



September 2020

Pension Wise service evaluation

Experiences and outcomes of customers
using Pension Wise in 2019/20

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Foreword

This is the fourth annual Pension Wise service evaluation report, covering the 2019/20 financial year. Pension Wise is an important service provided by the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS). It functions alongside the other two bodies that were brought together in 2019 to form MaPS (the Money Advice Service and The Pensions Advisory Service).

Pension Wise was launched in 2015 as part of the implementation of the, then new, Pension Freedoms, which expanded the options of people accessing defined contribution pension pots. Since then it has provided free and impartial guidance to help people aged 50 or over to better understand what they can do with their pots, and the things they should take into consideration when deciding which options to take.



The service is provided face-to-face and over the phone, through valued delivery partners, and online. The online service was included in the service evaluation from 2018/19 onwards.

Pension Wise has continued to expand rapidly, from around 60,000 transactions in 2015/16 to over 200,000 transactions in 2019/20, an increase of 22% from 2018/19. While the service's reach has expanded, the quality and impact of the services delivered have remained consistently high, which this and previous reports in this series demonstrate.

This report covers the period before the main effects of the coronavirus pandemic, or COVID-19, were felt (ending in March 2020). COVID-19 has affected every aspect of life, including pension access and retirement planning for many. Pension Wise's main delivery channel (face-to-face) has had to be suspended, with telephone appointments offered as an alternative.

It's good to note that the excellent satisfaction ratings and positive impacts, evidenced in this report, were similar for both the telephone and face-to-face appointments.

MaPS is reviewing its pensions guidance services, with further expansion and integration likely in the coming years. It is also reviewing its service evaluation methodologies and reporting across the range of guidance services it provides.

This is likely to be the last in this series of Pension Wise service evaluation reports, making way for a new format. We feel that satisfaction levels and the impacts of Pension Wise are now well established, and that future reporting should be aligned with that of other MaPS services. In any case, MaPS will continue to monitor key metrics and trends in relation to Pension Wise.

The annual service evaluation of Pension Wise has consistently demonstrated the value of the service to its growing number of customers. We thank all those who have helped evaluate the service over the last four years, especially the team at Ipsos MORI.

I would also like to thank all those involved in providing these services, especially our delivery partners – Citizens Advice and The Pensions Advisory Service.

Carolyn Jones

Carolyn Jones
Head of Pensions Policy and Strategy
Money and Pensions Service

Contents

Summary	1
1 Introduction	8
2 Profiles of customer and non-customer groups	14
3 Customer acquisition and appointment booking	27
4 Overall satisfaction	35
5 Satisfaction with specific aspects	38
6 Advocacy	41
7 Potential improvements	44
8 Confidence and preparedness	47
9 Perceived understanding of pension options	53
10 Knowledge of the facts	59
11 Chosen pension options	64
12 Taking positive steps	70
Appendix: survey technical details	80


Summary

About Pension Wise

Pension Wise is a Government-backed national pensions guidance service. The service launched in 2015 following the introduction of new pension freedoms, which changed how those aged 50 and over could access their defined contribution pension pots. It provides free, impartial information and guidance to this group.

The service offers guidance through face-to-face and telephone appointments. Since July 2017, Pension Wise has also offered a digital self-serve guidance option on their website.

Continued increases in the number of appointments in 2019/20


 **Over 97,000**
face-to-face
appointments arranged
(+8% since 2018/19)


 **Around 62,000**
telephone
appointments arranged
(+55% since 2018/19)


 **Over 45,000**
self-serve journeys (via
Pension Wise website)
(+22% since 2018/19)


Source: Money and Pensions Service

About this service evaluation

 Ipsos MORI carried out a series of surveys with face-to-face and telephone appointment bookers, and self-serve web customers. We explored satisfaction with Pension Wise, and the impact the service has on knowledge, confidence and behaviour.

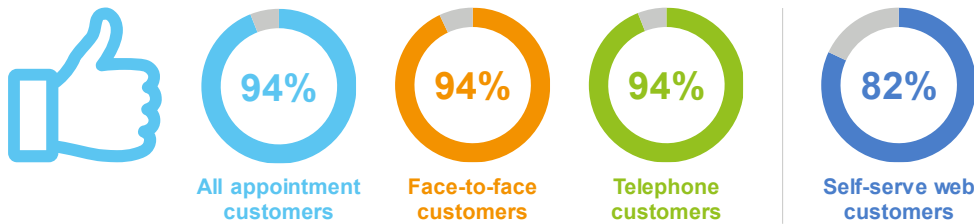
 This included initial surveys around one month after their interaction with Pension Wise and follow-up surveys roughly three months after using the service.

 We also carried out a separate survey of Pension Wise website visitors (who did not necessarily use the self-serve guidance) and non-users who are eligible for, but have not accessed, any Pension Wise guidance.

 This work follows three previous, comparable service evaluations in 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19. The 2018/19 evaluation was the first time that self-serve web customers were included.

High satisfaction with Pension Wise across all customers

% very or fairly satisfied with their overall experience



Bases: 1,439 appointment customers; 967 face-to-face customers; 472 telephone customers; 400 self-serve web customers

Key insights

- Satisfaction with the service provided by Pension Wise remains consistently high while the number of appointments grows each year (+22% since 2018/19)
- Satisfaction is high among all appointment customer groups (94%). The proportion saying they are very satisfied has also increased for the second consecutive year (to 77%, vs. 73% in 2018/19 and 69% in 2017/18).
- Eight in ten self-serve customers (82%) are also satisfied. Whilst this is understandably lower than for appointment customers, given that an appointment is a more intensive interaction, it is worth noting that satisfaction has increased since 2018/19 (when it was 78%).
- As with previous years, the levels of dissatisfaction remain very low for all customer groups (3% among appointment customers and 7% among self-serve customers). This suggests no substantial changes to the service are required.

High advocacy levels across all customers

% already recommended, or very or fairly likely to recommend Pension Wise



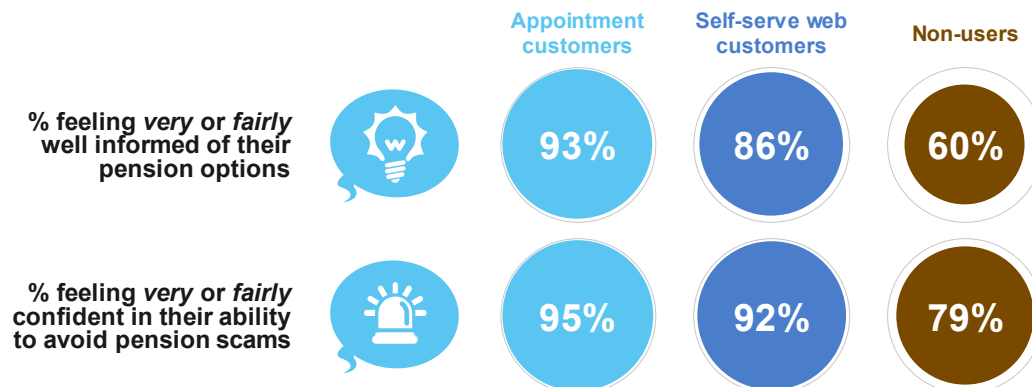
Bases: 1,439 appointment customers; 967 face-to-face customers; 472 telephone customers; 400 self-serve web customers

Key insights

- This year sees the highest advocacy score to date with 97 per cent of appointment customers saying that they have already recommended the service or are likely to do so. Around a quarter (24%) have already done so within a month of their interaction.
- Among all customer types, the strength of feeling is such that far more say they would be very likely to recommend Pension Wise than *fairly* likely.

Pension Wise customers feel well-informed and able to avoid scams

Around three months after their appointment ...



Bases: 857 appointment customers; 298 self-serve web customers; 770 non-users

Key insights

- The overwhelming majority of appointment customers (95%) feel confident in being able to avoid pensions scams. A similar proportion (93%) feel well informed of their pension options.
- Among the customers who have spoken to their pension providers since their appointment, over nine in ten (92%) felt well prepared for these discussions.
- All these findings are similarly positive for face-to-face, telephone and self-serve customers and all customer types are more positive than non-users.

Pension Wise customers are more knowledgeable

We explore customers' factual knowledge through a series of eight true or false statements about their pension options in the surveys. One month after using Pension Wise, all customer types typically have a better understanding of the facts than non-users.

Average % answering correctly (either *definitely true* or *definitely false*) across all eight true/false statements, around one month after the appointment



Bases: 1,963 appointment customers; 600 self-serve web customers; 181 website visitors; 770 non-users

% who said Pension Wise helped improve their understanding of their pension options



Bases: 2,163 appointment customers; 1,450 face-to-face customers; 713 telephone customers; 600 self-serve web customers

Key insights

Pension Wise customers are more likely than non-users to get the following facts right:

- you do not have to withdraw your pension immediately on retiring (78% of appointment customers and 70% of self-serve customers answer correctly vs. 59% of non-users)
- you do not have to withdraw the full amount from your pension pot (76% and 66% vs. 42%)
- pension pots can be transferred across providers (72% and 68% vs. 53%)
- buying an annuity is optional (70% and 64% vs. 41%)
- you can mix the ways you take money from a single pension pot (70% and 62% vs. 36%).

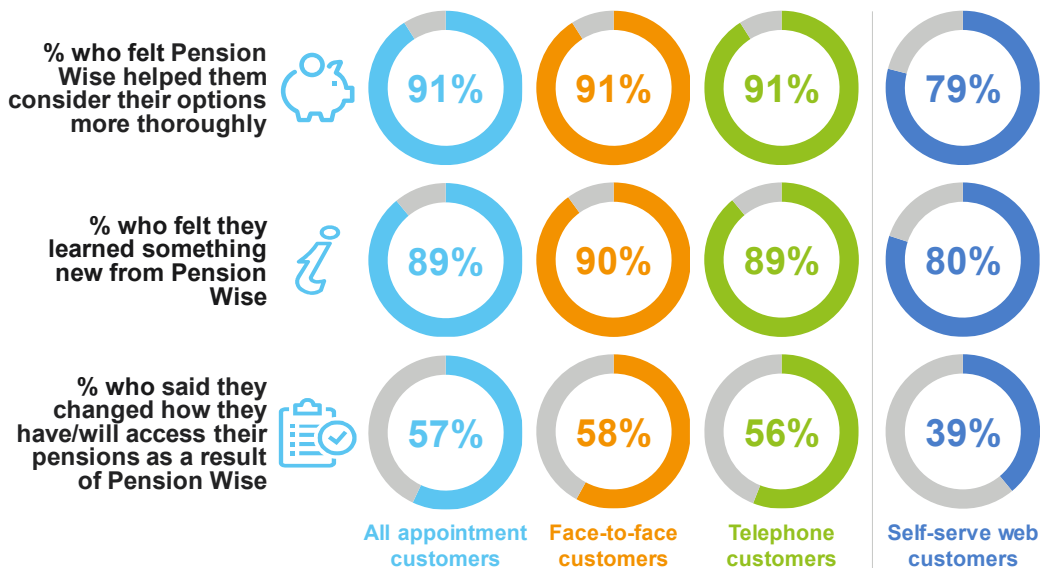
While this leaves some room for improvement, very few customers answer these questions incorrectly. Most of those who do not put “definitely true” or “definitely false”, still answer correctly, but are less certain (i.e. answering “probably true” or “probably false”).

In addition, nine in ten appointment customers (88%) report that their understanding of their pension options has improved a great deal or a fair amount after their appointment.

Nearly all these appointment customers (97%) attribute their sense of improved understanding to Pension Wise, at least by a fair amount.

This self-reported level of understanding is also high among self-serve customers (76%) and nearly all of them believe this improvement is due to Pension Wise (99%).

Self-reported impact on decision making



Bases: 857 appointment customers; 531 face-to-face customers; 326 telephone customers; 298 self-serve web customers

Key insights

- Nine in ten appointment customers (91%) agree that Pension Wise helped them to consider their pension access options more thoroughly. A similar proportion (89%) felt they learned something new from using the service. Scores are similarly high for self-serve customers.
- These findings suggest that Pension Wise can help customers make better-informed decisions when accessing their pension pots, which is the key aim of the service. Although Pension Wise does not aim to change its customers' eventual pension access choices, more than half (57%) of appointment customers do so. We cannot solely link this to them feeling better informed and having greater factual knowledge, as there may be other influences, but these measures are correlated with each other.
- The proportion changing their choices is lower among self-serve customers (39%), which may be because they are slightly more advanced in their thinking at the point of using the Pension Wise website, as evidenced elsewhere in the evaluation.

Pension Wise customers take more positive steps when accessing their pots

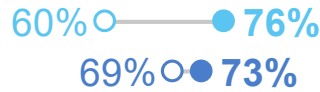
Appointment customers:

- within three months of appointment
- before appointment

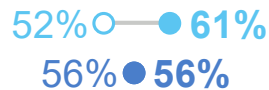
Self-serve web customers:

- within three months of self-serve journey
- before self-serve journey

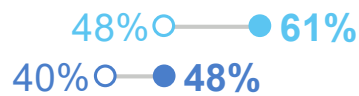
Read any information about your chosen options



Calculated income needed in retirement



Spoke to pension provider about your pension pot options



0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Bases: 2,148/857 appointment customers (talking about actions before/since their appointment); or 402 appointment customers and 600 self-serve web customers who are considering specific options.

Key insights

- All customer types are more likely than non-users to have taken a range of appropriate actions after using Pension Wise and before making pension withdrawal arrangements. These actions include talking to their pension providers, calculating the income needed in retirement and reading information about their chosen options.
- The proportion of appointment customers who spoke to their pension provider within three months of their Pension Wise appointment increased this year (up from 56% in 2018/19 to 61% in 2019/20). The scores are similarly high for self-serve users.

Conclusions

Overall, these are a very positive set of results for Pension Wise. Over the past three years, the service has maintained, or in some cases improved on its results across several key performance indicators. This has all been achieved while customer volumes have substantially increased and alongside operational changes to the service, including the addition of the digital self-serve guidance in 2018/19.

Along with appointment customers, self-serve web customers also rate Pension Wise highly and emerge with a great deal of confidence and knowledge about their pension options. Their results are, in isolation, very strong, but are still lower in places compared to appointment customers. Given the lighter touch nature of their interaction with Pension Wise, this is to be expected. The Money and Pensions Service plans to continue making improvements to the self-serve customer journey.

The Pension Wise service evaluation surveys will be undertaken, from this point onwards, as part of a wider coordinated evaluation covering multiple Money and Pensions Service direct guidance services. This will involve some changes to the survey and reporting but will continue to provide trend data for Pension Wise, across the main metrics covered in this report.

Characteristics of the different customer groups and how we evaluated them



1 Introduction

This report for the Money and Pensions Service evaluates the performance of the Pension Wise guidance service in 2019/20. It covers quantitative survey findings exploring:

- customer satisfaction with the service
- customers' knowledge and understanding of their pension options
- their confidence in making decisions, avoiding pension scams and dealing with pension providers
- the positive steps they are taking to finalise their pension access arrangements.

It also contextualises these results, giving a profile of customers and how they come to use Pension Wise, as well as comparing them to those who do not use the service but are eligible to do so.

Background

Pension Wise is a national pensions guidance service, backed by Government and delivered in partnership with other organisations. The service provides free, impartial information and guidance to those who are aged 50 and over, with defined contribution pensions that have not yet been accessed. The guidance explains the options available to these people when accessing their pension pots. In April 2015, new pension freedoms were introduced, which expanded people options to allow them to:

1. leave their whole pension pot untouched
2. get a guaranteed income (through an annuity)
3. get an adjustable income (through flexi-access drawdown)
4. take cash in chunks (Uncrystallised Funds Pension Lump Sum, or UFPLS)
5. take their whole pot in one go
6. mix the above options.

The service offers guidance through three channels:

- face-to-face appointments delivered through Citizens Advice – these have temporarily been suspended due to the coronavirus but were available for the period covered in this evaluation
- telephone appointments delivered through The Pensions Advisory Service (TPAS)
- digital, self-serve guidance, which customers can access through the Pension Wise website.

In 2019/20, there were over 97,000 face-to-face appointments arranged and 62,000 telephone appointments arranged. These appointment volumes have risen considerably each year since the first year of operations in 2015/16. Compared to 2018/19, face-to-face appointments are up by eight per cent and telephone appointments are up by 55 per cent.

There were approximately 2.75 million website visits in 2019/20, up roughly 20 per cent on 2018/19. Just over 45,000 people completed the digital self-serve guidance journey on the website in this period, compared to 37,000 people in 2018/19 (an increase of 22%).

What the face-to-face and telephone appointment service involves

The face-to-face and telephone appointments can be booked online, over the telephone, or in person. Teleperformance provides the contact centre for bookings made over the phone.

Face-to-face and telephone appointments typically last between 45 and 60 minutes. During these appointments, a Pension Wise Guidance Specialist fully explains the six pension options available to customers, helps customers understand the benefits and drawbacks of each option in an impartial way, raises awareness of the risk of pension scams and explains the potential impact of each option on taxes and benefits. The Guidance Specialist also helps customers to clarify the next steps in their decision-making process, including key questions to ask their pension providers and information on shopping around. Customers receive a document summarising their appointment, either online or through the post, within 48 hours of their appointment time.

What the digital self-serve guidance includes

Visitors on the Pension Wise website are directed to a page where they can explore their options.¹ They receive a summary description of the six options and can select the ones they are interested in. They can then choose to see more detailed guidance for these options, for example around tax. Self-serve customers can then print or download a summary of this guidance.

The Pension Wise website also provides broader information to all visitors about accessing their defined contribution pensions.

Audience groups included in this report

Throughout the report we refer to five primary audience groups:

- **Appointment bookers** are people who book a face-to-face or telephone appointment with Pension Wise. This includes people who complete their appointment as well as the small minority that do not complete it or miss it entirely.
- **Appointment customers** are the large majority (86%) of appointment bookers, who complete their appointment, as opposed to leaving before the end or missing it. They consist of face-to-face customers and telephone customers.
- **Website visitors** are those who have visited the Pension Wise website. They would have been eligible for a Pension Wise appointment in the past year but have not had one.
- **Self-serve web customers** are people who visit the Pension Wise website and fully navigate through the digital self-serve guidance pages. As such, they are a subset of the above group of website visitors who have specifically completed the self-serve guidance journey (although we sample and survey these two groups separately).
- **Non-users** are those who have not had an appointment, nor visited the Pension Wise website, but would have been eligible for an appointment in the past year.

¹ See <https://www.pensionwise.gov.uk/en/explore-your-options>.

Methodology

Initial surveys (surveys 1 and 2)

The findings are taken from five quantitative surveys, which Ipsos MORI carried out on behalf of Pension Wise. Two initial surveys explored service users' satisfaction and experiences with Pension Wise roughly one month after their interaction with the service. These included:

1. 2,282 people who booked face-to-face or telephone appointments with Pension Wise to take place between September and November 2019
2. 600 customers who accessed the digital self-serve guidance on the Pension Wise website from September to November 2019 and January to March 2020.

These surveys were carried out over several monthly waves of fieldwork. There were more waves of the self-serve customer survey (survey 2 above) in order to increase the sample size. For this survey, the January customers were interviewed in March alongside the February customers, i.e. around two months after visiting the website. For simplicity, we refer to a one-month gap in the rest of the report.

Follow-up surveys (surveys 3 and 4)

Two follow-up surveys focused on customers' knowledge of their pension options and the steps they have taken towards finalising their pension arrangements. The interviews took place with the same respondents from surveys 1 and 2 above, roughly three months after their interaction with Pension Wise (although in a handful of cases this was closer to four months). This longer gap is intended to leave enough time for customer to fully explore their options and take relevant actions. These two surveys included:

3. 857 face-to-face and telephone appointment customers (i.e. excluding those with incomplete or missed appointments) who took part in the initial appointment booker survey (survey 1 above)
4. 298 self-serve web customers who took part in the initial self-serve customer survey (survey 2 above).

Comparison survey (survey 5)

We carried out a final survey to draw findings from two comparison groups of people who have not had a Pension Wise appointment but would have been eligible for the service in the last 12 months. These are people aged 50 or over, who either have an unaccessed defined contribution pension, or one that they had only accessed in the past year. The fieldwork for this survey took place alongside the follow-up fieldwork with appointment customers (survey 3 above). The survey measured similar outcomes in terms of knowledge and steps taken towards the different pension options. It included:

5. 951 people eligible for Pension Wise, both those who have visited the Pension Wise website (181 website visitors) and those who have not (770 non-users).

We carried out surveys 1, 3 and 5 out through a mix of telephone and online interviewing. Surveys 2 and 4 with self-serve web customers were exclusively conducted online. Further details on the sampling, fieldwork and response rates are in the appendix.

Weighting

All the findings reported for face-to-face and telephone appointment bookers and customers (from surveys 1 and 3) are weighted, to represent people who booked Pension Wise appointments to take place between September 2019 and November 2019.

Website visitors and non-users (survey 5) have also been weighted to match the same appointment booker profile. As such, the achieved non-user sample from this survey is not intended to represent the wider population of 50-70 year-olds with unaccessed defined contribution pensions in the UK. It is, instead, intended to provide a comparison group who are demographically similar to Pension Wise appointment bookers, but who did not approach the service.

The findings reported for self-serve web customers (from surveys 2 and 4) are unweighted. This is because there is no available population profile to use for weighting. Therefore, these findings are not necessarily representative of the true population of self-serve customers. Nonetheless, they are the best possible representation of this audience that we are able to achieve in a quantitative survey.

Further details on the weighting approach are included in the appendix.

Updates to the methodology and comparability with previous years

This research follows three studies that Ipsos MORI carried out to evaluate the Pension Wise service in 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19. The report for 2018/19 can be found on the Money and Pensions Service website at:

<https://moneyandpensionsservice.org.uk/2020/01/24/pension-wise-service-evaluation-2018-19-experiences-and-outcomes-of-customers/>.²

The previous years' studies covered all the same audience groups using a comparable survey methodology, sampling, weighting, fieldwork periods and questionnaires to that used for 2019/20. There has been a reduction in sample sizes and a shorter fieldwork period since 2017/18 compared to 2016/17. This reflects that the 2016/17 study was purposely carried out on a much larger scale, with it being the first ever evaluation of the Pension Wise service.

