) were significantly more likely to have made a claim to the Employment Tribunal than other employee-side advice users. Conversely, employee-side users who were looking for advice regarding contracts and working arrangements were significantly less likely (seven per cent) to have made a claim to the Employment Tribunal than all other employee-side users.

5.8 Advice-seeking elsewhere after referring to Acas digital advice

Of the 23 per cent of users who confirmed having sought advice from another source *after* consulting Acas, several sources emerge as having been consulted most regularly. Thirty one per cent of these users consulted the Gov.uk website and the same proportion sought advice from a Trade Union representative or a lawyer following their use of the Acas digital advice. A further 21 per cent of these users spoke to somebody else at their organisation, 15 per cent sought advice from a professional network or organisation, 13 per cent went to the Citizens Advice website and 11 per cent read blogs, online publications or articles.

The type of user who utilised each of these other sources after reading Acas digital advice varied significantly. Employer-side users were significantly more likely to have gone on to use the Gov.uk website (35 per cent) than employee-side users (27 per cent). Employer-side users also reported having sought advice from professional networks or organisations (38 per cent of employer-side users), online HR resources (21 per cent of employer-side users), external HR advisors or consultancies (20 per cent of employer-side users) and employer associations (six per cent of employer-side users).

Figure 5.8 Sources from which users most commonly sought advice after reading Acas digital advice



Q. Which people, bodies or websites did you seek advice from after looking at advice on the Acas website? If looked at other web based advice from other organisations. (798); Employee-side (504); Employer-side (264).

Other sources consulted in smaller numbers by users after reading Acas digital advice, not presented in Figure 5.8, include Citizens Advice office visits (eight per cent), social media (two per cent), friends and family (two per cent) and various other sources.

As elsewhere, significant differences in these data by advice topic abound:

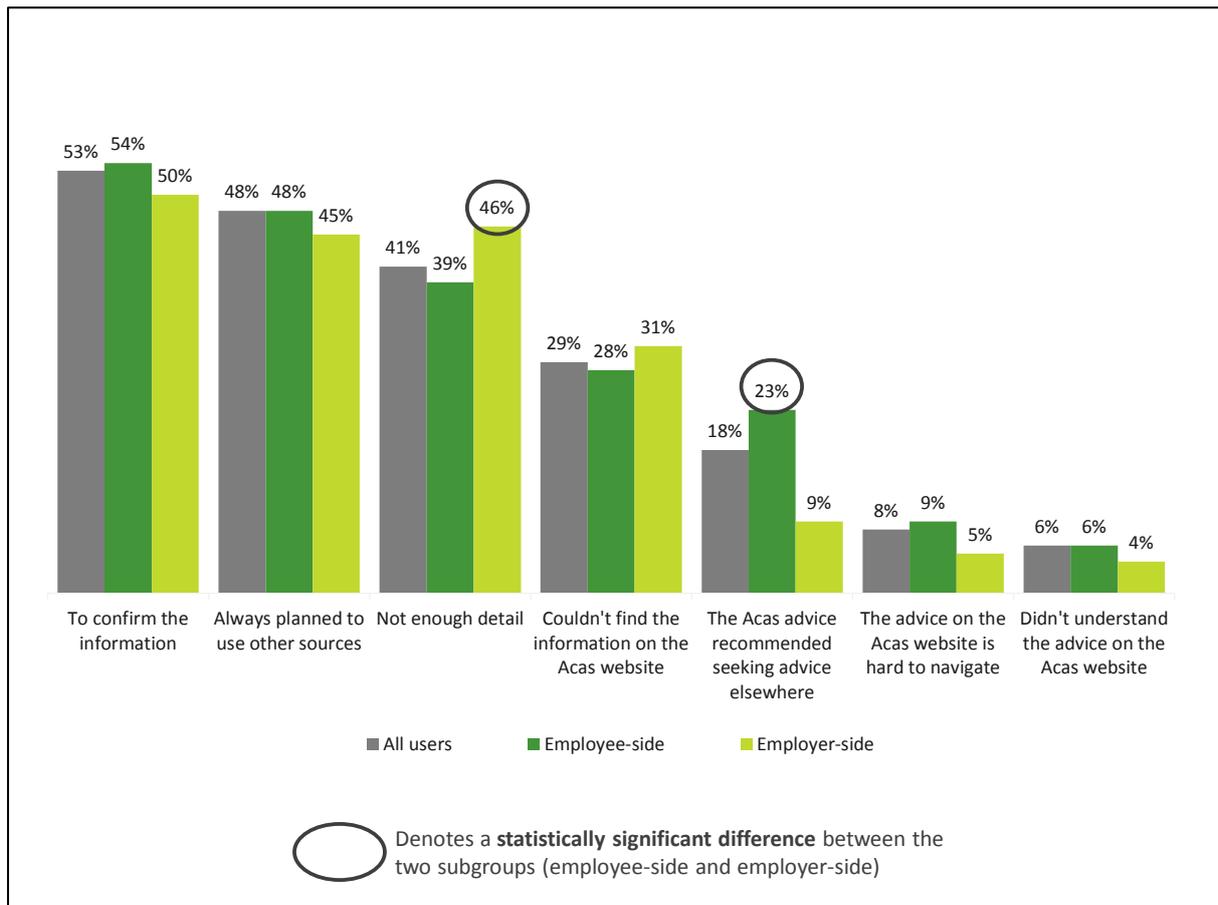
- Users looking for advice regarding absence, sickness, health and wellbeing were significantly more likely to subsequently seek advice from someone at their company (33 per cent), a professional network or organisation (23 per cent), or a lawyer or solicitor (20 per cent).
- Users looking for advice regarding contracts and working arrangements were more likely to seek advice from the Gov.uk website after visiting the Acas website (42 per cent) than were other users.
- Users who had been reading Acas advice regarding discipline, dismissal and grievance were significantly more likely to have gone on to consult a lawyer (37 per cent) or a Trade Union representative (37 per cent), but less likely to have visited Gov.uk website (23 per cent) or the Citizens Advice website (17 per cent).
- Users who read advice about redundancy, lay-offs and business transfers were significantly more likely to go on to consult a lawyer or solicitor (40 per cent) or discussed the topic with somebody else at their company (28 per cent).