Self-serve web customers were added to the evaluation from 2018/19. Therefore, this is the second year of data that we have for this audience.

Each year, there have also been a small number of questionnaire changes. The most notable change this year was the addition of three agree/disagree questions to assess how using Pension Wise had influenced their decision making (see Figures 9.3 to 9.5).

Where results are comparable across years, we draw out where findings have changed significantly or remained consistent over time. Primarily, we focus our comparisons between 2018/19 and 2019/20.

² Findings for 2017/18 customers are on the GOV.UK website at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pension-wise-service-evaluation-2017-to-2018-customer-experiences-and-outcomes>. Findings for 2016/17 are at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pension-wise-service-evaluation-customer-experiences-and-outcomes>.

How to interpret the data

Representation of percentage scores

Throughout the report figures in charts do not always add to 100%. This is due to one of the following:

- rounding of percentages
- the exclusion of a very small number of “refused” responses when looking at the profiles of the different audience groups in Chapter 2
- questions that allow more than one response.

Statistical significance

The report highlights relevant differences between the average and subgroup findings, or across years. We only draw out differences that are found to be statistically significant at the 95% level of confidence. Strictly speaking, statistical significance testing applies only to random probability samples, whereas the telephone fieldwork for this survey used quota sampling. In practice, significance testing is commonly used for surveys like this one, with the assumption being that the achieved (mixed quota and random probability) sample behaves like a random sample. In such cases, the significance testing is intended to provide a rough guide to the margins of error around the survey results.

Not all statistically significant differences are noted. The report highlights differences that appear consistently across questions, that indicate important subgroups, or indicate important shifts across years.

Subgroups based on financial confidence

The surveys include a question to split people into subgroups based on financial confidence. The subgroups are based on a single question, asking how confident people are on a scale of 0 to 10 in managing their money. We have grouped responses from 0 to 3 as “low confidence” and 7 to 10 as “high confidence”. The following table shows that, across all audience groups, only a small minority have low financial confidence. This is in line with 2018/19.

The differences across audiences are, by large, negligible, although non-users tend to be slightly less confident than appointment bookers.

Table 1.1: Financial confidence by audience group

	Appointment bookers	Self-serve web customers	Website visitors	Non-users
Base	2,282	600	181	770
High confidence	78%	75%	82%	70%
Low confidence	4%	5%	1%	8%

The purpose of the non-user comparison group

The non-user group is intended to be a broad comparison group, to understand how Pension Wise appointment bookers differ from other defined contribution pension holders, who are demographically similar to them, but have not used the appointment service. It is not meant to be a strict control group. This is because Pension Wise appointment bookers may be more informed and engaged with their pension pots than the typical defined contribution pension holder, even before they come into contact with the service.

In Chapter 4, the report uses difference-in-difference analysis between appointment customers and non-users. This is intended to elevate the analysis beyond simplistic, single-point-in-time comparisons between customers and non-users. Again, we do not suggest here that the non-users are a strict control group. However, this analysis does provide a deeper insight into how Pension Wise, rather than other external factors influencing behaviour, has prompted customers to take action towards finalising their pension arrangements.

Acknowledgements

Ipsos MORI would like to thank Midge Clayton from the Money and Pensions Service for his continued help and input across all stages and aspects of this research study.

2 Profiles of customer and non-customer groups

This chapter outlines the key characteristics and attitudes across the main audience groups who were surveyed for this evaluation. As detailed in the introduction to this report, these groups are:

- appointment bookers (including both those who did and did not complete their appointment)
- self-serve web customers
- other website visitors (who did not necessarily use the self-service tools)
- non-users who have not engaged with any of the services or tools offered by Pension Wise.

Appointment bookers

Demographics

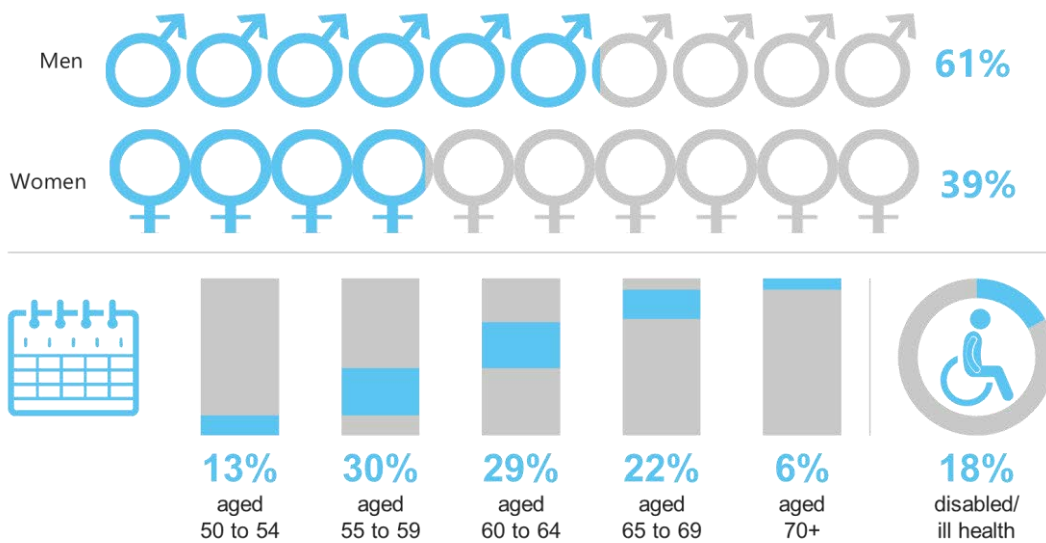
Appointment bookers are more likely to be men than women (61% vs. 39%). This reflects that more men aged over 50 have defined contribution pensions compared to women. It may also reflect wider gender differences in terms of pension values and financial confidence.

While Pension Wise is available to anyone aged 50 and over with an unaccessed defined contribution pension, most appointment bookers, six in ten (59%), are aged between 55 and 64. A further three in ten (28%) are aged 65 or over, leaving a minority (13%) that are under 55.

One in six appointment bookers (18%) say they have a long-term illness, health problem or disability that limits their daily activities or work. Where it can be compared, this is lower than in the general population – the Annual Population Survey from 2018 (the latest published data) shows that 27 per cent of those aged 50 to 64 are disabled, against 16 per cent of appointment bookers in this age group.³

³ The Annual Population Survey data are available on the Office for National Statistics website, at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/datasets/prevalenceandemployment>.

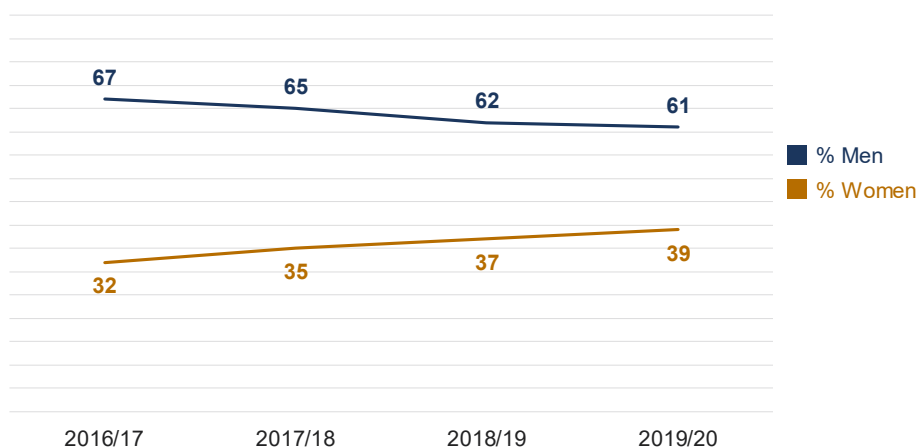
Figure 2.1: Appointment Booker key demographics



Base: 2,282 appointment bookers, excluding any who refuse to answer

While the age and disability profile matches that of previous years, it is worth noting that the gender balance of appointment bookers has consistently improved since 2016/17. Each year a higher proportion of appointments are booked by women, as shown in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: Trend data for the gender of appointment bookers



Base: 2,282 appointment bookers

Work status and wealth

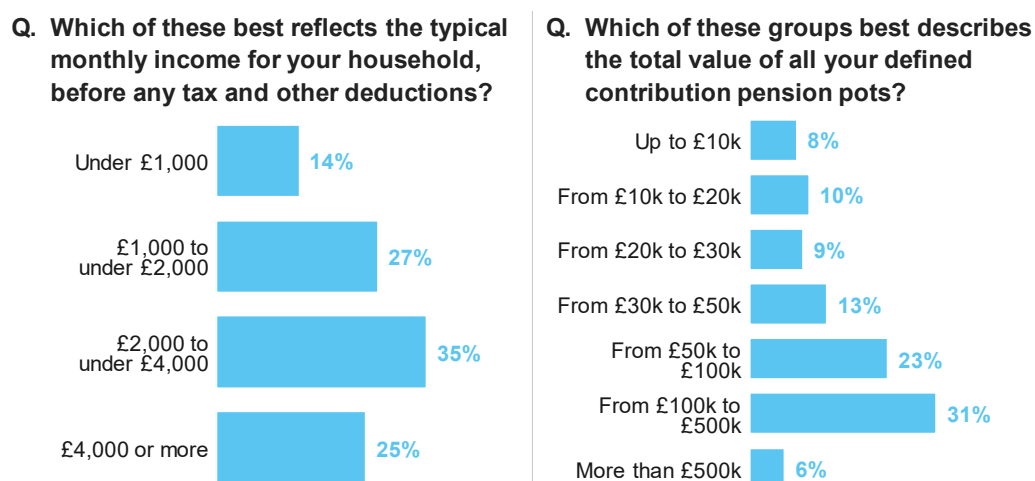
Six in ten appointment bookers (60%) are still in work, either on a full-time, part-time or self-employed basis. A further one in ten (10%) are unemployed or not in work for another reason. The remaining three in ten are retired (28%), with a minority of this group still doing some paid work (accounting for 4% of all appointment bookers).

As shown in Figure 2.3, two in five appointment bookers (41%) live in households with income of less than £2,000 per month (less than £24,000 per annum). Over a third have household income between £2,000 and £4,000, and a quarter have £4,000 or more per month (or £48,000 per annum). These

figures include any pensions or employment income that they or other people in the household might already be receiving.

Six in ten appointment bookers (60%) have a pension pot worth over £50,000. Four in ten (37%) have pots over £100,000, although for most this does not exceed £500,000. Just over a quarter (27%) have relatively small pension pots worth under £30,000.

Figure 2.3: Income and pension pot size distributions of appointment bookers



Base: c.1,830 appointment bookers at each question, excluding any who refuse to answer or say they don't know

This year's appointment bookers have slightly better incomes than those in the previous year. In 2019/20, a quarter (25%) are earning over £4,000 per month, compared to 16 per cent 2018/19. Income data was not collected before 2018/19.

Other findings in terms of overall work status and pension pot values are consistent with previous years.

Retirement income

By definition, all appointment bookers have defined contribution pensions – this is one of the eligibility criteria for using Pension Wise. Around half (42%) have just one defined contribution pension, with the other half (43%) saying they have more than one. The remainder do not know (4%) or prefer not to answer this question (11%).

Also, nearly all appointment bookers (91%) expect to have some form of retirement income in addition to their defined contribution pension. One in four of all appointment bookers (26%) expect their defined contribution pension to be their main source of retirement income.

As shown in Figure 2.4, the next most common source of retirement income for appointment bookers is their State Pension entitlement (80%), with 29 per cent expecting this to provide the majority of their retirement income.

Defined benefit pensions are held by 42 per cent, with around half of these cases (22%) expecting this to provide the majority of their retirement income.

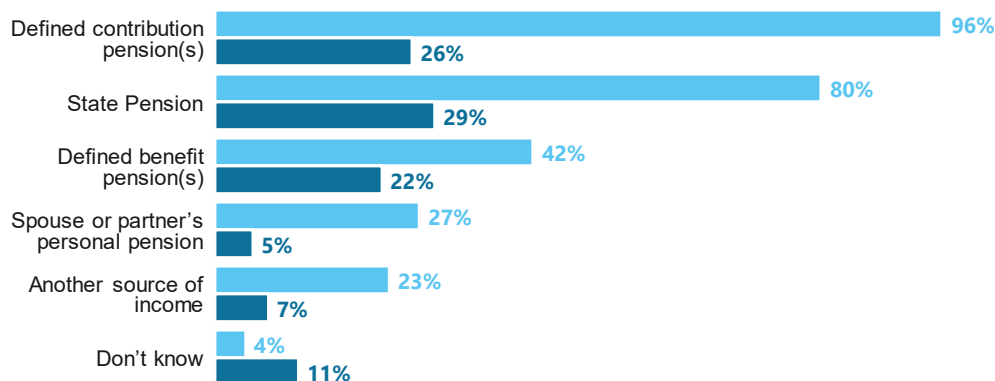
Other sources of income, such as spouses' pensions are also common, though it is relatively rare for appointment bookers to be considering relying on these as their main source.

Figure 2.4: Expected sources of retirement income among appointment bookers (other than defined contributions pensions)⁴

Q. Which of the following will you have for/provides the majority of your retirement income?

■ Expected to provide any retirement income

■ Expected to provide the majority of retirement income



Base: c.2,000 appointment bookers at each question, excluding any who refuse to answer

Appointment bookers who expect most of their retirement income to come from their defined contribution pensions are more likely to have a larger defined contribution pension pot. Over half of this group have a pension pot worth over £100,000 (56%, vs. 37% on average). By contrast, of those relying mainly on the State Pension, one quarter (25%, vs. 18% on average) have an overall defined contribution pension pot value of under £20,000.

These findings on retirement income are all consistent with the 2018/19 service evaluation.

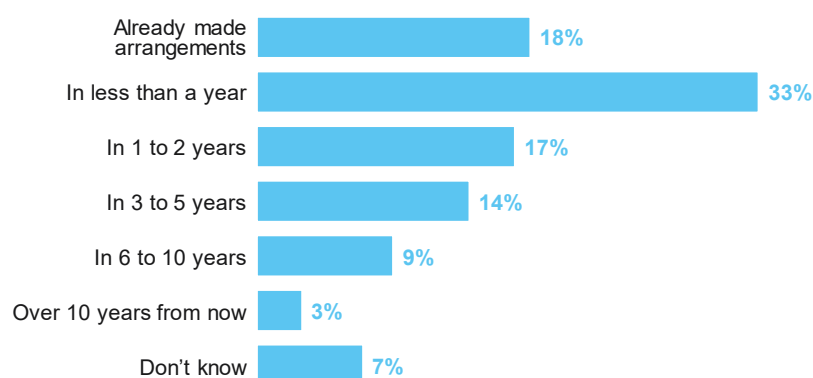
Proximity to accessing pension pots

Most appointment bookers are close to finalising their access arrangements for their defined contribution pensions or have already done so. Two-thirds (67%) stated that they have already made formal arrangements or intend to do so within the next two years, as shown in Figure 2.5. This has been consistent since this question was first asked in 2017/18.

⁴ Figure 2.3 in the 2018/19 report included the percentage saying "defined contribution pension(s)". The questionnaire changes this year mean that all respondents are now required to indicate they have one or more defined contribution pensions, or to refuse to answer, reflecting the fact that having a unaccessed defined contribution pension is one of the eligibility criteria for receiving Pension Wise guidance.

Figure 2.5: When appointment bookers expect to finalise their pension access arrangements

Q. Which of these best represents when you intend to make formal arrangements for taking money from your defined contribution pension or pensions?



Base: 2,083 appointment bookers, excluding any who refuse to answer

As we would expect, appointment bookers who are retired are more likely to say they have already made formal arrangements compared to those who are not retired (34% vs. 11%). This is likely to be very different from the wider population of all those with unaccessed defined contributions pensions aged 50 and over. For this reason, we continue to weight the sample of website visitors and non-users to a similar profile, in terms of proximity to access as has been done in previous years. This additional weighting ensures that the data are comparable to appointment bookers and not unduly skewed by differences in their proximity to access.

Internet and Pension Wise website usage

The vast majority of appointment bookers (95%) say that they use the internet for personal use, with three-quarters (74%) using the internet daily.

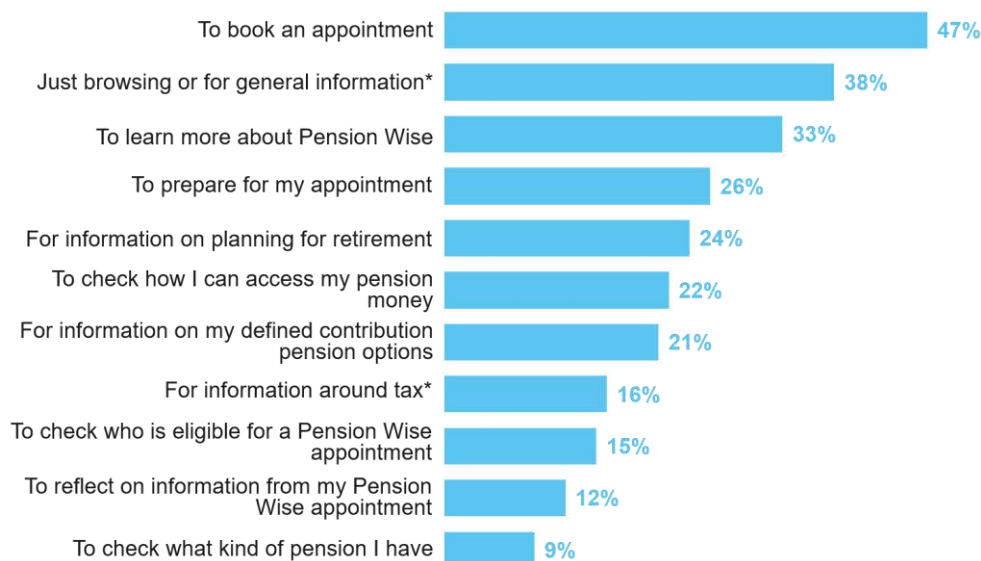
Seven in ten appointment bookers (71%) say they have visited the Pension Wise website at some point. Among those who attended their appointment, six in ten (62%) visited the website before they had their appointment with Pension Wise, with three in ten (29%) visiting both before and after their appointment.

As shown in Figure 2.6⁵, the most common reasons for visiting the Pension Wise website were for booking an appointment, general browsing, and to learn more about Pension Wise. The top reason reflects the efforts of recent Pension Wise communications campaigns, which have encouraged people to book appointments online. A quarter (26%) also mention visiting the website to prepare for their appointment, which accounts for 31 per cent of those who visited before their appointment.

⁵ The question was unprompted for telephone respondents and prompted for online survey respondents (with the option to give an "other" response).

Figure 2.6: Most common reasons for appointment bookers using the Pension Wise website

Q. What did you initially visit the Pension Wise website for?



Base: 1,680 appointment bookers who also visit the Pension Wise website

Most common responses shown (registering 5% or higher). *These responses are new for 2019/20

The proportion of appointment bookers who visited the Pension Wise website is slightly lower than last year (71%, vs. 75% in 2018/19). More specifically, fewer are visiting the website before their appointment (62%, vs. 67% in 2018/19). However, in both years, there are still more visiting the website ahead of their appointment than in 2017/18 (when it was 54%).

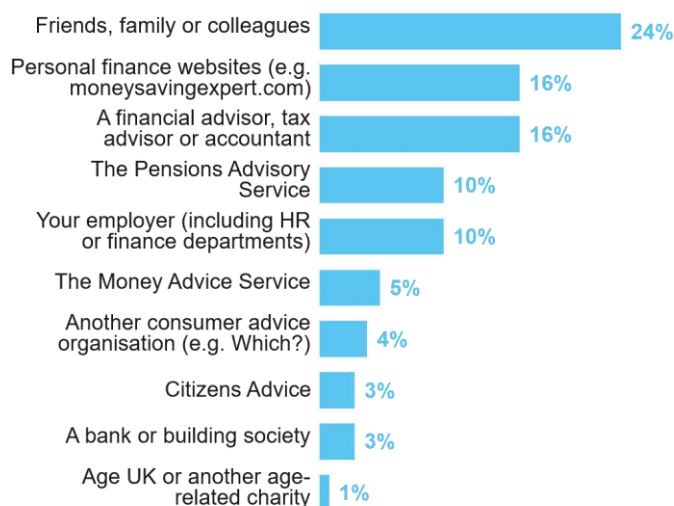
The Pension Wise website also continues to play a key role in steering people towards the appointments service. Over half of customers (56%) who visited the Pension Wise website beforehand said they booked their appointment as a result of what they saw or read. This accounts for around a third of all appointment bookers (33%), in line with the findings from 2018/19. The main reasons for visiting the website (Figure 2.6) also remain broadly consistent with previous years.

Further financial advice and guidance outside Pension Wise

Three in five appointment bookers (61%) have received some form of formal or informal financial advice or guidance 12 months before their Pension Wise appointment. As shown in Figure 2.7, the most common sources were pension providers (34%), friends, family or colleagues (24%), personal finance websites (16%) and financial advisors (16%), while all other sources were quoted less frequently. Around one in ten (12%) said they received advice from public sector sources such as The Pensions Advisory Service and the Money Advice Service, which are both now part of the Money and Pensions Service alongside Pension Wise.

Figure 2.7: Sources of advice and guidance about defined contribution pensions outside of Pension Wise

Q. In the last 12 months before your Pension Wise appointment, did you receive any financial advice or guidance about your defined contribution pensions from any of the following sources?



Base: 2,257 appointment bookers

The pattern of advice and guidance sources used is similar to previous years.

Attitudes towards financial management and planning

The survey includes a series of attitudinal questions that seek to understand people's approaches to financial management and retirement planning. These show that Pension Wise appointment bookers tend to feel financially confident, are risk averse and keen to plan financially for the future.

- Eight in ten appointment bookers (78%) feel confident with managing money and six in ten (58%) considers themselves to be savvy consumers.
- Two-thirds (64%) disagree that they would rather think about today than plan for the future.
- Eight in ten (83%) agree that they would rather be safe than sorry when it comes to taking chances.

Appointment bookers are typically open to paying for financial advice, although there is not a clear majority when it comes to trusting or being able to easily find such advice. Seven in ten appointment bookers (72%) said they would pay for financial advice if the costs were reasonable. Over half (51%) feel they could trust financial advisors and a similar proportion say they would know where to look for one (50%). This does not necessarily signal high distrust – only 22 per cent *disagree* they would trust financial advisors, with a further 24 per cent being neutral.

Men are more likely than women to say they feel confident about managing money (81% vs. 73%). Women also tend to be more financially risk-averse than men. They are more likely to agree that, when it comes to taking chances, they would rather be safe than sorry (86%, vs. 81% of men). They are also more likely to want to plan ahead – 67 per cent *disagree* that they would rather think about today than plan for the future (vs. 62% of men).

These gender differences are not unique to Pension Wise appointment bookers. We noted in last year's service evaluation report that the FCA Financial Lives 2017 survey (the latest published to date) found, using the same questions, that 78 per cent of men of all ages were financially confident, versus 73 per cent of women. In addition, 73 per cent of men agreed they would rather feel safe than sorry when it comes to taking chances, compared to 83 per cent of women.⁶

Those who stayed in education longer, are wealthier or have higher value pensions, tend to be more confident in managing their money, including:

- 81% of the appointment bookers with a university degree
- 85% of those earning over £48,000 per year
- 82% of those with a pension pot over £100,000.

However, even those with no qualifications (72%), low income (73% of those earning under £24,000 per year) or a low pension pot value (73% of those with a pension pot under £10,000) still show good levels of financial confidence.

These findings are consistent with those from the 2018/19 service evaluation.

Comparing financial attitudes of Pension Wise appointment bookers to the wider population

These attitudinal statistics can be compared to the general population as measured in the latest FCA Financial Lives survey from 2017⁷. Overall, the Pension Wise appointment bookers feel slightly more confident than others when it comes to managing money (78% confident, compared to 75% of adults aged 18+). There are stronger differences elsewhere – they also tend to be more engaged with financial advice and more risk averse in their decision making:

- They are more likely to disagree that they would rather think about today than plan for the future (64%, vs. 56% of all adults).
- They are more likely to view themselves as confident and savvy consumers of financial products and services (58%, vs. 51% of all adults).
- They are much more likely to be open to paying for reasonably priced financial advice (72%, vs. 46% of all adults).

⁶ The Financial Lives survey is available at <https://www.fca.org.uk/publications/research/understanding-financial-lives-uk-adults>.

⁷ Ibid.

Differences between face-to-face and telephone appointment bookers

The profiles for both face-to-face and telephone appointment bookers are very similar when it comes to gender, age, ethnicity, disability and income. Their attitudes towards finances are also very similar. However, they differ in other ways, particularly around the type of pension provision and any arrangements made. Telephone appointment bookers are, compared to face-to-face appointment bookers:

- more likely to have just one defined contribution pension (47% vs. 41%) and less likely to have multiple pots (39% vs. 44%)
- more likely to have a lower value pension pots (28% vs. 19% with a pot worth less than £30,000)
- more likely to have had some form of advice or engaged in retirement planning before their appointment – over half (57%, vs. 45% of face-to-face appointment bookers) have spoken to their pension provider and a quarter (26%, vs. 20% of face-to-face appointment bookers) have sought advice from a financial advisor.

The differences between these two audience groups continue to change each year of the service evaluation. In 2018/19, those booking telephone appointments were more likely to be female, disabled and retired than those booking face-to-face appointments, but the two audiences are more alike this year in terms of these demographics. The differences in their pension pots value, with telephone appointment bookers tending to have slightly smaller pots, are consistent with the previous year.

How customers differ from non-completers

The vast majority of appointment bookers (86%) complete their Pension Wise appointment. A small minority do not complete them (12%) or miss the scheduled appointment (2%). Due to the small numbers of non-completers, only limited comparisons can be drawn. Nevertheless, there are some significant differences between those who do and do not complete their appointment worth noting:

- Non-completers are more likely to have smaller defined contribution pension pots, valued at under £10,000 (19%, vs. 8% of appointment customers).
- Non-completers are more likely to say they have already made formal arrangements for taking money from their defined contribution pensions (27%, vs. 18% of appointment customers).

These differences suggest that some of those who attend but do not finish their appointment already have a preferred option before using Pension Wise and use the service more for reassurance purposes.

Overall, the proportion of appointment bookers who complete their appointment is line with previous years (86% in 2018/19 as well).

Self-serve web customers

As well as arranging an appointment with a Pension Wise guidance specialist, customers can use a range of self-service tools on the Pension Wise website and access guidance themselves. It should be noted that the self-serve customers included in this service evaluation are not necessarily representative of everyone using the digital self-service tools. This is because these customers are required to opt into the survey sample at the start of their self-serve journey.

Nevertheless, in terms of gender, age and disability, the profile of self-serve customers who completed the survey is very similar to that of appointment bookers. This suggests that the groups using the face-to-face, telephone and digital channels are not substantially different from each other demographically.

However, there are two areas where they do differ from appointment bookers:

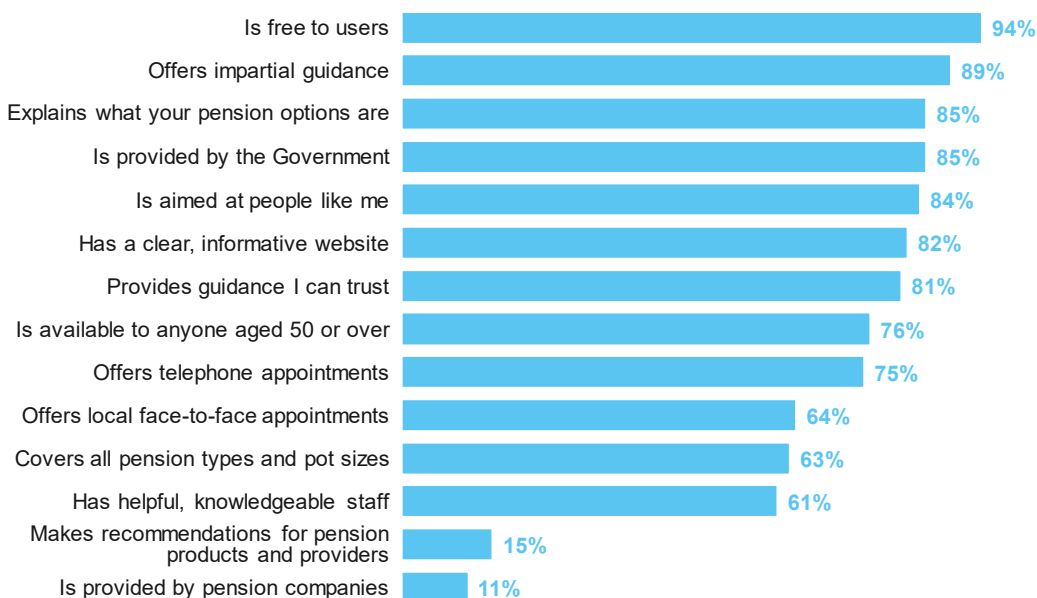
- Self-serve customers tend to be more affluent. Three in five (60%) have a monthly income of at least £2,000 (vs. 48% of appointment bookers).
- They are less likely to say they would trust a financial advisor (42 % vs. 51%) or pay for financial advice (64%, vs. 72% of appointment bookers).

The differences and similarities between the two customer groups are consistent with last year, when we first surveyed self-serve customers. Self-serve customers, by and large, view Pension Wise in a positive light. The vast majority are aware that the service is free to use (94%), impartial (89%) and provided by the Government (85%).

Around a quarter of self-serve customers (25%) are not aware that Pension Wise offers telephone appointments, and a third (36%) do not realise it offers face-to-face appointments. All other attributes are shown in Figure 2.8. There are no major differences by demographic group.

Figure 2.8: Attributes that self-serve customers associate with Pension Wise

Q. Do you think Pension Wise ... ?



Base: 600 self-serve web customers

The proportion of self-serve customers who think that Pension Wise has helpful and knowledgeable staff has increased from 54% in 2018/19 to 61% this year. This is driven by the fact that more self-serve customers have also attended a Pension Wise appointment this year (32%, vs. 23% in 2018/19), and almost all of this group (96%) think that Pension Wise has helpful and knowledgeable staff. As might be expected, the rest of the self-serve customer group overwhelmingly say they do not know at this question (36%).

Aside from this, self-serve customers are similarly positive across the other attributes as they were last year.

Platforms used to access the Pension Wise website

The vast majority of self-serve customers (81%) have accessed the website via a computer or laptop. Two-fifths (42%) have accessed it via a smartphone or tablet. There is an overlap between these two groups, with a quarter (24%) using the Pension Wise website both via a computer and a mobile device.

Under 55s are more likely to access the website on a mobile device (49%, vs. 42% overall).

Men are more likely to use computer or laptop (83% vs. 75%). There is no notable difference by gender, however, when it comes to using a mobile phone or tablet.

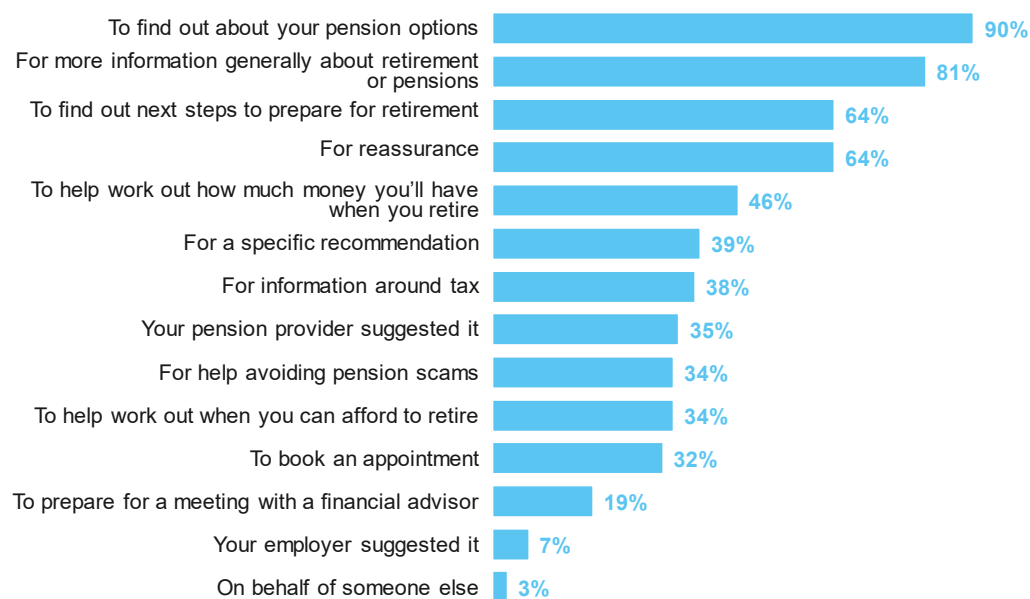
These patterns of use by platform are consistent with last year.

Reasons for visiting the website

The most common reason for visiting the Pension Wise website is in line with the core aim of Pension Wise guidance, to help people understand their pension pot options (90%). Beyond this, a large majority of self-serve customers are also looking for more general information, guidance and reassurance related to retirement planning. The full (prompted) list of reasons is shown in Figure 2.9 below.

Figure 2.9: Most common (prompted) reasons for self-serve web customers using the Pension Wise website

Q. Which of the following, if any, were your main reasons for visiting the Pension Wise website [on the same day you used the self-serve guidance]?



Base: 600 self-serve web customers

Almost seven in ten (68%) pick five or more reasons from the list in Figure 2.8, while eight in ten (80%) pick four or more reasons. This highlights that most come to the website looking for a range of information and guidance related to pensions.

Self-serve customers are more likely than appointment customers to use the service to find out their next steps (64% vs. 55%), to work out how much money they will have when they retire (46% vs. 38%) and to help work out when they can retire (34% vs. 26%). This suggests some are generally a little further on in their planning than appointment customers (see Figure 3.3 in the next chapter).

Self-serve customers' awareness of the kind of pension they have

Only those with unaccessed defined contribution pensions are eligible for Pension Wise face-to-face and telephone appointments. Even though the digital guidance on the Pension Wise website is designed specifically for people with defined contribution pensions, it is not possible to stop others accessing it. In the survey, just over seven in ten self-serve customers (72%) report having a defined contribution pension.⁸ There could be a number of explanations for this:

- Some of the 28 per cent that do not recall having a defined contribution pension may be visiting the website for general guidance on retirement planning, as the findings in the previous section confirm.
- Some might not realise they have a defined contribution pension, despite the explanation in the question.

⁸ 15 percent say they do not have a defined contribution pension and 13% do not know the type of pension they have.

There are no substantial differences in satisfaction with the service by age or gender, in terms of awareness of pension types, and the figures are consistent with last year.

Website visitors and non-users

The website visitor and non-user audiences are used as comparison groups for the Pension Wise service evaluation, with non-users being the primary comparison group for appointment bookers and appointment customers.

Website visitors are those who used the Pension Wise website at least once. They may or may not have accessed the self-serve guidance on the website but are, in any case, sampled separately from those taking part in the self-serve customer surveys.

Because they serve as comparison groups, the combined sample of website visitors and non-users has been weighted to match the demographic profile of appointment bookers in terms of gender, age band, work status, internet usage, and how soon they expect to access their defined contribution pension pots.

However, there are noteworthy differences between the website visitor and non-user groups that provide context for comparisons made later in this report:

- Website visitors tend to be more confident about managing money (82% are in the “high confidence” group vs. 70% of non-users).
- They also consider themselves to be confident and savvy when it comes to financial products and services (74% vs. 53%).
- Website visitors are also more likely to expect to have a wider range of retirement income sources, including defined benefit pensions (53% vs. 33% of non-users) and their partners’ pensions (41% vs. 26% of non-users).

Overall, this indicates that website visitors tend to be more advanced and confident than non-users in terms of their financial engagement and planning. These differences may explain the relatively high level of action taken by website visitors to progress their pension pot options.

3 Customer acquisition and appointment booking

This chapter explores how people interact with Pension Wise, where they find out about it, and how and why they make appointments. It also looks at why a small number of people miss appointments or do not finish them, and why non-users do not book appointments with Pension Wise.

Where people hear about Pension Wise

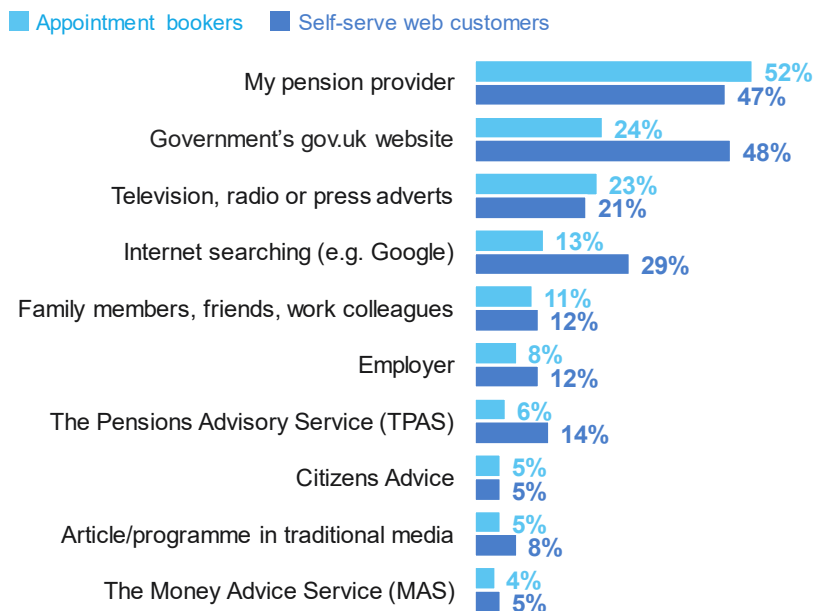
Over half of appointment bookers (52%) hear about Pension Wise from their pension provider.⁹ Around a quarter (24%) arrive at Pension Wise via the GOV.UK website, while a similar proportion find out about the service through advertising (23%).

As expected, self-serve customers are more likely to hear about Pension Wise through GOV.UK (48%) or general internet searching (29%). Similar proportions of appointment bookers and self-serve customers found out from their pension provider (52% and 47% respectively) or from advertising (23% and 21%).

Around two-fifths (38%) of appointment bookers recall hearing about Pension Wise from more than one source. This is the case for over half of all self-serve customers (57%). The remaining most common sources are shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Where appointment bookers and self-serve web customers hear about Pension Wise

Q. Before your Pension Wise appointment, where had you seen or heard about the service?



Bases: 2,282 appointment bookers; 600 self-serve web customers
Most common responses shown (registering 3% or higher among appointment bookers).

⁹ This is asked unprompted for telephone respondents and with a prompted list for online respondents.

These findings reflect the both importance of multi-platform marketing and the major role that pension providers play – both help to reinforce the Pension Wise messaging.

The type of sources used vary by customer type and profile:

- Those who book telephone appointments are more likely to find out about the service through their pension provider (58%, vs. 50% of those booking face-to-face appointments).
- Older appointment bookers are also more likely to hear about the service through their pension provider (60% of those aged 65 and over, vs. 32% of those aged 50 to 54).
- Under 55s, on the other hand, are more likely to find out from television, radio or press adverts (30% of those aged 50 to 54, vs. 19% of those aged 65 and over).

The proportion of appointment bookers hearing about Pension Wise from their pension provider (52%) is broadly in line with the previous two years, and it remains higher than in 2016/17. It was 56 per cent in 2018/19, 53 per cent in 2017/18, and 43 per cent in 2016/17.

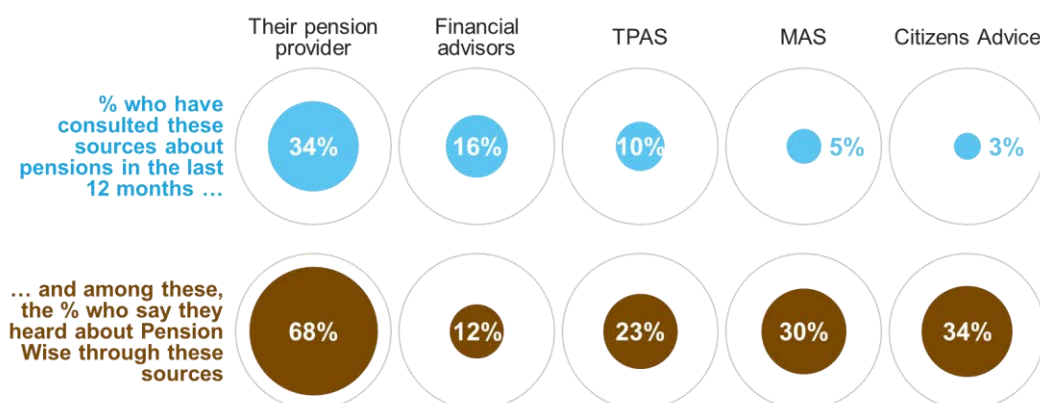
The proportion who have heard about the service from their family members, friends or colleagues has increased over the years. It was five per cent in 2017/18, nine per cent in 2018/19, and it is 11 per cent this year. This suggests that personal recommendations are an important and growing source of new customers for the service.

All other results in this section are consistent with 2018/19.

The advice and guidance sources that advocate Pension Wise the most

As discussed in the previous section (Figure 3.1), the proportion of appointment bookers directed to Pension Wise from Citizens Advice, the Money Advice Service (MAS) and The Pensions Advisory Service (TPAS) is relatively small. However, when rebasing these findings among the appointment bookers that have actually used these other advice and guidance services (which we covered in Chapter 2), the proportions introduced to Pension Wise by them are much higher. A third of appointment bookers (34%) sought advice after a recommendation from Citizens Advice, followed by 30 per cent who were referred by MAS and 23 per cent recommended by TPAS.

Figure 3.2: Sources of financial advice and guidance that drive individuals to Pension Wise



Bases: 2,282 appointment bookers; 768 that have spoken to their pension provider; 348 that have spoken to a financial advisor; 227 that have used TPAS; 120 that have used MAS; 60 that have used Citizens Advice

These findings have shifted since 2018/19. Among those that have used Citizens Advice, the proportion introduced to Pension Wise by them has increased (from 27% in 2018/19 to 34% in 2019/20). The proportion referred by TPAS has, on the other hand, decreased slightly (to 23%, vs. 27% in 2018/19).

Reasons for using Pension Wise

Nine in ten (88%) book a Pension Wise appointment to find out more about their pension options, followed by eight in ten (79%) saying they also want more general information about retirement and pensions.¹⁰ Two-thirds of appointment bookers (66%) are looking for reassurance.

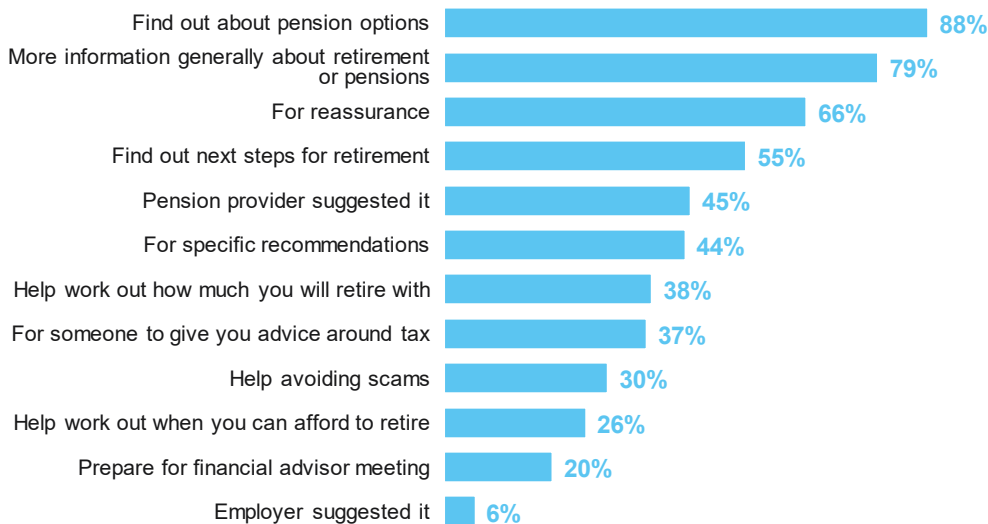
Hardly any appointment bookers are simply engaging with Pension Wise on the recommendation of their pension provider or employer alone. Under one per cent say these are main reasons without giving any of the other responses at this question.