5.9 Reasons for looking elsewhere for information after reading Acas digital advice

Respondents were asked why they went on to look elsewhere for the information they had sought on the Acas website. Most users responded that they had looked for information elsewhere as an addition, rather than as an alternative to the information that they had gained from the Acas website: 53 per cent of users 'wanted to confirm the information' that they had read on the Acas website' while 48 per cent of users had 'always planned to use other sources'. A further 18 per cent of users who looked elsewhere did so because Acas' own advice had advised this course of action.

Less positively, 41 per cent of users who looked elsewhere for advice after visiting Acas said that this was because insufficient detail had been provided by the Acas digital advice. Another 29 per cent reported having been unable to locate the information that they were looking for on the Acas website. Similarly, eight per cent of users who went elsewhere reasoned that the advice on the Acas website was hard to navigate, and finally six per cent of these users said that they did not understand the advice on the Acas website.

Figure 5.9 Reasons given for looking for information elsewhere after consulting Acas’s digital advice pages



Q. Why did you go on to look elsewhere for the information you sought on the Acas website? If they sought assistance from another body or if they used web based advice from other organisations (798); Employee-side (504); Employer-side (264).

Employer-side users were significantly more likely (46 per cent) than employee-side users (39 per cent) to have proceeded to look elsewhere for advice because they did not feel that the Acas digital advice was sufficiently detailed. On the other hand, employee-side users were significantly more likely (23 per cent) than employer-side users (nine per cent) to go on to look elsewhere precisely because the Acas advice had recommended this course of action. There were, however, no significant differences by the main topic that users had been looking for advice regarding.

Users who read the information thoroughly on screen were significantly more likely than other users to proceed to seek advice from another source because they ‘wanted to confirm the information’ (56 per cent), ‘always planned to use other sources’ (51 per cent) and because they felt that there was ‘not enough detail’ provided by Acas (46 per cent). On the other hand, users who skim-read the information on screen were significantly more likely than the composite group of all other users to seek advice elsewhere because they had always planned to (53 per cent), because they felt that the advice on the Acas website was too hard to navigate (11 per cent) or because they didn’t understand the Acas information (10 per cent). Users who read long-form advice (PDFs) were significantly more likely to seek advice elsewhere as they wanted to confirm the information that they had read (62 per cent) or because they always planned to use other sources (58 per cent); they were significantly less likely to do so because they couldn’t find the information or advice (23 per cent), however – as might be expected of this group.