Beyond these reasons, appointment bookers give a wide range of more specific goals for their appointment, such as finding out their specific next steps, working out retirement incomes or when they can afford to retire, and getting help around tax, avoiding scams and talking to financial advisors. In total, 82 per cent of appointment bookers give one or more of these specific reasons for booking.

The full list of reasons is shown in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3: Main reasons for booking a Pension Wise appointment

Q. Which of the following, if any, were your main reasons for arranging an appointment with Pension Wise?



Base: 2,282 appointment bookers

¹⁰ This is asked unprompted for telephone respondents and with a prompted list for online respondents, with the option to give an “other” response. This data collection approach applies to all the questions in this chapter that ask why people have or have not used Pension Wise.

Whilst the main, broad reasons for booking an appointment are the same for both telephone and face-to-face appointment bookers, there are some differences between these two groups. Those who book face-to-face appointments are more likely to have the following specific goals for their appointment:

- to find out the next steps they should be taking (58% vs. 49%)
- to get help working out how much money they will have when they retire (40% vs. 32%)
- to figure out when they can afford to do so (27% vs. 21%).
- Those who book telephone appointments, on the other hand, are more likely to do so following an advice from their pension provider (53% vs. 42% of face-to-face appointment bookers).
- Overall, face-to-face appointment bookers tend to pick more reasons from the list than telephone appointment bookers and are more likely to pick one of the options related to more specific goals (84%, vs. 77% of telephone appointment bookers). This is an historic difference between those using the telephone and face-to-face channels, consistent with previous years, and suggests that face-to-face appointment bookers often have more specific guidance needs.

The reasons further vary depending on the demographic and income profiles of appointment bookers:

- Men are more likely than women to book an appointment for various reasons, including:
 - reassurance (69% vs. 61%)
 - to get advice around tax (39% vs. 34%)
 - to get help avoiding pension scams (33% vs. 26%)
 - to prepare for a meeting with a financial adviser (23% vs. 16%).
- Those aged 65 and over are more likely to be:
 - following advice from their pensions provider (56% vs. 23% of 50-54 year olds)
 - to want a specific recommendation on what to do with their pot (51% vs. 37%)
 - to want help avoid pension scams (35% vs. 20%).
- Under 55s, on the other hand, are more likely to book an appointment to:
 - find out more about the next steps to help them prepare for retirement (58% vs. 48% of those aged 65 and over)
 - find out when they can afford to retire (35% vs. 16%).
- Those with higher incomes, £48,000 per year or more, are less likely:
 - to be seeking assurance (58%, compared to 66% overall)
 - to want a specific recommendation on what to do with their pension pot (37%, compared to 44% overall)
 - to want help working out how much money they will have in retirement (30%, vs. 38% overall)
 - or want help avoiding pensions scams (21%, vs. 30% overall).

Overall, the range of reasons for booking an appointment is largely in line with the 2018/19 findings.

Appointment bookers understand that Pension Wise is an impartial service

Pension Wise provides impartial guidance. It does not provide specific recommendations for what people should do with their pension pots. Nevertheless, just under half of appointment bookers (44%) say they come to Pension Wise with a view of getting specific recommendations. As discussed above, this is slightly higher among older customers and those on low income. The overall proportion is not significantly different from 2018/19, indicating that managing customer expectations around the types of guidance that the service can provide remains a challenge.

Nevertheless, the vast majority of appointment bookers (94%) who booked an appointment to get specific recommendations on what to do with their pension pot were still satisfied with Pension Wise. In addition, nearly all appointment bookers (99%) that completed their appointments recall their Pension Wise guidance specialist explaining to them that the service is impartial and does not make specific recommendations, highlighting that these initial misconceptions are almost always managed effectively.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the vast majority of self-serve customers (89%) are also aware of the impartial nature of Pension Wise, compared to 15 per cent who think it makes recommendations for pension products and providers.

Arranging an appointment

Nearly half of appointment bookers continues to arrange appointment online

Based on the 2019/20 survey results (as opposed to Pension Wise's own management information), nearly half of appointment bookers (49%) arranged their appointment by telephone and a slightly smaller proportion arranged it online (45%). Only a very small proportion arranged appointments in person at Citizens Advice (3%) or through their employer (1%). These estimates closely match Pension Wise's own management information¹¹, which shows that:

- 50 per cent arranged appointments by telephone
- 50 per cent arranged them online.

Half of those booking face-to-face appointments do this directly through the Pension Wise website (51% vs. 42% over the phone). As expected, two-thirds of those booking telephone appointments arrange them over the phone (69%) but three in ten (30%) book them online.

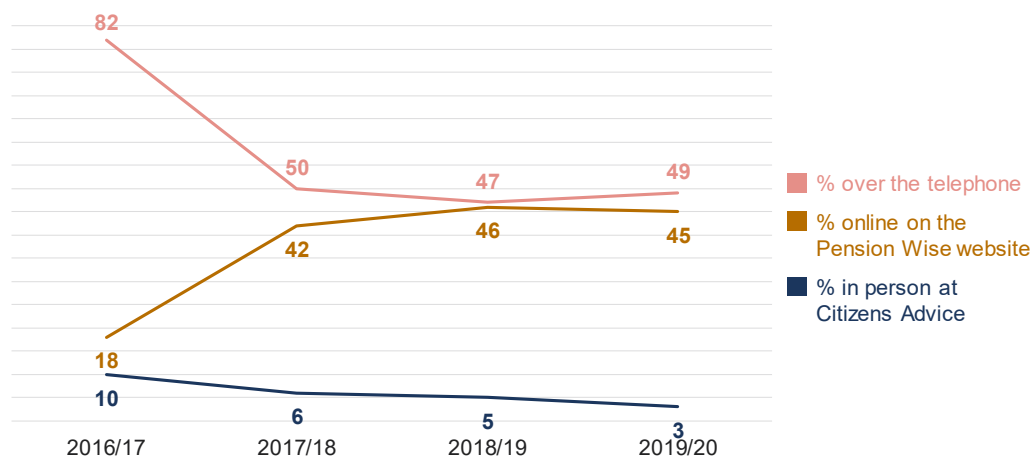
As shown in Figure 3.3, the results are broadly in line with the 2018/19 evaluation. The proportion of customers booking appointments online remains in line with 2018/19, and is much higher than when Pension Wise first introduced their online booking system in summer 2016.¹² The proportion of telephone bookings has also remained stable since 2017/18, with 49 per cent of people booking appointments over the phone in 2019/20. The proportion booking in-person, by contrast, has been on a downward trend since the first service evaluation.

¹¹ Pension Wise used to report on additional appointment arrangement methods – via employers or in-person. This year, both these former booking channels are mainly used to direct people to the online booking service and identifying them through that system is not possible. So, this year, the split between telephone and online bookings is 50:50, as it would have been last year if these two channels were designated as online bookings rather than itemised separately.

¹² To enable direct comparisons, we have looked specifically at the subgroup of appointment bookers that use the internet (so are capable of booking online appointments).

Figure 3.4: Trend data for the ways in which people book appointments

Q. In which one of these ways did you arrange an appointment with Pension Wise?



Bases: 2,282 appointment bookers

Only a very small proportion experiences any problems or issues when arranging appointments

The process of arranging appointments tends to be seamless, with only three per cent of bookers reporting a problem when trying to arrange an appointment with Pension Wise. There is little or no difference by the type of appointment or profile of customers. Those with two or more appointments are more likely to report issues (10%), which could be one of the reasons they booked more than one time.

Among the small proportion (3%) who experienced problems, the most commonly raised issues are the long waiting time until the next appointment (29%), a lack of slots available at convenient times (25%) or locally (21%), or that an appointment was changed or cancelled (18%).

The proportion reporting any issues or problems is lower than in the previous evaluations (8% in 2018/19 and 10% in 2017/18) suggesting that improvements made to the service have been effective. The types of problems appointment bookers mention remain largely similar, albeit at a lower volume. However, the proportion citing long waiting times for available appointments has fallen (from 47% in 2018/19 to 29% this year), suggesting that the measures Pension Wise has taken, around this issue specifically, have had a positive effect.

Whether self-serve customers want appointments

There is a sizeable overlap between the appointment booker and self-serve customer populations, with over a third of self-serve customers (37%) saying they have booked a Pension Wise appointment; 32 per cent have already attended it with further five per cent planning to attend after completing the self-serve journey on the Pension Wise website. The proportion of self-serve customers attending an appointment increased by nine percentage points this year (32% vs. 23% in 2018/19).

A further 36 per cent of self-serve customers have not yet booked an appointment but say they may do so in the future. One in five (21%) expressly rule out booking an appointment in the future.

One of the common reasons for using the self-serve journey instead of booking an appointment is the convenience of it. Over two-fifths (42%) of self-serve customers agree that it was more convenient for

them than having a face-to-face or telephone appointment, and just one-fifth (21%) disagree. Among this 21 per cent, six in ten (57%) have already booked or attended a Pension Wise appointment and a further three in ten (30%) say they may book one.

These findings are largely similar across gender and age groups.

Reasons for missing or not completing an appointment

As noted in Chapter 2, 14 per cent of appointment bookers are recorded as either not completing their appointment (12%) or missing a scheduled appointment (2%). Nearly a quarter (23%) of those who did not complete their appointment were not eligible for Pension Wise, either because they do not have the right kind of pension (a unaccessed defined contribution pension) or are the wrong age (at least 50). In addition, one in ten (10%) said they did complete the appointment at a later date.

Beyond this, the most common reasons for not completing are:

- people saying they only have one or two questions (21%)
- feeling they are already aware of what the guidance specialist was telling them (14%)
- not having the relevant documents (11%).

The proportion of customers who missed a scheduled appointment is too small to analyse further.

Reasons for not booking an appointment

The comparison survey of non-users and website visitors (those who visited the Pension Wise website but did not necessarily use the self-serve guidance on the website) aims to understand why those eligible for Pension Wise services do not use the guidance available. Just under half (47%) of non-users have not heard of Pension Wise at all – similar to the 2018/19 result.

The most common reasons for not booking an appointment among the 53 per cent of non-users who *have* heard of the service are to do with lack of time (20%) or people saying they did not need further guidance (19% say they already got the information they need from a financial advisor).

Most reasons are not related to the quality or perceived usefulness of the Pension Wise service. Only a very small proportion thought that it sounds too basic for their needs (4%), that it will not be personalised (3%), that the guidance specialist would not know about their pension (2%) or that they would not trust the service (2%). These findings are all similar to those from the 2018/19 service evaluation.

We also ask website visitors (those who visited the Pension Wise website but did not necessarily use the self-serve guidance on the website) this question. The pattern of answers among this group is similar to the non-users who have heard of Pension Wise.

The proportion of website visitors who are not aware that they could book a Pension Wise appointment continues to be low. This year, eight per cent mention this, broadly in line with the seven per cent saying this in 2018/19. This remains lower than in the 2017/18 service evaluation, when a fifth (19%) of website visitors said they were not aware of this.

Customer satisfaction and advocacy



4 Overall satisfaction

This chapter focuses on appointment customers (i.e. those who have completed their appointment), and self-serve web customers. It explores their satisfaction with their whole Pension Wise experience.

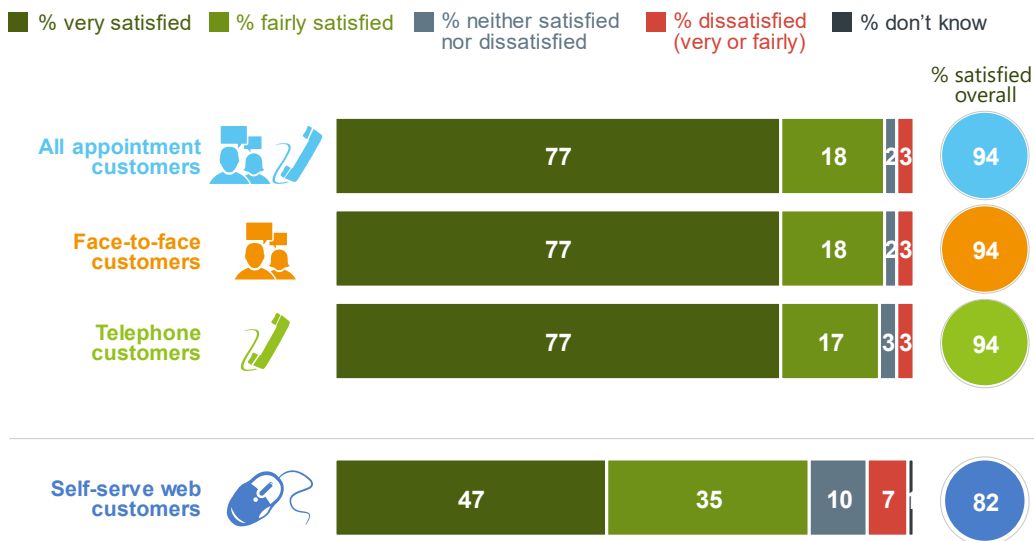
Pension Wise service users continue to be overwhelmingly satisfied. Over nine in ten appointment customers (94%) are satisfied with the service overall. This is the case for both face-to-face and telephone customers and, as shown in Figure 4.1, both are equally likely to feel *very* satisfied (77%).

Among self-serve customers, eight in ten (82%) are satisfied. More are *very* satisfied (47%) than *fairly* satisfied (35%). The difference in satisfaction between appointment customers, who have had a telephone or face-to-face appointment, and those who use the self-serve guidance on the website is expected. It reflects that having an appointment is a more intensive intervention than using a digital tool.

Dissatisfaction with the service continues to be very low across all customer groups. Just three per cent of appointment customers (telephone or face-to-face) and seven per cent of self-serve customers are dissatisfied.

Figure 4.1: Overall satisfaction with Pension Wise
(around one month after interaction with the service)

Q. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with Pension Wise?



Bases: 1,439 appointment customers; 967 face-to-face customers; 472 telephone customers; 400 self-serve web customers

For self-serve customers, there is no notable difference in satisfaction between those accessing the service on their mobile phones (85%) and those using it via a computer or laptop (84%).

The subgroups of customers that are more satisfied

For both appointment and self-serve customers, there is a consistently high satisfaction by age band, gender, disability as well as their pension pot sizes. There are, nonetheless, a small number of non-demographic subgroups who are particularly positive about their experience:

- For both appointment and self-serve customers, satisfaction is typically higher among those that have high confidence in managing their money (e.g. 95% of high-confidence appointment customers are satisfied vs. 86% of low-confidence appointment customers).
- Appointment customers who recall looking at the summary document they receive after their appointment are more likely to be satisfied than those who do not remember receiving the document (95% vs. 89%).
- Appointment customers who are widowed or divorced are more likely to be *very* satisfied than those who are single or in couple or married (83% vs. 73% and 77% respectively).

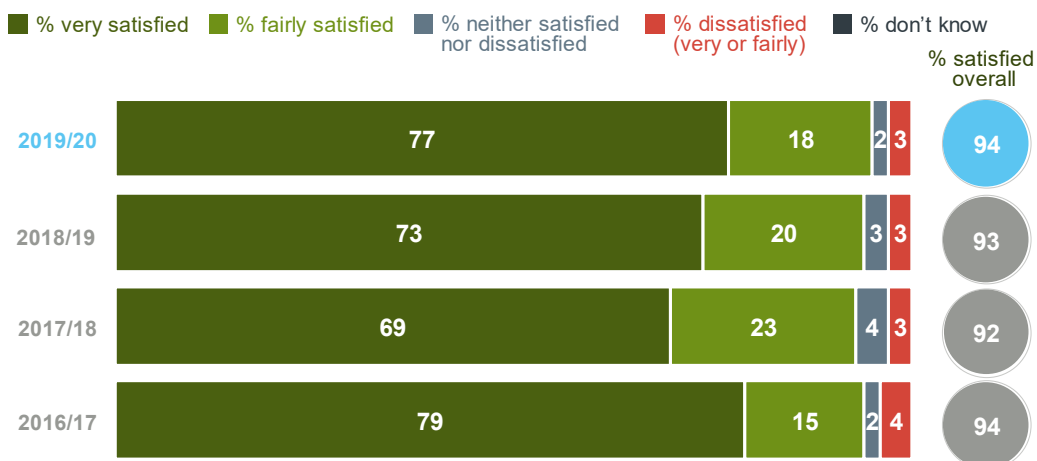
Among self-serve customers, there is consistently high satisfaction regardless of their reasons for completing the self-serve journey. For example, nearly two-thirds (64%) say one of their main reasons for visiting the Pension Wise website is for reassurance and, of these, 86 per cent were satisfied with the service. Those visiting for other specific reasons are all, broadly, equally satisfied.

Trend in satisfaction

The high level of satisfaction among Pension Wise customers has been consistent over the four years of this service evaluation, as highlighted in Figure 4.2. Over the last three years, there has been a rising number of customers who are *very* satisfied (2017/18: 69%, 2018/19: 73%, 2019/20: 77%). This year, levels of overall satisfaction including those *fairly* satisfied are, once again, in line with the previous high point in 2016/17 (94%).

Figure 4.2: Trend data for overall satisfaction with Pension Wise (appointment customers)

Q. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with Pension Wise?

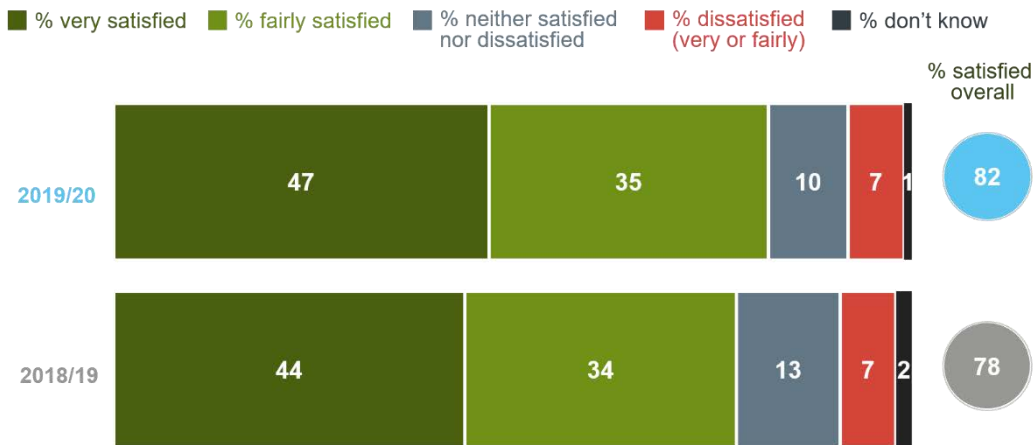


Bases: 1,400+ appointment customers each year

As Figure 4.3 shows, satisfaction among self-serve web customers has also increased this year, meaning that for both customer groups (appointment and self-serve), satisfaction is at its highest point this year.

Figure 4.3: Trend data for overall satisfaction with Pension Wise (self-serve customers)

Q. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with Pension Wise?



Bases: 400+ self-serve web customers each year

5 Satisfaction with specific aspects

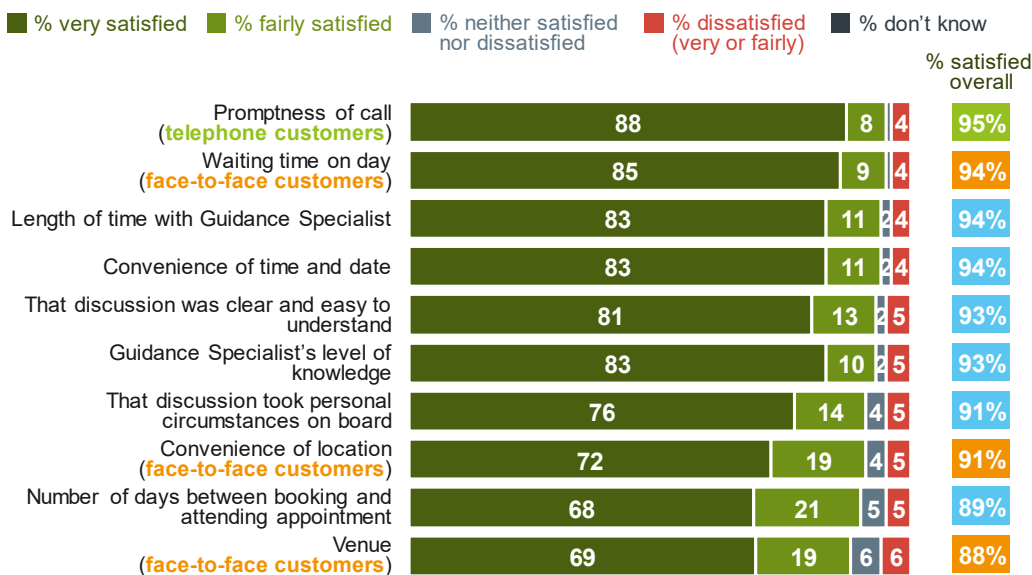
The evaluation includes diagnostic measures of satisfaction to see if there are any aspects of the service that customers are particularly pleased or displeased with, and to monitor if the service is performing to the required standard. These questions are asked of both appointment customers and self-serve web customers around one month after their interaction with the service.

Appointment customers

Appointment customers are highly satisfied with specific aspects of the service, as Figure 5.1 shows. On all aspects, at least nine in ten are satisfied and at least seven in ten are very satisfied. Appointment customers are most satisfied with the promptness of the call (telephone customers), the waiting time on the day of their appointment (face-to-face customers), the length of time the guidance specialist spoke with them and the convenience of the time and date of the appointment.

Figure 5.1: Appointment customer satisfaction with specific aspects of the appointment (including aspects relevant to face-to-face customers or telephone customers only).

Q. How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the following aspects?



Bases (from a random allocation of statements across respondents): 713-1,473 appointment customers; 1,266 face-to-face customers; 713 telephone customers
Unlabelled bars ("neither satisfied nor dissatisfied") are 1%.

These findings are broadly consistent across all subgroups apart from one difference – those who are further away from accessing their pension may be more flexible around the date and time of their appointment. Appointment customers who plan to sort their defined contribution pension arrangements more than two years from now are a little more likely to be satisfied with the convenience of the time and date of the appointment (98%), compared to those who have already made arrangements (93%) or want to do so within the next two years (94%).

Appointment customers who used the Pension Wise website before their appointment are slightly more likely to be satisfied with the length of time the guidance specialist spoke with them (94%), compared to those who only used the website after their appointment (89%).

Given the high satisfaction levels across each of these indicators, it is useful to explore which customer groups are most likely to be *very* satisfied with certain aspects. These groups tend to change year-on-year. For the 2019/20 service evaluation these are:

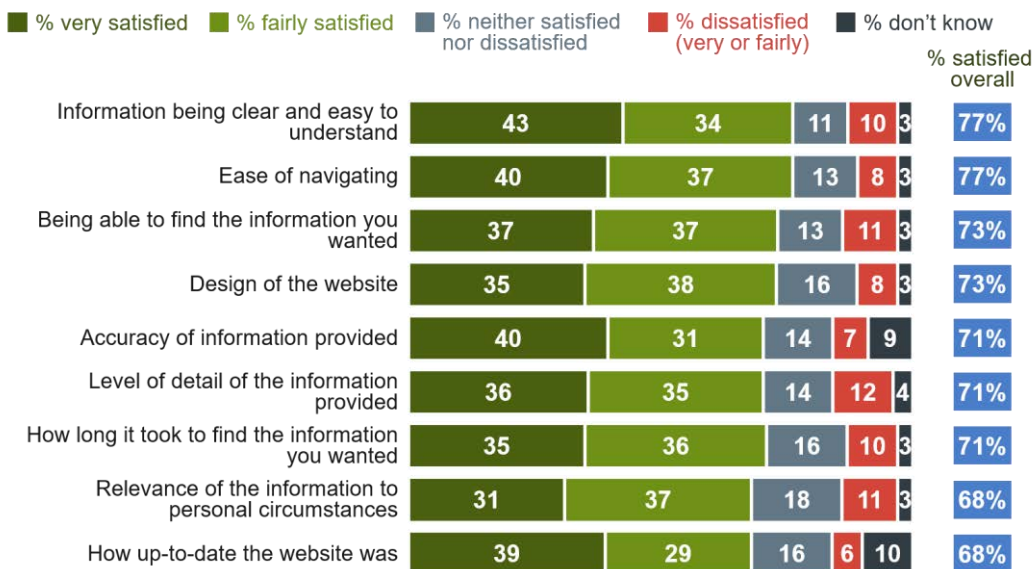
- Appointment customers who are based in Scotland are more likely than others to be *very* satisfied with the convenience of the appointment location (80%, vs. 72% on average).
- Customers who arrange their appointment by telephone are slightly more likely to be satisfied with the time taken between booking and attending their appointment than those who booked online (90% vs. 86%).
- Face-to-face customers are more likely to be *very* satisfied than telephone customers with the number of days between booking and attending their appointment (71% vs. 60%). This difference was also noted in the 2018/19 evaluation (53% vs. 33%) but the increase across both groups since last year is the most important difference to note. Across all other aspects, satisfaction is broadly equal between telephone and face-to-face customers.

Self-serve web customers

At least seven in ten self-serve customers are satisfied with various specific aspects of the Pension Wise website, as shown in Figure 5.2. The most highly rated features are to do with the information being clear and easy to understand, and the ease of navigating the website.

Figure 5.2: Self-serve web customer satisfaction with specific aspects of the Pension Wise website

Q. How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the following aspects of the website?



Base: 600 self-serve web customers

Trends in satisfaction with specific aspects of the service

Satisfaction with the different aspects of the service has remained high among appointment customers over the past four years. On several aspects, satisfaction levels have been maintained or improved since 2018/19, including more customers now saying they are *very* satisfied. This includes:

- the number of days between booking and attending the appointment (68% are *very* satisfied vs. 47% in 2018/19)
- the convenience of the time and date of the appointment (83% are *very* satisfied vs. 76% in 2018/19)
- the convenience of the location of the appointment (72% are *very* satisfied vs. 68% in 2018/19).

For self-serve customers, while many areas do not show a statistically significant change from last year, there is an upwards movement across many indicators. This is in line with the overall increase in satisfaction for this customer group (78% to 82%). The two significant changes are:

- the accuracy of the information provided (71% satisfied vs. 66% in 2018/19)
- the level of detail in the information provided (36% *very* satisfied vs. 31% in 2018/19).

6 Advocacy

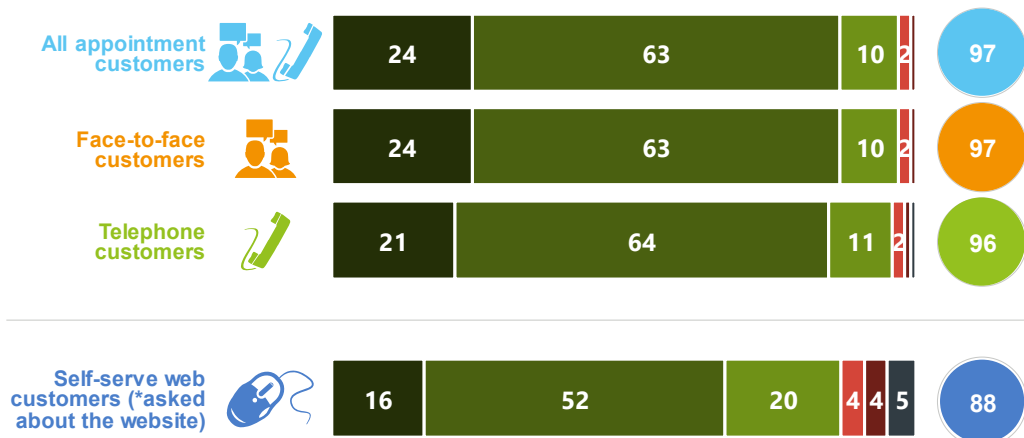
Pension Wise customers are strong advocates for the service. In total, 97 per cent of appointment customers report that they have already recommended the service or are likely to do so. This is the same across face-to-face and telephone customers. Almost nine in ten self-serve customers (88%) also say this.

As shown in Figure 6.1, around one quarter of appointment customers say they have *already* recommended Pension Wise to others, within one month of their interaction with the service. Among all customer types, the strength of advocacy is such that far more say they would be *very likely* to recommend, rather than just *fairly likely*.

Figure 6.1: Likelihood to recommend Pension Wise or the Pension Wise website
(around one month after their interaction with the service)

Q. How likely is it, if at all, that you would recommend Pension Wise* to others?

■ % already recommended
 ■ % very likely
 ■ % fairly likely
 ■ % not very likely
 ■ % not at all likely
 ■ % don't know
 % already/likely to recommend



Bases: 1,439 appointment customers; 967 face-to-face customers; 472 telephone customers; 400 self-serve web customers

Unlabelled bars ("not at all likely" and "don't know") are 1% or less.

The levels of advocacy are similarly high across most subgroups but, within both the appointment and self-serve customer groups, those aged under 60 are more likely to have already recommended the service than those aged 60 and over. For example, among self-serve web customers, 20 per cent of those aged under 60 have done so, compared with 12 per cent of those aged 60 and over.

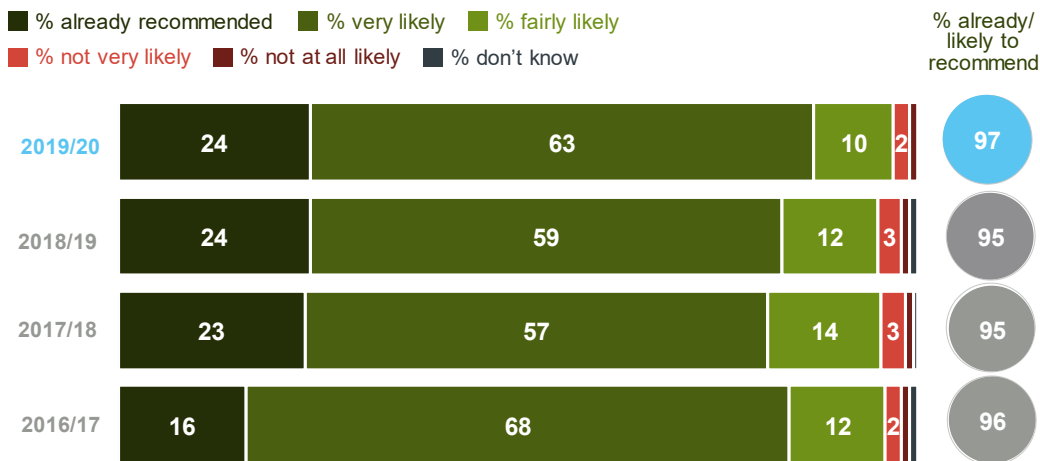
Trend in advocacy

The proportion of appointment customers saying they have already recommended Pension Wise or are likely to recommend it has remained consistently high across all four years of the service evaluation.

This year sees the highest advocacy score to date (2016/17: 96%; 2017/18: 95%; 2018/19: 95%; 2019/20: 97%). Over the last three years, there has been an increase in those who say they are very likely to recommend Pension Wise to others, as shown in Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2: Trend data for likelihood to recommend Pension Wise (appointment customers)

Q. How likely is it, if at all, that you would recommend Pension Wise to others?



Bases: 1,400+ appointment customers each year
Unlabelled bars ("not at all likely" and "don't know") are 1% or less.

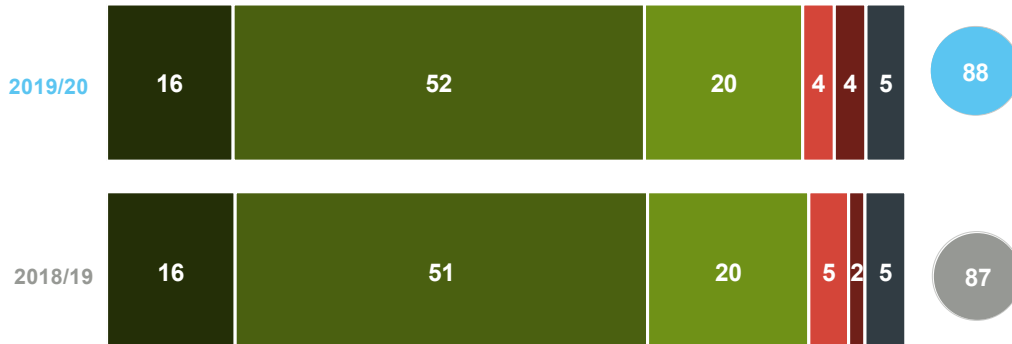
The consistently high advocacy scores may help to explain the increasing number of transactions with the service as more people personally recommend Pension Wise to others. Chapter 3 noted the increasing importance of personal recommendations as a source of new customers for the service (increasing from 5% in 2017/18 to 11% this year).

As Figure 6.3 shows, the proportion of self-serve web customers who have already recommended or are likely to recommend Pension Wise is consistent with the previous year. The breakdown of those who are *very* likely, *fairly* likely or have already recommended also remains in line with 2018/19.

Figure 6.3: Trend data for likelihood to recommend Pension Wise (self-serve customers)

Q. How likely is it, if at all, that you would recommend Pension Wise to others?

■ % already recommended
 ■ % very likely
 ■ % fairly likely
 ■ % not very likely
 ■ % not at all likely
 ■ % don't know
 % already/likely to recommend



Bases: 400+ appointment customers each year

7 Potential improvements

There are very low levels of dissatisfaction among appointment customers (3% dissatisfied with their overall experience) and self-serve customers (7% dissatisfied). This suggests that customers are not looking for any substantive changes or improvements.

Nevertheless, the surveys ask those that are dissatisfied about their reasons for dissatisfaction. We also ask all customers for any ideas they may have to improve the Pension Wise service. Among those that do raise suggestions, these form a small set of common themes, which are discussed in this chapter.

Reasons for dissatisfaction

When asked, the top reasons customers give for being dissatisfied are typically about the following issues to do with the content of the guidance, rather than about technical issues, accessibility or convenience:

- not getting an answer to the specific questions they had
- thinking the service or guidance is insufficiently personalised
- information being confusing and not knowing what to do next.¹³

These are the same themes that emerged in the 2018/19 service evaluation, again among a small minority of customers.

The high rate of satisfaction means that relatively few Pension Wise customers can suggest any concrete improvements to make to the service. When all appointment customers are asked what they would like to see improved, over seven in ten (77%) either say there is nothing to improve, give positive feedback or say they do not know – which is higher than in 2018/19 (when it was 72%). Among self-serve customers, this is over eight in ten (83%).

Disabled people's satisfaction with the website

Customers with a disability who have a face-to-face or telephone appointment tend to be similarly satisfied with the appointment service as those customers without a disability. However, there are some differences when it comes to their satisfaction with the website. Although a majority (83%) of disabled self-serve customers are satisfied with their experience overall, there are some aspects of the website which these customers are less satisfied with. This includes:

- information being clear and easy to understand (70% vs. 79% of those without a disability)
- ease of navigation (70% vs. 79% of those without a disability)
- the design of the website (65% vs. 75% of those without a disability).

¹³ This is asked unprompted for telephone respondents and with a prompted list for online respondents, with the option to give an “other” response. We ask the question on suggested improvements, also covered in this chapter, in the same way.

The findings around clarity of information and ease of navigation were similar for customers with a disability in the 2018/19 evaluation.

These differences may, to some extent, be expected, given this audience may have more specific accessibility needs. However, the findings indicate that this customer group would benefit the most from any improvements that can be made to the website's accessibility and ease of use, specifically with them in mind.

Suggested improvements

The main areas suggested for improvement, in each case by fewer than five per cent of all appointment customers, include:

- a desire for guidance and information to be more specific or tailored
- a desire for more time during appointments
- reducing waiting times between booking and appointments so that service users can be seen quicker
- issues with information being overwhelming or wanting content that is easier to understand.

This marks a change from the previous two years where waiting times for appointments was the most prevalent issue. It suggests that the improvements Pension Wise has put in place around this over the last two years have had a positive impact. While some people still mention it, it is no longer an issue that stands out among others, across all appointment customers.

This desire for a more personalised service has also been an expressed wish among a small minority of self-serve web customers since this survey began (3% raise this in 2019/20). These customers have not (yet) had an appointment with a Guidance Specialist but may intend to book one. The service has always been guidance-based rather than offering personalised advice but it is clear that some customers would like it to go further in that direction than the service currently can.

The impact of Pension Wise

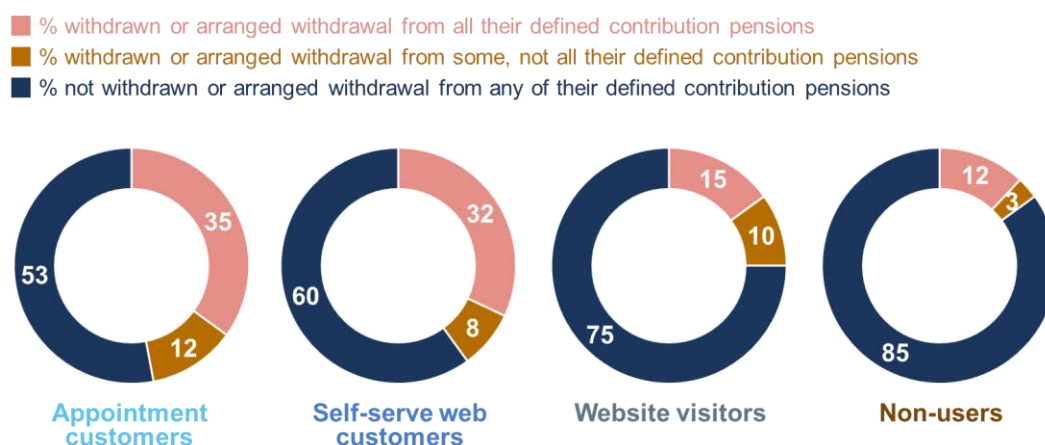


8 Confidence and preparedness

Pension Wise provides all customers with guidance on how to avoid pension scams. It also guides customers on the kinds of questions they can ask pension providers, based on the pension options they are considering. This chapter looks at how customers (appointment customers and self-serve web customers) feel about these areas around three months after their appointment.

The chapter also explores how certain and happy customers are about the options they will choose or have chosen for accessing their defined contribution pensions, compared to non-users. For context, the following chart (Figure 8.1) shows that customers are much more likely than website visitors and non-users to have solidified their access arrangements at the point we survey them. These proportions are, across all groups, broadly similar to the 2018/19 evaluation.

Figure 8.1: Arrangements made or to be made for accessing defined contribution pensions
(around three months after using Pension Wise, or equivalent period for website visitors and non-users)



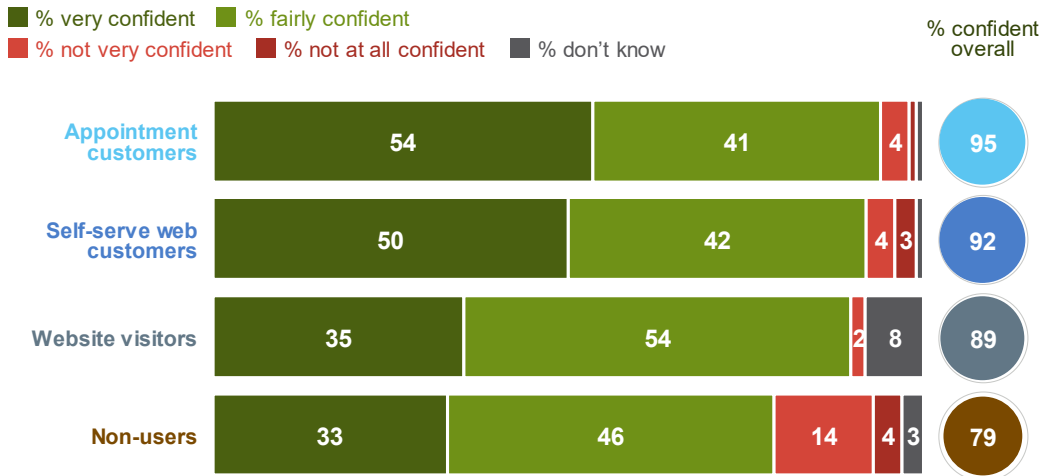
Bases: 857 appointment customers; 298 self-serve web customers; 181 website visitors; 770 non-users

Confidence in avoiding scams

The vast majority of customers feel confident in being able to avoid pension scams, even three months after their interaction with Pension Wise. This applies to 95 per cent of appointment customers and 92 per cent of self-serve web customers. All three of the groups that have used Pension Wise in some way, including website visitors, are more confident than non-users, as Figure 8.2 shows.

Figure 8.2: Levels of confidence in avoiding pension scams
(around three months after using Pension Wise, or equivalent period for website visitors and non-users)

Q. How confident, if at all, do you feel about being able to avoid any pension scams?



Bases: 857 appointment customers; 298 self-serve web customers; 181 website visitors; 770 non-users
 Unlabelled bars ("not at all confident" and "don't know") are 1%.

Among appointment customers, confidence in avoiding scams is consistently high for both telephone and face-to-face customers and across the main demographic groups, including gender and age. This is different from last year's evaluation, where we found that customers aged 60 and over tended to be less confident on this measure. For self-serve web customers, those aged over 55 are more likely to say they are *very* confident than those aged under 55 (53% vs. 36%).

Chapter 2 outlined that a fifth (22%) of those booking Pension Wise appointments do not self-assess as having high confidence when it comes to managing money in general. These customers might also be expected to be less confident at avoiding pension scams, so it is encouraging to see that 87 per cent of this group still feel they are able to avoid them three months after their appointment.

Those with a disability are less likely than average to say they are *very* confident (43%, vs. 54% overall), as are those with no qualifications (46%). However, this is also linked to the fact that disabled customers and those with lower education levels are less financially confident in general – they are far less likely than others to fall into the "high confidence" group. Although these are inherently more challenging groups for Pension Wise to support, they still feel more confident about avoiding pensions scams than those who do not use the service at all (89%, vs. 79% of non-users).

Being prepared for discussions with providers

Three in five appointment customers (61%) speak to their pension provider within three months of their Pension Wise appointment. Among non-users, at the same point in time, only a fifth do this (20%).

All those using Pension Wise services are more likely to feel well prepared than non-users. Among the appointment bookers who engage with their pension provider, nine in ten (92%) feel they are well prepared for this discussion, with two in five (40%) feeling very well prepared. Similarly, nine in ten self-serve customers (92%) feel prepared, compared to seven in ten non-users (72%), as Figure 8.3 shows.

Figure 8.3: Feeling prepared for discussions with pension providers

(within three months of using Pension Wise, or equivalent period for website visitors and non-users)

Q. How well prepared, if at all, did you feel when discussing your pension pot options with your pension provider?



Bases: 523 appointment customers who have spoken to their pension provider since their appointment; 143 self-serve web customers; 52 website visitors; 151 non-users
Unlabelled bars ("don't know") are 1%.

The sense of preparedness is equally high across face-to-face and telephone customers, and there are no strong differences by gender or age. However, some subgroups are less likely to feel well prepared, including:

- those with a disability (82%, vs. 92% overall)
- single or widowed customers (85%)
- those with lower value pots, worth up to £30,000 (86%).

Among self-serve customers, there are similarly high levels of preparedness across all subgroups.