APPENDIX 1: INDIVIDUAL DIGITAL ADVICE PAGES CODED INTO SURVEY RESPONSE OPTIONS

	Page views March- April 2018	%
1. Absence, sickness, health and well-being (e.g. Absence, Sick pay, Stress, Mental health)	73,603	4.7%
<i>Fitness for Work or Fit Notes (statement of)</i>	13	
<i>Stress</i>	22	
<i>Legal highs</i>	187	
<i>Working in hot temperatures</i>	505	
<i>Introducing Wellbeing to the Workplace</i>	640	
<i>Promoting positive mental health in the workplace</i>	1,457	
<i>Health and the workplace</i>	1,950	
<i>Managing staff experiencing mental ill health</i>	3,566	
<i>Managing anxiety in the workplace</i>	3,752	
<i>Wellbeing and Workplace Performance</i>	5,455	
<i>Alcohol and drugs policies</i>	5,477	
<i>Dealing with stress in the workplace</i>	8,201	
<i>Mental health in the workplace</i>	9,190	
<i>Managing staff absence</i>	13,104	
<i>Managing absence</i>	20,084	
2. Contracts and working arrangements (e.g. Zero hours contracts, T&Cs, Notice period/pay, Probation period, Flexible working, Varying a contract, Employment status)	182,774	11.7%
<i>Volunteer reserve services</i>	278	
<i>Job evaluation</i>	947	
<i>Automatic pension enrolment</i>	1,353	
<i>Volunteers, work experience and internships</i>	1,976	
<i>Sunday working</i>	2,040	
<i>Peripatetic Workers</i>	3,186	
<i>Overtime, opting out and compensatory rest</i>	3,871	
<i>The new employee's contract</i>	3,915	
<i>Written Statement - terms and conditions of employment</i>	4,494	
<i>Part-time workers</i>	5,869	
<i>Fixed Term Work</i>	9,961	
<i>Apprentices</i>	11,457	
<i>Employment Status Types</i>	14,097	
<i>Varying a contract of employment</i>	14,918	
<i>Agency workers</i>	16,650	
<i>Zero hours contracts</i>	25,451	
<i>The right to request flexible working</i>	29,365	
<i>Contracts of employment</i>	32,946	

3. Discipline, dismissal and grievance (e.g. Discipline procedures, Dismissal, Grievance procedures, Bullying/harassment, conducting investigations)	301,651	19.2%
<i>Arbitration</i>	2,302	
<i>Managing a complaint at work</i>	3,858	
<i>Managing conflict at work</i>	5,112	
<i>Conciliation</i>	5,196	
<i>Managing discipline</i>	6,325	
<i>Raising an issue at work</i>	6,822	
<i>Mediation</i>	7,391	
<i>Discipline and grievance hearing</i>	7,798	
<i>Grievance hearing</i>	8,131	
<i>Employment tribunals</i>	12,260	
<i>Settlement agreements</i>	15,533	
<i>Discipline</i>	16,249	
<i>Bullying and harassment</i>	18,902	
<i>Raising a grievance at work</i>	21,319	
<i>Dismissing employees</i>	22,522	
<i>Carrying out Investigations in the Workplace</i>	26,191	
<i>Discipline and grievances at work: The Acas guide</i>	29,511	
<i>Discipline and grievance - Code of practice</i>	86,229	
4. Diversity, equality and discrimination (e.g. Race/ Sex/ Disability/ Sexual orientation/ Religion or belief / Age discrimination, Equal pay, Reasonable adjustments, Disputes and problems at work)	161,446	10.3%
<i>Civil partnerships and marriage</i>	781	
<i>Older Workers - Rights at Work</i>	957	
<i>Sexual Orientation Discrimination</i>	1,713	
<i>Religion or belief discrimination</i>	1,916	
<i>Gender identity discrimination</i>	2,167	
<i>Unconscious bias</i>	3,022	
<i>Race discrimination</i>	4,292	
<i>Disputes and conflict in the workplace</i>	6,009	
<i>Conditions automatically treated as a disability</i>	6,195	
<i>Sexual Harassment</i>	7,536	
<i>Sex discrimination</i>	8,401	
<i>Age discrimination</i>	9,060	
<i>Equal pay</i>	17,769	
<i>Disability discrimination</i>	18,704	
<i>Discrimination</i>	26,178	
<i>Disputes and problems at work</i>	46,746	