Certainty and confidence when making arrangements

Certainty over preferred pension options among those who have yet to make arrangements

Three months after their appointment, two-thirds of appointment customers (65%) still have to decide what action to take with at least one of their defined contribution pension pots. The remaining third (35%) have already arranged or withdrawn *all* their pension pots by this point. By contrast, at the point we interview them, most non-users (88%) and website visitors (85%) still have to make arrangements for at least one of their pension pots.

Among those who are yet to finalise their arrangements, nine in ten appointment customers (89%) and self-serve customers (87%) feel certain about the options they will choose. One in five appointment customers and a quarter of self-serve customers are *very* certain (22% and 26% respectively). Website visitors and non-users tend to be less certain (78% and 73% respectively), as shown in Figure 8.4.

In last year's service evaluation, on this question, self-serve customers were closer to website visitors but they are now more in line with appointment customers.

The pension access options each customer group has in mind are covered in Chapter 11.

Figure 8.4: Certainty over preferred pension options

(around three months after using Pension Wise, or equivalent period for website visitors and non-users)

Q. How certain, if at all, would you say you are of taking that option or those options?



Bases: 490 appointment customers who have not made arrangements for at least one defined contribution pension; 162 self-serve web customers; 130 website visitors; 466 non-users
Unlabelled bars ("not at all certain" and "don't know") are 1%.

There are no differences between telephone and face-to-face customers on this measure – both tend to be equally certain of their preferred options. However, appointment customers in some demographic groups tend to be less certain than average, including:

- women (85% are certain vs. 92% of men)
- customers aged under 65 (86% are certain vs. 97% of those aged 65 and over) – the same difference was seen in the 2018/19 service evaluation
- single or widowed customers (83% are certain, vs. 89% overall).

There are also no substantial subgroup differences among self-serve customers.

Reasons behind uncertainty

As Figure 8.4 illustrates, a small proportion (10%) of the appointment customers who are yet to make arrangements for at least one of their defined contribution pensions feel uncertain about the option they will take.¹⁴ The most common reasons they give for this are:

- wanting more information (31%)
- feeling that retirement is still too distant (16%)
- wanting to talk a financial adviser first (16%)
- not being confident with finances generally (12%)
- being too busy with other priorities (11%)
- not understanding the information they have received so far (10%).

The top four reasons above have made an appearance in previous years of the service evaluation too. Among these, reasons such as feeling retirement is too far off, or a lack of confidence with financial issues in general, highlight inherent challenges with certain customer groups that Pension Wise is likely to face every year. By contrast, the proportion saying they do not understand the information Pension Wise provides is extremely small overall (around 1% of customers overall).

The 13 per cent of self-serve customers who feel uncertain give a similar set of reasons, with no one reason standing out in particular.

Finally, the 23 per cent of non-users who feel uncertain also give similar reasons. In addition, two other common mentions among this group are that the value of their pensions is too small (21%) or that they cannot afford financial advice (16%). Around one in ten non-users (9%) also say that they want to talk to Pension Wise first.

The role Pension Wise plays in choosing an option

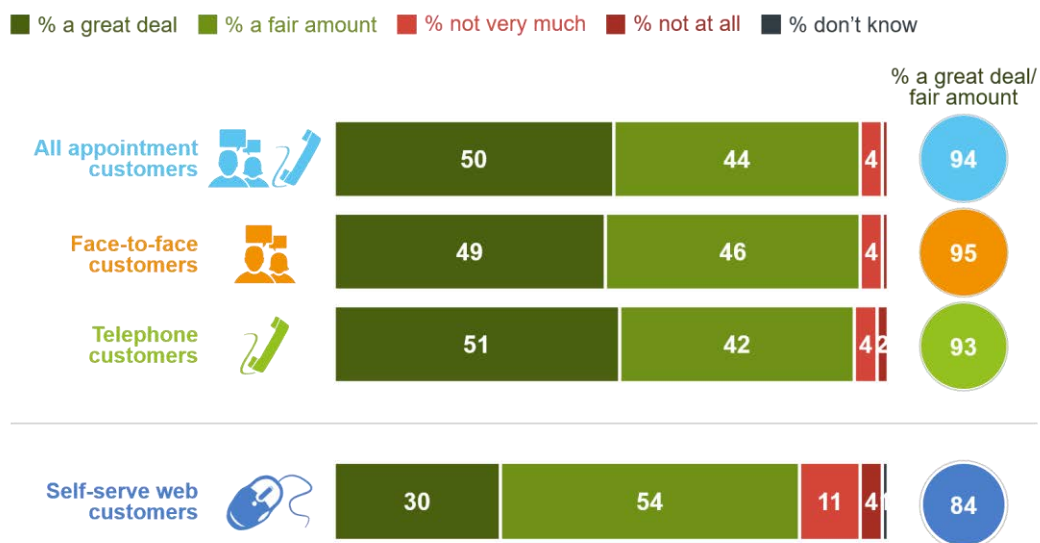
Half of all appointment customers (47%) have withdrawn or arranged the withdrawal of at least one of their defined pension pots within three months of their Pension Wise appointment. When asked, almost all these customers (94%) say that Pension Wise contributed *a great deal* or *a fair amount* to them feeling confident in making this decision. Half (50%) specifically say Pension Wise contributed *a great deal*. This is equally positive for face-to-face and telephone customers, as Figure 8.5 highlights.

We would expect these results to be slightly lower for self-serve customers. There is a strong human interaction with face-to-face and telephone customers, which is not present in the self-serve journey. Nevertheless, the vast majority of self-serve customers (84%) also feel that Pension Wise gave them confidence in making their decision.

¹⁴ This is asked unprompted for telephone respondents and with a prompted list for online respondents, with the option to give an “other” response.

Figure 8.5: Extent to which Pension Wise makes customers feel confident in decision-making

Q. To what extent did Pension Wise give you confidence in taking your decision?



Bases: 748 appointment customers who have withdrawn or arranged withdrawal for at least one defined pension pot within three months of their Pension Wise appointment, or have not arranged anything yet but say they are certain about what they will do; 437 face-to-face customers; 311 telephone customers; 239 self-serve web customers
Unlabelled bars ("not at all") are 1%.

These findings are consistently positive for men and women, and for different age bands. Appointment customers with smaller pension pots tend to be slightly more positive about the impact of Pension Wise in this respect (57% of those with £30,000 or less invested in defined contribution pensions say it gave them a great deal of confidence, vs. 50% overall) – this is similar to the 2018/19 service evaluation.

Among self-serve customers specifically, men are more likely than women to feel they have gained confidence from Pension Wise (88% say a great deal or fair amount vs. 75% of women). This is not a consistent pattern, however, as in the 2018/19 service evaluation women were more likely than men to say this (91% vs. 80% of men).

Trends in confidence and preparedness

The proportion of appointment customers who spoke to their pension provider within three months of their Pension Wise appointment increased this year (up from 56% in 2018/19 to 61% in 2019/20). Even with this increase, there has been no drop in the proportions who say they are prepared for such conversations this year. There has also been no change in customers' confidence in making decisions,

Confidence in avoiding scams was at 94 per cent in 2016/17 and 92 per cent in 2017/18. Last year (2018/19), this recovered to 95 per cent, which is where it remains in this latest service evaluation.

9 Perceived understanding of pension options

This chapter covers customers' self-reported understanding of their pension options, how much they think it has improved, and how much they attribute this to their Pension Wise experience. This self-reported understanding is different from customers' factual knowledge around the options they can take. We explore factual knowledge separately in Chapter 10.

Whether customers think their understanding has improved

Nine in ten appointment customers (89%) believe that their understanding of their pension options has improved either a *great deal* or a *fair amount* after their appointment. Nearly all (99%) attribute their sense of improved understanding to Pension Wise, at least by a *fair amount*.

Similarly, around three-quarters of self-serve web customers (76%) report that their understanding of their pension options has improved after using the self-serve guidance on the Pension Wise website. Even though the self-service journey is a less intensive interaction with the service than a face-to-face or telephone appointment, almost all these self-serve customers (97%) believe that their improvement is due to Pension Wise, at least by a *fair amount*.

Both sets of measures are collected around one month after people's interactions with Pension Wise. This is in order to capture their views while their experience is still fresh enough in their minds. Figure 9.1 shows the findings for both these questions combined.

Figure 9.1: Extent to which customers feel that Pension Wise has improved their understanding (around one month after their interaction with the service)

Q. How much, if at all, did your experience with Pension Wise help improve your understanding of your pension options?

- % think understanding improved *and* Pension Wise is responsible for a great deal of the improvement
 - % think understanding improved *and* Pension Wise is responsible for a fair amount of the improvement
 - % think understanding improved but not due to Pension Wise
 - % think understanding has not improved very much or at all
 - % don't know
- % who feel Pension Wise is responsible



Bases: 2,163 appointment customers; 1,450 face-to-face customers; 713 telephone customers; 600 self-serve web customers

Unlabelled bars ("not due to Pension Wise") are 1% or less.

This shows that nine in ten appointment customers (88%) report that their understanding has improved and that, in their view, this is due, at least a *fair amount*, to their Pension Wise appointment experience.

This effect is slightly stronger among face-to-face customers (89%, vs. 85% of telephone customers), although it is worth noting that the scores for all three customer groups (face-to-face, telephone and self-serve) are the highest achieved in all four years of the service evaluation to date. The face-to-face and telephone scores are on a par with those achieved in 2016/17.

These results are consistently positive irrespective of age. There are, however, differences by gender and pension pot size. Women are more likely to say that they emerged with an improved understanding of their options, and that Pension Wise was responsible for *a great deal* of this (49% vs. 43% of men). Those with pension pots of more than £100,000 are less likely than others to say this (39%, vs. 45% overall) – reflecting a similar difference found last year.

There is a positive correlation between these indicators and the Pension Wise summary document. Appointment customers who read the summary document in full are more likely to say their understanding improved and that Pension Wise contributed *a great deal* to this (45% vs. 38% of those who do not remember receiving a summary document). Similarly, self-serve customers who remember downloading and reading their summary document are more likely to say this (52% vs. 24% on average). This is also a similar difference to the one found last year – it highlights the ongoing usefulness of having a summary document for people to be able to reflect on the guidance they have received.

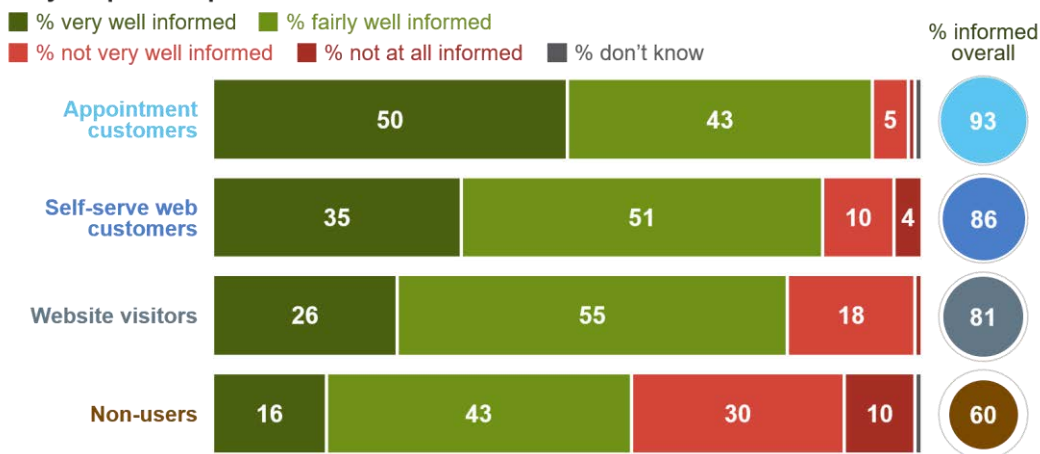
Feeling informed about your pension options in the longer term

We also explore whether Pension Wise customers feel informed about their pension options around three months or more after their interaction with the service. This longer-term outlook helps to show whether customers have maintained the sense of understanding that they felt they gained immediately after using the service.

An overwhelming majority of appointment customers (93%) feel well informed, with half (50%) stating that they feel *very well* informed (Figure 9.2).

Figure 9.2: Feeling informed about your pension options
(around three months after using Pension Wise, or the equivalent period for website visitors and non-users)

Q. How well informed, if at all, do you feel about the different options you can take with your pension pots?



Bases: 857 appointment customers; 298 self-serve web customers; 181 website visitors; 770 non-users
Unlabelled bars ("not at all informed" and "don't know") are 1%.

As with the indicators on confidence and preparedness, appointment and self-serve customers emerge with a more positive outlook than website users and non-users (60% of non-users and 81% of website users feel well informed compared to 93% of appointment and 86% of self-serve customers).

These overall findings are similar across the different customer types, and by gender, age band, and those with different-sized pension pots. However, among appointment customers, those with lower-value pension pots worth under £30,000 are slightly less likely to say they feel *very* well informed about the different options (44%, vs. 50% on average). For self-serve customers, there is a similar pattern – those with a pension pot worth over £100,000 are more likely to feel informed than those with lower-value pension pots under £30,000 (96% vs. 84%).

Appointment customers who look at other Pension Wise information outside of their appointment tend to feel better informed. Almost all the appointment customers who visit the Pension Wise website before their appointment feel informed (96% vs. 87% of those who do not).

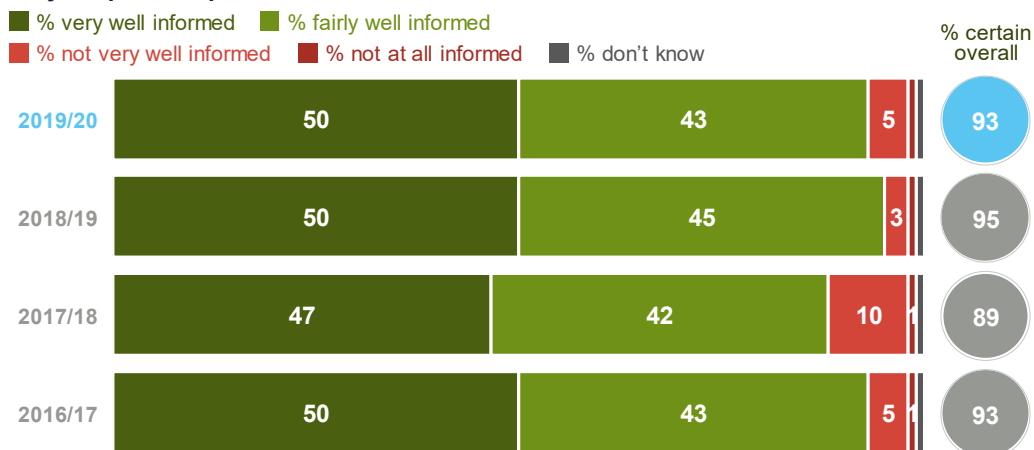
Trends in self-reported understanding

The proportion of appointment customers who feel that their understanding of their pension options has improved, and that Pension Wise contributed a *great deal* to this, is now back to the level last seen in 2016/17 (when it was also 88%). This represents a consistent improvement since 2017/18 (85%) and 2018/19 (86%).

The proportion who feel informed of their options three months after their appointment has, outside of a one-off dip in 2017/18 (when it was 89%), remained consistently high, as Figure 9.6 shows.

Figure 9.3: Trend data for appointment customers feeling informed about their pension options

Q. How well informed, if at all, do you feel about the different options you can take with your pension pots?



Bases: 650+ appointment customers each year
Unlabelled bars ("not at all informed" and "don't know") are 1%.

- The proportion of self-serve customers who feel informed is also in line with the 2018/19 result for this group.

Self-reported impacts of Pension Wise

This year, we asked three new questions of customers three months after their interaction with Pension Wise. These questions were added to the questionnaire to provide a better understanding of the perceived impact that Pension Wise has on their pension access decision making.

The findings show that customers feel the service helps them consider their choices more thoroughly and improves their knowledge base. For more than half (57%), it is felt to directly influence the final pensions access options they choose.

Helping customers consider their choices

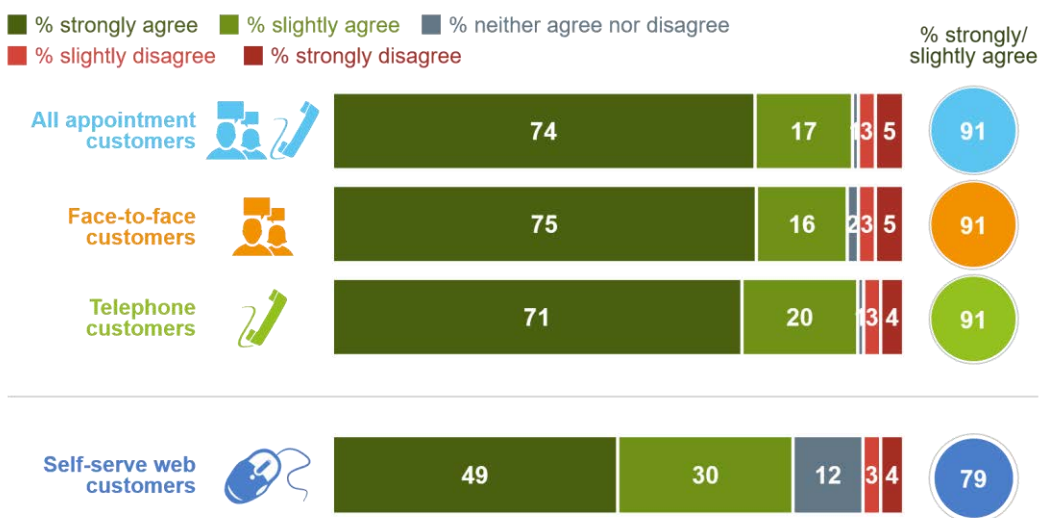
One statement gauges whether the service helped them to consider their pension access options more thoroughly. Nine in ten appointment customers (91%) agree that this was the case, with three-quarters (74%) strongly agreeing and just six per cent disagreeing (Figure 9.4).

This is evenly balanced across face-to-face and telephone customers. It perhaps helps to explain why customers feel much more informed than non-users about their pension pot options.

Self-serve customers also had high levels of agreement with this statement. Eight in ten (79%) agree that Pension Wise helped them consider their pension access options more thoroughly with half (49%) reporting that they strongly agree.

Figure 9.4: Extent to which customers feel that Pension Wise helped them consider their pension access options more thoroughly
(around three months after using the service)

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? *Using Pension Wise helped me consider my pension access options more thoroughly*



Bases: 857 appointment customers; 508 face-to-face customers; 349 telephone customers; 298 self-serve web customers

These results are relatively consistent among all customers subgroups.

Helping customers make better-informed decisions

Nine in ten appointment customers (89%) feel they have learned something new as a result of their appointment. Two-thirds (67%) strongly agree with this sentiment.

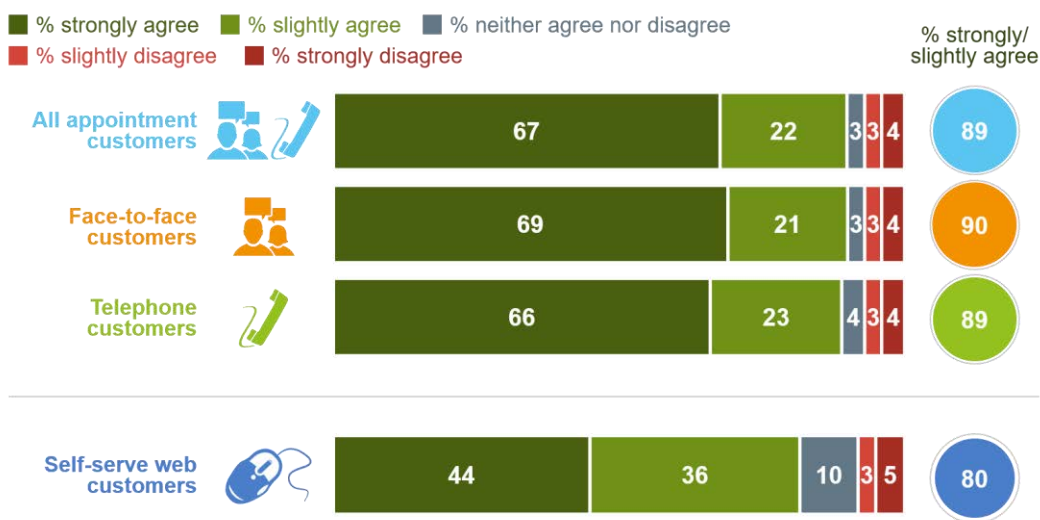
As Figure 9.5 shows, this sentiment is equally strong among face-to-face and telephone customers.

Eight in ten self-serve customers (80%) agree that they learned things from Pension Wise they did not know before, with a slightly higher proportion *slightly* agreeing compared to appointment customers.

Figure 9.5: Extent to which customers feel they learned something new from Pension Wise (around three months after using Pension Wise)

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

I learned things from using the Pension Wise service that I didn't know before



Bases: 857 appointment customers; 508 face-to-face customers; 349 telephone customers; 298 self-serve web customers

- Among appointment customers, agreement is typically high for all genders and age groups. Women are, however, more likely to *strongly* agree than men (72% vs. 65%) and those aged 50-54 are also more likely to *strongly* feel they learnt something new (76%, vs. 67% overall).
- Disabled customers are one of the few customers groups a little less likely than average to agree (82%, vs. 89% overall) – although this is still an overwhelming majority among this group.

Helping customers decide which options they wish to take

The majority of customers feel that their Pension Wise experience influenced their eventual choices. More than half of appointment customers (57%) agree, when asked three months after their appointment, that it changed how they accessed their pension, or how they intend to. One third (33%) strongly agree that this was the case.

The full results, shown in Figure 9.6, highlight that this is the same across face-to-face and telephone customers. We also find relative consistency across gender and age groups at this question.