5. Family friendly and parental rights (e.g. Maternity rights, Paternity rights, Parental leave, Leave relating to adoption, Time-off for dependants)	87,619	5.6%
<i>Workplace support for parents with premature or sick babies</i>	414	
<i>Surrogacy - rights for intended parents</i>	650	
<i>Adoption Leave and Pay</i>	3,114	
<i>IVF</i>	4,102	
<i>Time off for ante-natal appointments</i>	6,590	
<i>Parental Leave</i>	7,721	
<i>Pregnancy and maternity</i>	8,043	
<i>Paternity leave and pay</i>	10,101	
<i>Time off for dependants</i>	10,175	
<i>Shared Parental Leave</i>	11,639	
<i>Maternity leave and pay</i>	25,070	
6. Holidays and working time (e.g. Holiday entitlement, Working time regulations, Bank/public holidays)	141,952	9.1%
<i>Summer holiday guidance</i>	1,486	
<i>Jury service</i>	2,000	
<i>Holiday notice</i>	3,313	
<i>Christmas holiday guidance</i>	3,498	
<i>Bereavement in the workplace</i>	3,937	
<i>Religious Festivals and Holy Days</i>	5,332	
<i>Time off</i>	6,959	
<i>Holidays</i>	44,648	
<i>Working Hours</i>	70,779	
7. Managing staff (e.g. Managing people, younger workers, how to manage performance)	31,298	2.0%
<i>Productivity</i>	479	
<i>How to get the best out of your staff</i>	765	
<i>Managing in difficult times</i>	1,175	
<i>Settling in a new employee</i>	1,247	
<i>Employee engagement</i>	2,897	
<i>Having difficult conversations</i>	10,480	
<i>Performance Management</i>	14,255	
8. Pay (including National Minimum/Living Wage) (e.g. Non-payment/deduction of wage, National Minimum/Living Wage, Other wage issues)	225,745	14.4%
<i>National Living Wage</i>	4	
<i>National Minimum Wage - piece work</i>	1,094	
<i>Direct payments</i>	2,982	
<i>Handling pay and wages</i>	3,459	
<i>Pay</i>	15,285	
<i>Calculating holiday pay</i>	33,373	
<i>Gender pay reporting</i>	72,227	
<i>National Minimum Wage</i>	97,321	

9. Redundancy, lay-offs and business transfers (e.g. Redundancy/redundancy pay, Lay-offs /short-time work, TUPE, Company take-over/merger)	161,054	10.3%
<i>Employee turnover</i>	797	
<i>Handling small-scale redundancies</i>	18,321	
<i>Terminating employment - notice periods and pay</i>	42,785	
<i>Redundancy</i>	45,129	
<i>Transfer of Undertakings (TUPE)</i>	54,022	
10. Others (e.g. Trade union issues, Dress codes, Information and consultation issues, References, Data protection)	200,012	12.8%
<i>Major Sporting Events</i>	106	
<i>Work options after exam results</i>	169	
<i>Bribery</i>	220	
<i>Consultation</i>	1,191	
<i>Criminal Record Checks</i>	1,629	
<i>Collective bargaining</i>	2,012	
<i>The Human Rights Act</i>	2,375	
<i>First Job</i>	2,445	
<i>Information and consultation of employees: ICE</i>	2,690	
<i>Change management</i>	3,137	
<i>Recruiting an employee</i>	3,427	
<i>Codes of practice</i>	3,531	
<i>E-cigarettes</i>	4,150	
<i>Communication</i>	5,603	
<i>Whistle-blowing - Public Interest Disclosure</i>	5,625	
<i>Social media</i>	5,994	
<i>Retirement</i>	6,516	
<i>Dress Code and appearance in the workplace</i>	9,410	
<i>Recruitment and Induction</i>	11,218	
<i>Employment Law update</i>	16,941	
<i>References for Employment</i>	17,426	
<i>Data Protection</i>	19,907	
<i>Travel disruption</i>	74,290	
Total digital advice page views	1,567,154	100.0%