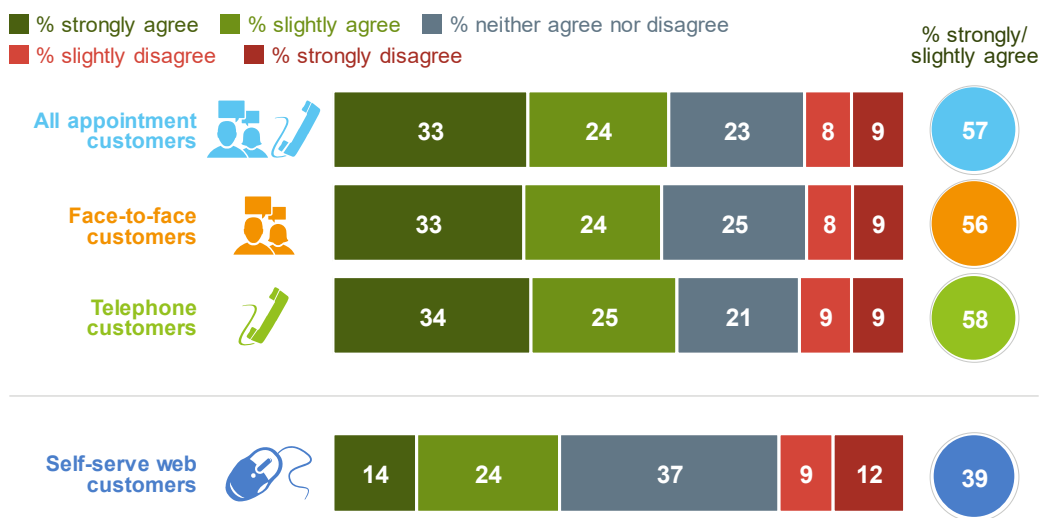
On balance, self-serve customers are more likely to agree (39%) than disagree (21%), although the extent to which they attribute their actions to their Pension Wise interaction is lower than for appointment customers. This may be due to this customer group being a little more advanced in their thinking when they contact the service.

The Pension Wise service does not set out to change people's choices or tell customers what they should choose to do. Rather, it is concerned with ensuring that people make informed choices. These findings suggest that the service encourages most customers to fully consider all their options, while underpinning better-informed choices, and that this can often involve a change of mind.

Figure 9.6: Extent to which customers feel they changed their options because of Pension Wise (around three months after using Pension Wise)

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

As a result of using the Pension Wise service, I changed how I have, or how I'm going to access my pension(s)



Bases: 857 appointment customers; 508 face-to-face customers; 349 telephone customers; 298 self-serve web customers

Among appointment customers, this sentiment is strongest for those with mid-value pension pots, between £30,000 and £100,000 (64% agree and 39% strongly agree). Self-serve customers with pension pots under than £100,000 are also more likely to agree than those with higher value pension pots (48% vs. 31%).

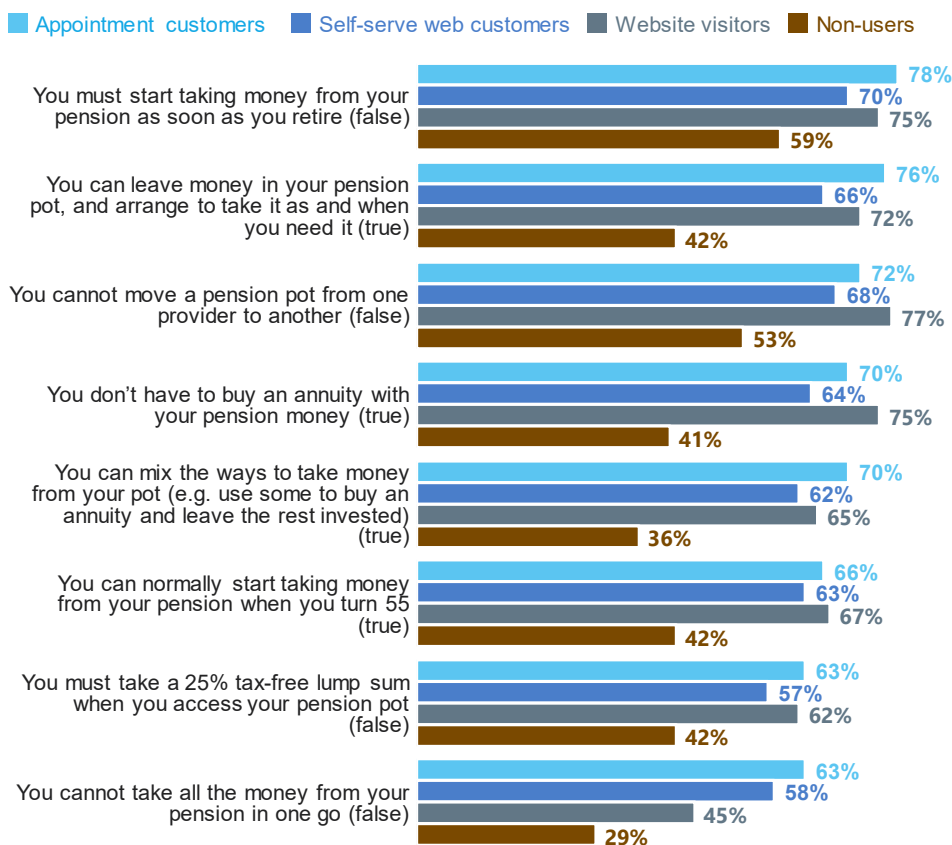
10 Knowledge of the facts

In addition to the self-reported understanding covered in Chapter 9, we also look at people's factual knowledge around what they can do with their pension pots. We ask appointment customers (i.e. those who complete their appointment) and self-serve web customers a series of true and false statements around one month after their interaction with Pension Wise, to see if they have maintained knowledge of the things that they would have been told or would have read when using the service.

As Figure 10.1 shows, there is relatively high level of factual knowledge among both groups of Pension Wise customers. Around 60 to 80 per cent of appointment customers and 60 to 70 per cent of self-serve web customers are aware of each of the facts noted here. Moreover, they are confident in their knowledge. They consider these things to be, correctly, *definitely* true or false, not *probably* true or false.

Figure 10.1: Knowledge of specific facts around pension freedoms
(around one month after using Pension Wise, for customers)

Q. For each statement, please say whether you think it is definitely true, probably true, probably false or definitely false. % answering correctly (definitely only)



Bases: 1,963 appointment customers; 600 self-serve web customers; 181 website visitors; 770 non-users

Appointment customers, have a particularly good knowledge of the following facts:

- that you do not have to withdraw your pension immediately on retiring (78% definitely correct)
- that you do not have to withdraw the full amount from your pension pot (76%)
- that pension pots can be transferred across providers (72%)
- that buying an annuity is optional (70%)
- that you can mix the ways you take money from a single pension pot (70%).

Overall, two-thirds of appointment customers (66%) and almost two-thirds of self-serve customers (63%) know that they can *definitely* withdraw their pension money from age 55 onwards. This knowledge is greater among appointment customers aged 50 to 54, who are approaching this milestone, than among those who have passed it already (72% vs. 65% among those aged 55+). This difference is similar to the one found last year.

Similarly, we looked at whether customers who are not yet retired are as aware as others of the fact that they do not have to withdraw their pension immediately on retiring. As might be expected, those who have retired are more knowledgeable of this aspect (84% and 80% of retired appointment customers and retired self-serve customers respectively get this *definitely* correct) but a very high proportion of those who are yet to retire are also aware (76% and 67% *definitely* correct).

Comparing appointment customers to non-users

We also ask these questions of website visitors and non-users, as a point of comparison. As Figure 10.1 shows, appointment customers tend to be more knowledgeable about each of these facts than non-users. Amongst non-users, the following facts are the most well-known:

you do not have to withdraw your pension immediately on retiring (59% *definitely* correct)

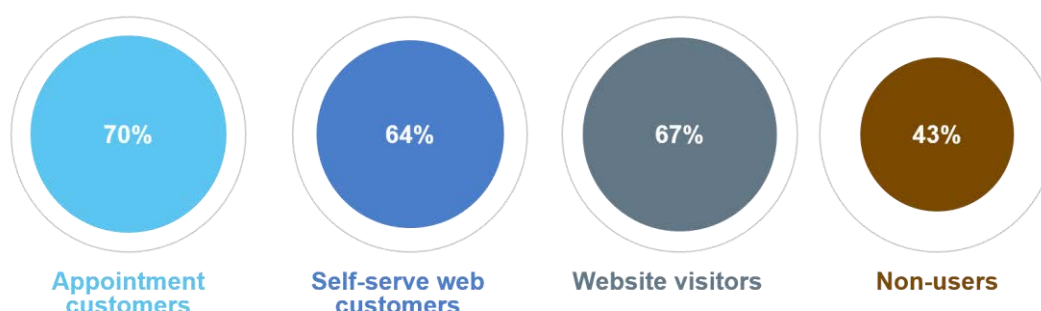
pension pots can be transferred across providers (53%).

This suggests that these facts are more common knowledge than the other areas asked about. Website visitors are typically much closer to appointment customers.

An overall knowledge indicator for each audience group is shown in Figure 10.2. This shows the average proportion of people giving correct answers (either *definitely* true or *definitely* false) for each of the eight statements. It illustrates that all those having some form of interaction with Pension Wise tend to be more knowledgeable than those who do not.

Figure 10.2: Factual knowledge averaged across each of the eight statements in the survey

Average % answering correctly (either *definitely* true or *definitely* false) across all eight true/false statements



Bases: 1,963 appointment customers; 600 self-serve web customers; 181 website visitors; 770 non-users

Proportions who are incorrect about the facts

Table 10.1 shows that very few Pension Wise customers are wrong about these facts. It also shows that non-users are more likely to get specific facts wrong compared to customers. The most common misconceptions across all groups are that:

- you have to take 25 per cent of your pot as a tax-free lump sum
- you cannot withdraw all your pension pot in one go.

Figure 10.1 also showed that another area non-users are especially uncertain of is whether you can mix the ways in which you withdraw your pension (which you can). All these are perhaps areas where Pension Wise can do most to help address misconceptions through its guidance. And it is already the case that far more customers get the answers right than not.

Table 10.1: Percentage of customers answering each factual statement about pension freedoms incorrectly (either selecting *definitely* or *probably* false for a true statement or *definitely* or *probably* true for a false statement)

	Appointment customers	Self-serve web customers	Website visitors	Non-users
Base	1,963	600	181	770
You must start taking money from your pension as soon as you retire (false)	7%	7%	4%	9%
You can leave money in your pension pot, and arrange to take it as and when you need it (true)	4%	5%	2%	7%
You cannot move a pension pot from one provider to another (false)	11%	9%	8%	13%
You don't have to buy an annuity with your pension money (true)	12%	10%	7%	11%
You can mix the ways to take money from your pot (e.g. use some to buy an annuity and leave the rest invested) (true)	6%	7%	8%	7%

	Appointment customers	Self-serve web customers	Website visitors	Non-users
Base	1,963	600	181	770
You can normally start taking money from your pension when you turn 55 (true)	8%	8%	4%	13%
You must take a 25% tax-free lump sum when you access your pension pot (false)	20%	18%	14%	19%
You cannot take all the money from your pension in one go (false)	21%	20%	26%	34%

The types customers who are most knowledgeable

Across the board, the proportion of customers who answer the eight statements correctly is high. Nevertheless, there are some differences in knowledge by gender, education and overall pension pot value. These differences are all consistent with last year's service evaluation.

Male appointment customers in 2019/20 are more likely than women to provide a *definitely* correct answer across several of the true or false statements. For example, more male appointment customers say they *definitely* know that it is optional to buy an annuity (73% vs. 64% of female appointment customers). However, women are not more likely to be incorrect. Instead, they tend to be less certain of the facts, being more likely to say these things are *probably* true or false, or to say they do not know. There is a similar pattern in the self-serve customer data.

These gender differences have been apparent across each year of the service evaluation. Rather than indicating any deficiency in the Pension Wise service, they may simply show that women are more cautious or reserved about their knowledge when answering these sorts of factual questions. Tying in with this, as noted in Chapter 2, men are more likely than women to say they feel confident about managing money, and women tend to be more risk-averse.

Appointment customers with pension pot sizes over £100,000 are also more likely to answer several questions *definitely* correctly (81% *definitely* correct, averaged across each of the eight statements, vs. 70% for all appointment customers). This is also the case among non-users, indicating that these more affluent customers are likely to have started from a more informed position.

Appointment customers with university-level qualifications are also more likely than average to answer most of the eight questions *definitely* correctly. One exception to this is around whether you can withdraw your pension pot from age 55 onwards, where degree holders are no more knowledgeable than the average appointment customer (65% *definitely* correct, vs. 66% overall).

Again, those outside of these subgroups are not more likely to choose incorrect answers. Instead, they tend to be less certain of the correct answers and are typically more likely to say things are "*probably* correct" or that they do not know.

Trends in factual knowledge

The factual knowledge of Pension Wise customers has been relatively high throughout all four years of the service evaluation to date. Over this time, there has been natural variation in the estimates each year, although many of these year-on-year changes do not indicate a longer-term trend. This includes the small fall this year in the proportion of appointment customers correctly identifying that you do not have to buy an annuity (70% vs. 75% in 2018/19) – bringing it back to previous levels (68% in 2017/18 and in 2016/17).

Two areas of factual knowledge that have seen an overall upwards movement since the baseline evaluation in 2016/17 are in people knowing that they do not have to withdraw their pension as soon as they retire (78% in 2019/20 vs. 70% in 2016/17) and knowing they can mix their pension pot options (70% in 2019/20 vs. 65% in 2016/17).

For self-serve customers (first surveyed in 2018/19), the results this year are consistent with last year.

11 Chosen pension options

The service evaluation explores which of the six pension options customers have taken or intend to take (if they have not yet finalised their access arrangements). Customers are asked these questions within three months of using Pension Wise. For those that have made final arrangements or withdrawn money, it covers whether people used financial advisors in this process. It also looks at what they do with their pension money. We ask the same questions of website visitors and non-users, for comparison.

As a reminder, the six options available to people with defined contribution pensions include:

1. leaving their whole pension pot untouched
2. getting a guaranteed income (through an annuity)
3. getting an adjustable income (through flexi-access drawdown)
4. taking cash in chunks (Uncrystallised Funds Pension Lump Sum, or UFPLS)
5. taking their whole pot in one go
6. mixing the above options.

In addition, people can take a tax-free lump sum on withdrawal, alongside options 2, 3 and 5, up to the value of 25 per cent of their pension pot. This tax-free lump sum existed before the wider pension freedoms were introduced in April 2015. If arranged as part of a flexi-access drawdown facility (option 3), it is possible for people to just take a tax-free lump sum without accessing any further money from their pot.

Pension arrangements made after using Pension Wise

Half of all appointment customers (47%) and four in ten self-serve customers (40%) access some of their pension money, or make arrangements to do so, in the three months after using Pension Wise (as shown in Figure 8.1 earlier in the report).

As three months is a relatively short period to measure changes in non-users' behaviour, the evaluation instead captures the arrangements they have made over the last 12 months. A quarter of website visitors (25%) and around one in seven non-users (15%) have accessed their pension money or arranged to do so in this time period.

A small proportion of all the survey audiences (6% of appointment customers, 13% of self-serve customers and 11% of non-users) only remember that they have arranged for a tax-free lump sum – and they do not say which of the six aforementioned options they have chosen alongside this. In reality, these customers are likely to have arranged a drawdown facility but not drawn anything down as yet (so-called zero income drawdowns, or ZIDs). Therefore, the true proportion of appointment customers that have chosen a drawdown option is likely to be closer to four in ten rather than three in ten (the proportion in Figure 11.1, at the end of this section). For self-serve customers, the true figure is likely to be around half (vs. 36% in Figure 11.1).

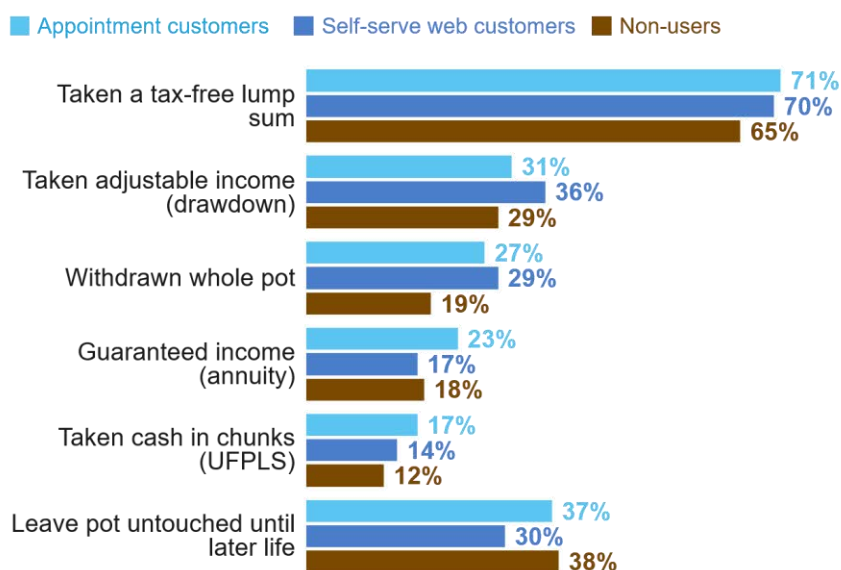
Among those that have made their arrangements, it is more common for people to choose a single pension option than to mix their options. Two-thirds appointment customers (63%) and self-serve customers (65%), and around a third of non-users (49%) have only taken one of the six available

pension options (other than taking a tax-free lump sum). A lower proportion in each case choose two or more options (22% of appointment customers, 20% of self-serve customers and 19% of non-users).

Outside of the tax-free lump sum, the most common options among all groups are to take an adjustable income (flexi-access drawdown), withdraw the whole pot or buy an annuity. The full list of options is shown in Figure 11.1.

Figure 11.1: Options taken in cases where people have already made arrangements

Q. Which of the following things, if any, did you arrange with any of these pots?



Bases: 398 appointment customers who have withdrawn pension pots or arranged to do so since their appointment; 118 self-serve customers who have done so since using the Pension Wise website; 191 non-users who have done so in the last 12 months

The pattern of options taken is similar for face-to-face and telephone customers. Among appointment customers that have made their arrangements, men are more likely than women to have chosen:

- to take a tax-free lump sum (75% vs. 63%)
- a flexi access or drawdown (37% vs. 20%).

Women, on the other hand, are more likely to take the whole value of their pension pot in one go (35% vs. 23% of men).

Those with large pension pots worth £100,000 or more are also more likely than others to have chosen a flexi access drawdown (50% vs. 31% overall) and less likely to have decided to take their whole pot out in one go (12%, vs. 27% overall).

The findings for gender and pension pot size are linked, as men are more likely to have higher value defined contribution pension pots than women. This might explain why women are more likely to have decided to withdraw their entire pension, as this is expected to be a more common option for smaller pension pots.

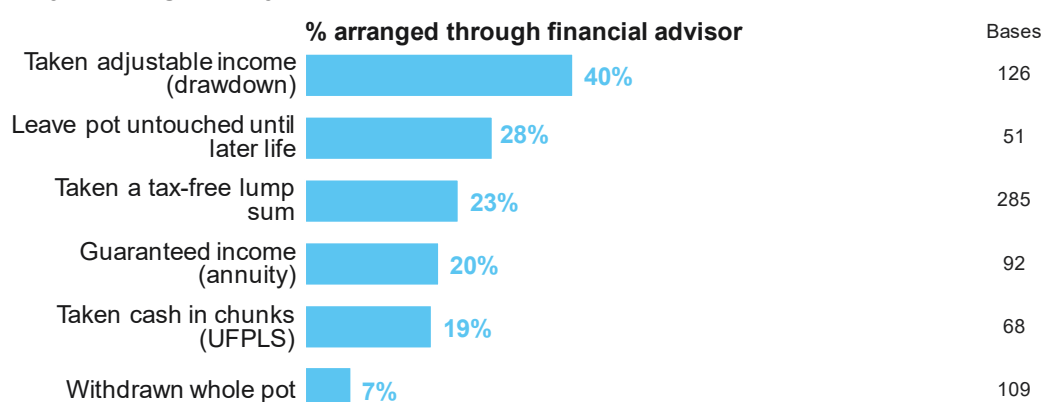
Using financial advisors to arrange pension options

A quarter of appointment customers (23%) and a similar proportion of self-serve customers (25%) that have made any arrangements have done this via an advisor (as opposed to arranging things themselves directly with a pension provider). This is higher for non-users (31%).

The use of financial advisors varies considerably across each of the options. Among appointment customers that arranged each particular option, an adjustable income, leaving the pot untouched and taking a tax-free lump sum are the most common things arranged via financial advisors, the full list of options is shown in Figure 11.2.

Figure 11.2: Proportion of appointment customers arranging chosen options via a financial advisor

Q. For each of the following, did you arrange these through a financial advisor or did you arrange them yourself?



Bases (as stated on chart): appointment customers who have made each of the following pension withdrawal arrangements since their appointment

There are too few self-serve customers, website visitors and non-users in the sample to break down responses here across the different pension options or further customer subgroups.

Changes over time

We changed the wording for these questions substantively in the 2018/19 service evaluation, so these findings are not directly comparable with the first two years of the service evaluation. However, comparing to 2018/19 still reveals changes in behaviour over the past year, including:

- a smaller proportion of appointment customers opting for an annuity (23% vs. 29% in 2018/19)
- fewer appointment customers arranging any options through a financial advisor (23% vs. 29% in 2018/19), including the drawdown option (40% arranged through a financial advisor vs. 57% in 2018/19), taking cash in chunks (19% vs. 38% in 2018/19) and taking a tax-free lump sum (23 vs. 29% in 2018/19).

How people use withdrawn pension money

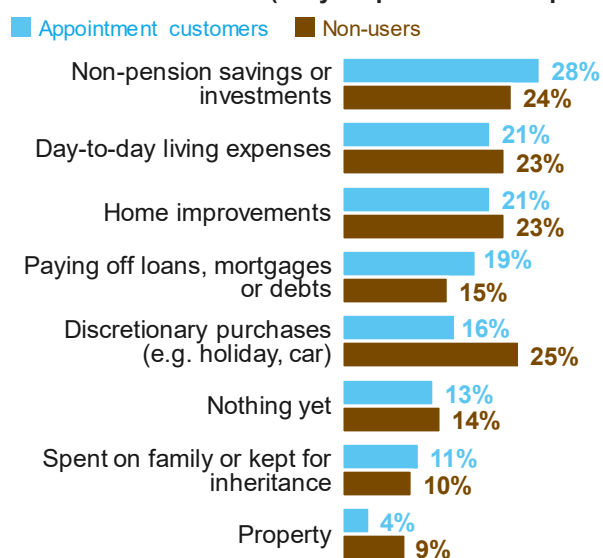
Not all of those who have made access arrangements have completed the withdrawal process. Around a third of appointment customers (35%) and one in ten non-users (12%) have done so (shown earlier in this report in Figure 8.1).

We ask these respondents what they have done with their pension money.¹⁵ As shown in Figure 11.3, there is no single typical way in which either appointment customers or non-users have put their withdrawn money to use. The uses vary, including putting it into other savings or investments, day-to-day living expenses, home improvements, and paying off loans, mortgages and other debts. Overall, non-users are more likely to spend money on various options, particularly discretionary purchases (25% vs. 15% of appointment customers).

A third of the customers (37%) that have withdrawn funds have spent this money in two or more of these areas. However, there are no combinations of spending that are especially common.

Figure 11.3: How withdrawn pension pot money has been used or spent

Q. What are the main things that you have done with the money that you have withdrawn so far? (Only responses at two per cent or higher across groups shown.)



Bases: 287 appointment customers who have withdrawn pension pots since their appointment; 90 non-users who have done so in the last 12 months

These results are broadly similar across appointment channel, gender and age group.

There are too few self-serve customers and website visitors that have withdrawn funds to analyse at this question.

Trends over time

Whilst we observe some fluctuations across these reasons over time, the number of customers who answer this question year on year is relatively small, so changes for specific answer codes are to be

¹⁵ This is asked unprompted for telephone respondents and with a prompted list for online respondents, with the option to give an "other" response.

expected. Across the years, non-users have had different spending habits from appointment customers. Last year, for example, non-users were more likely than appointment customers to have put pension money towards their day-to-day living expenses.

For non-users, more are likely to say they spend the money on home improvements this year than last year (23%, compared to 12% in 2018/19).

Pension arrangements people still intend to make

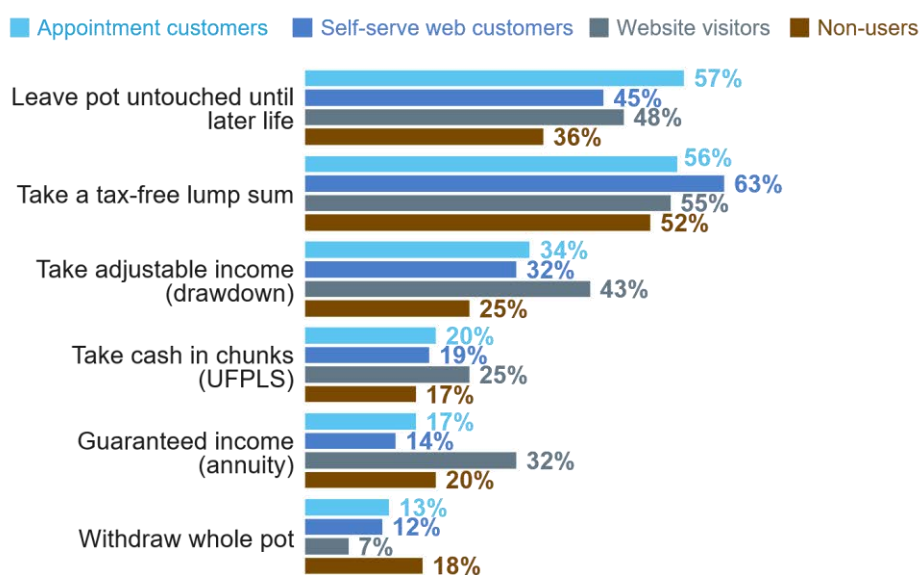
Two thirds of appointment customers (65%) and just over two-thirds of self-serve customers (68%) still have at least one unaccessed defined contribution pension pot around three months after using Pension Wise. Nearly nine in ten website visitors (85%) and non-users (88%) also have unaccessed pensions at the point of interview (as shown in Figure 8.1 earlier in the report).

We ask these groups what pension access arrangements they intend to make. The most common options being considered are leaving their pension pot untouched and taking a tax-free lump sum. More broadly, it is common for customers to consider a wider range of options rather than just one. The full list is shown in Figure 11.4.

The pattern of responses suggests that, among Pension Wise customers, those who want to withdraw their entire pension pot are likely to have made arrangements for this relatively quickly after their interaction with the service. Those who want to leave their pot untouched, are more likely to hold off for longer than three months before formalising the arrangements for this. It could be that some are leaving their pension pots to accumulate until they retire but may also reflect that leaving their pension pot untouched is a proxy for putting off a decision on what to do.

Figure 11.4: Intentions for unaccessed pension pots

Q. Are you likely to do any of the following things with your unaccessed pension pots?



Bases: 562 appointment customers who have pension pots for which they have not yet arranged access; 202 self-serve customers; 148 website visitors; 661 non-users

Around one in twenty appointment customers (6%), and one in ten self-serve customers (11%) and non-users (11%) are considering taking a tax-free lump sum but are not contemplating any of the other

options available to them. However, this is a relatively uncommon state of affairs. It is far more common for customers and non-users who are still contemplating their choices to have two or more options in mind, outside the tax-free lump sum.

In fact, those who are still contemplating their choices are more likely to have two or more options in mind (beyond the lump-sum) compared to those that have already made their arrangements (covered earlier in this chapter, in Figure 11.1). For example, two in five (43%) of the appointment customers that have unaccessed pensions are considering two or more options beyond the lump sum, whereas one in five (22%) of those that have actually made arrangements end up choosing two or more such options. This suggests that people tend to narrow down their options when it finally comes to making their arrangements.

On the whole, appointment customers are more likely than non-users to pick out specific options, including leaving their pot untouched, taking an adjustable income, and taking cash in chunks. This reflects that they tend to have greater certainty with their choices, as Chapter 8 explains. It also reflects their overall greater knowledge of their options, as discussed in Chapter 10. We found similar differences between customers and non-users last year.

The broad pattern of results is in line with last year's evaluation.

Subgroup differences

As with actual behaviour (among those that have made their arrangements, shown in Figure 11.1 at the start of this chapter), there are differences in choices by gender and pension pot size. Among appointment customers:

Men are more likely than women to contemplate taking a tax-free lump sum (64% vs. 44%), arranging an adjustable income (42% vs. 21%), taking cash in chunks (24% vs. 13%) or buying an annuity (20% vs. 13%). Women, on the other hand, are more likely to say they will take the whole pot in one go (17% vs. 11% of men).

Those with high value pensions pots (worth more than £100,000) are more likely to say they will take a tax-free lump sum (69%, vs. 56% on average) or arrange an adjustable income (56%, vs. 34% on average), Appointment customers with pots worth up to £30,000, on the other hand, are more likely to take the whole value in one go (27%, vs. 13% on average).

As noted earlier in the chapter, these two sets of findings are linked, with women tending to have smaller pension pots.

Changing options

We observed in Figure 9.6 that 57 per cent of appointment customers and 39 per cent of self-serve customers say they have changed their chosen pension access options as a result of contacting Pension Wise. However, the choices they made are similar to the customers who did not change their mind.

This suggests that contacting Pension Wise does not result in customers being led to choose particular options, but instead that the service can help them make a more informed choice and consider their options more thoroughly, before they make a decision.

12 Taking positive steps

Pension Wise guidance encourages customers to seek out relevant information and advice that will help them:

- plan effectively for their retirement generally
- make an informed decision about the withdrawal of their pension pots specifically
- understand the full range of implications and possibilities for their chosen options.

The evaluation explores the impact of Pension Wise in this regard by asking what actions appointment and self-serve web customers have taken before their interactions with the service, and what actions they have taken in the following three months. This before-and-after comparison shows the level of progress customers have made towards their preferred pension options.

For comparison, website visitors and non-users are also asked what actions they have taken over a similar time period (i.e. in the three months prior, and before this point). By comparing the actions of non-users to customers, we can provide an indication of the relative impact of Pension Wise.

Planning for retirement

Actions taken before using Pension Wise

There are several actions that defined contribution pension holders can take to help them plan for retirement. This evaluation looks at how many people are calculating the amount of retirement income they want, seeking financial or tax advice, or speaking to a pension provider.

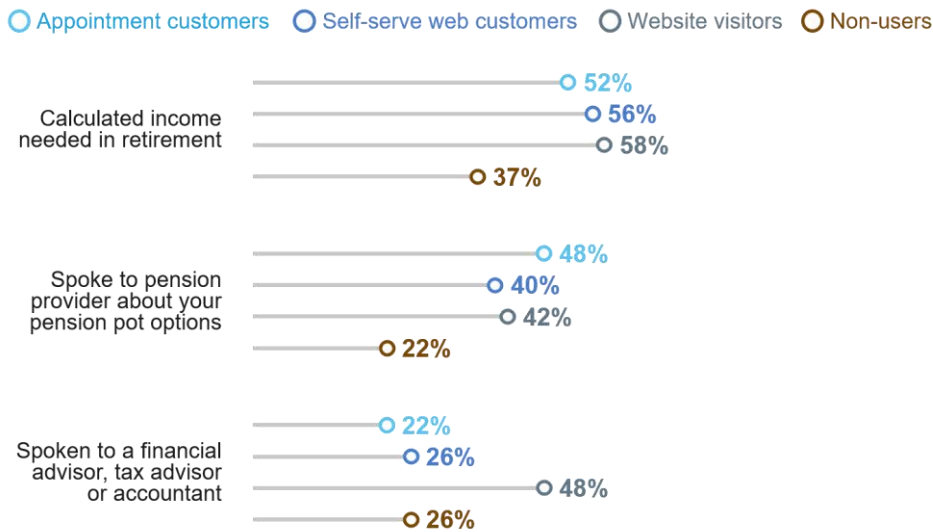
As shown in Figure 12.1, just over half of all appointment customers and a similar proportion of self-serve web customers have already calculated their retirement income needs before using Pension Wise. Slightly fewer, around four in ten, have spoken to their pension provider before their interaction with Pension Wise.

Both these actions are more common among customers than non-users, specifically those who have never visited the website. It is worth noting that appointment customers are encouraged to think about their retirement incomes and speak to pension providers before their appointment. The difference may therefore partly reflect customers preparing for their appointments.

As expected, appointment customers who say they first heard about Pension Wise through their pension provider are more likely to have spoken to their provider about their options than those who heard about the service elsewhere (50% vs. 39%). Nevertheless, even when looking only at the customers that heard about the service elsewhere, a higher proportion of appointment customers (39%) than non-users (20%) have spoken in advance to their pension providers.

A similar proportion of customers and non-users have spoken to a financial advisor, tax advisor or accountant before the period of interaction with Pension Wise. This differs from the 2018/19 evaluation where non-users were more likely to have spoken to a financial advisor. This year, website visitors are more likely to have consulted at least one of these sources.

Figure 12.1: Actions taken by customers before using Pension Wise, and by website visitors and non-users in the equivalent time period



Bases: 2,148 appointment customers; 600 self-serve web customers; 181 website visitors; 770 non-users

Telephone customers are more likely than face-to-face customers to have spoken to their pension provider or spoken to a financial advisor, tax advisor or accountant (26% vs. 20%). This difference was also present last year.

Actions taken since using Pension Wise

Figure 12.2 highlights that more customers take these actions in the three months following their interaction with Pension Wise than beforehand. Six in ten appointment and self-serve customers calculate the retirement income they think they will need or speak to their pension provider about their pension pot options following their appointment.

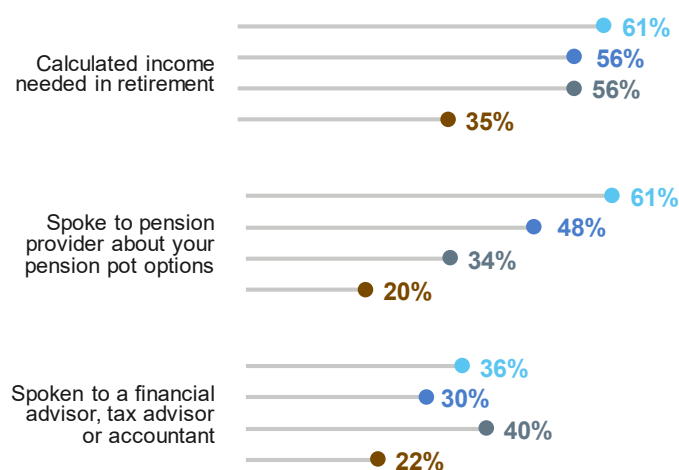
Customers are far more likely to do all these actions than non-users over this three-month time period. The large gap between appointment customers and non-users on these actions has been a consistent finding across all four years of the service evaluation. It shows that, following their use of Pension Wise, customers are more advanced in their preparations for retirement than others who are demographically similar to them.

Figure 12.2: Actions taken by customers since using Pension Wise, and by website visitors and non-users in the equivalent time period

(within three months of using Pension Wise, for customers)

Q. In the last three months/since your interaction with Pension Wise, have you done any of the following?

● Appointment customers ● Self-serve web customers ● Website visitors ● Non-users



Bases: 857 appointment customers; 298 self-serve web customers; 181 website visitors; 770 non-users

The proportion of appointment customers who have spoken to their pension provider following their appointment is higher this year than in 2018/19 (at 61% vs. 56% in 2018/19). This brings it much closer to the 2017/18 result (when it was 63%).

Whether Pension Wise appointments prompt people to plan more for their retirement

Figure 12.3 outlines the distance travelled by appointment customers and non-users for these three actions. That is, how many more people take these actions after the appointment period than before it. It does this by overlaying the results from Figure 12.1 and Figure 12.2.

The proportions taking these actions before the Pension Wise appointment period are shown via an unfilled circle and the proportions taking these actions after the appointment period are shown via a filled-in circle. We have restricted the comparison to be between appointment customers and non-users only, for clarity, and to provide a single “difference-in-difference” score.

This score is intended to show more clearly the extent to which the Pension Wise appointment may have prompted customers to take relevant actions. For example:

Before their appointment, 48 per cent of customers have spoken with their pension provider.

Following the appointment, this rises to 61 per cent, a distance travelled of 13 percentage points.

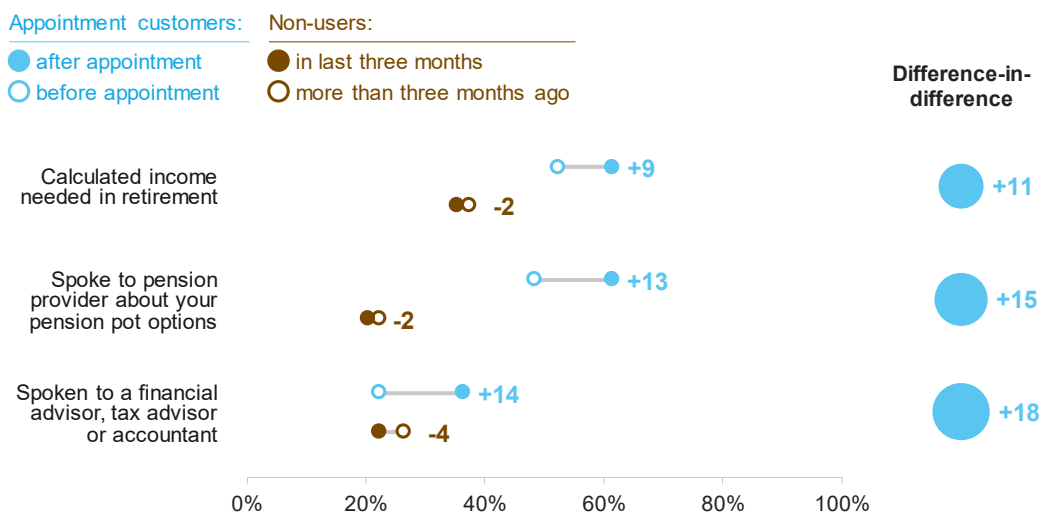
For non-users, 22 per cent have spoken with their provider before the period when 2019/20 Pension Wise customers had their appointments, while 20 per cent have spoken to them in the subsequent three months. This is a distance travelled of -2 percentage points.

The “difference-in-difference” between customers and non-users is fifteen percentage points (13 minus -2).

There are similar differences for the other two actions. These differences suggest that the Pension Wise appointment has prompted customers to take each of these actions, rather than any outside factors (which would have also affected non-users).

A caveat to this conclusion is that non-users are not a perfect control group. Appointment customers may be inherently more likely to take relevant actions than the sampled group of non-users. The service evaluation methodology aims to account for this as much as possible, by weighting non-users to be demographically similar to appointment customers, and similar in terms of when they intend to access their pensions.

Figure 12.3: Distance travelled by appointment customers and non-users, in terms of actions taken to plan for retirement



Bases: 2,148/857 appointment customers (talking about actions before/since their appointment); 770 non-users

Steps taken by those who have already made arrangements for their pension pots

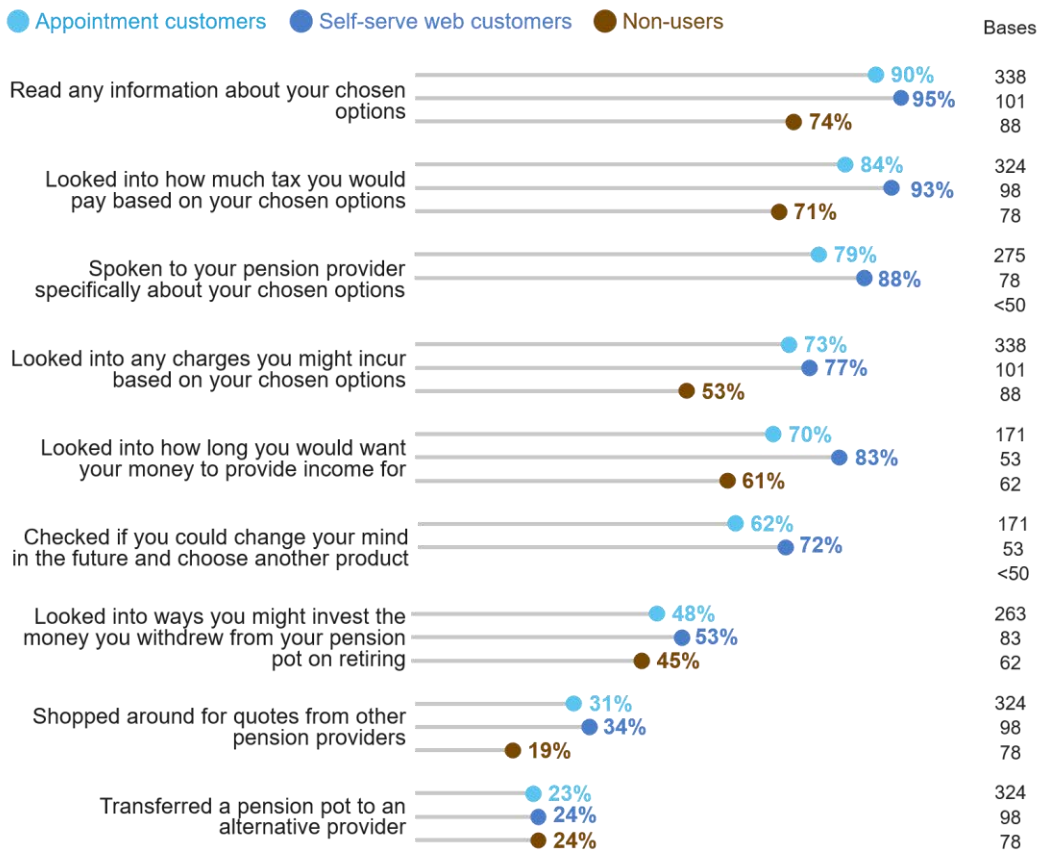
Half of all appointment customers (47%) and four in ten self-serve customers (40%) access some of their pension money, or make arrangements to do so, in the three months after using Pension Wise. The evaluation asks whether they take steps to inform themselves of their choices prior to making these arrangements.

Similar to Chapter 11, we compare customers to non-users who have withdrawn money or arranged to do so over the last 12 months. Less than one fifth (15%) of non-users have accessed their pension money or arranged to do so in this time period. There are too few website visitors who have already made such arrangements in the survey sample to analyse separately.

Figure 12.4 has the full list of actions covered. Customers and non-users are only asked about actions that are relevant to the arrangements they have made, so the sample sizes differ for each action. For example, those opting to leave their pot untouched would not need to look into ways to invest withdrawn money.

Figure 12.4: Steps taken before making arrangements to access pension pots, among customers and non-users that have already done so

Q. Before you made formal arrangements to take money from your pension pots, had you done any of the following?



Bases (listed on side of chart): those who have chosen an option where this is a potentially relevant next step
 Figures are not shown where base sizes are under 50.

The behaviour of appointment customers and self-serve customers in this situation is very similar. Both sets of customers are more likely than non-users to have taken several specific actions before making their arrangements, including:

- reading up about their chosen options
- looking into tax implications
- looking into potential charges
- shopping for quotes from other pension providers.

These figures, and the differences between appointment customers and non-users, are broadly in line with those found in the 2018/19 service evaluation.

Steps taken by those who have unaccessed pension pots

Actions taken before using Pension Wise

Two-thirds of appointment customers (65%) and seven in ten self-serve customers (68%) still have unaccessed pension pots around three months after using Pension Wise. Over eight in ten website visitors (85%) and nine in ten non-users (88%) also have unaccessed pensions at the point of interview. The surveys ask these audiences about the specific steps they have taken to progress their preferred pension options, and whether these have been taken before, or after their interactions with Pension Wise (or in the equivalent time period for website visitors and non-users).

Figure 12.5 shows the proportion from each group that have taken each action before the appointment period (or the equivalent period, for groups other than appointment customers). Again, we only ask people about actions that are relevant to their preferred pension options, so the sample sizes differ for each action.

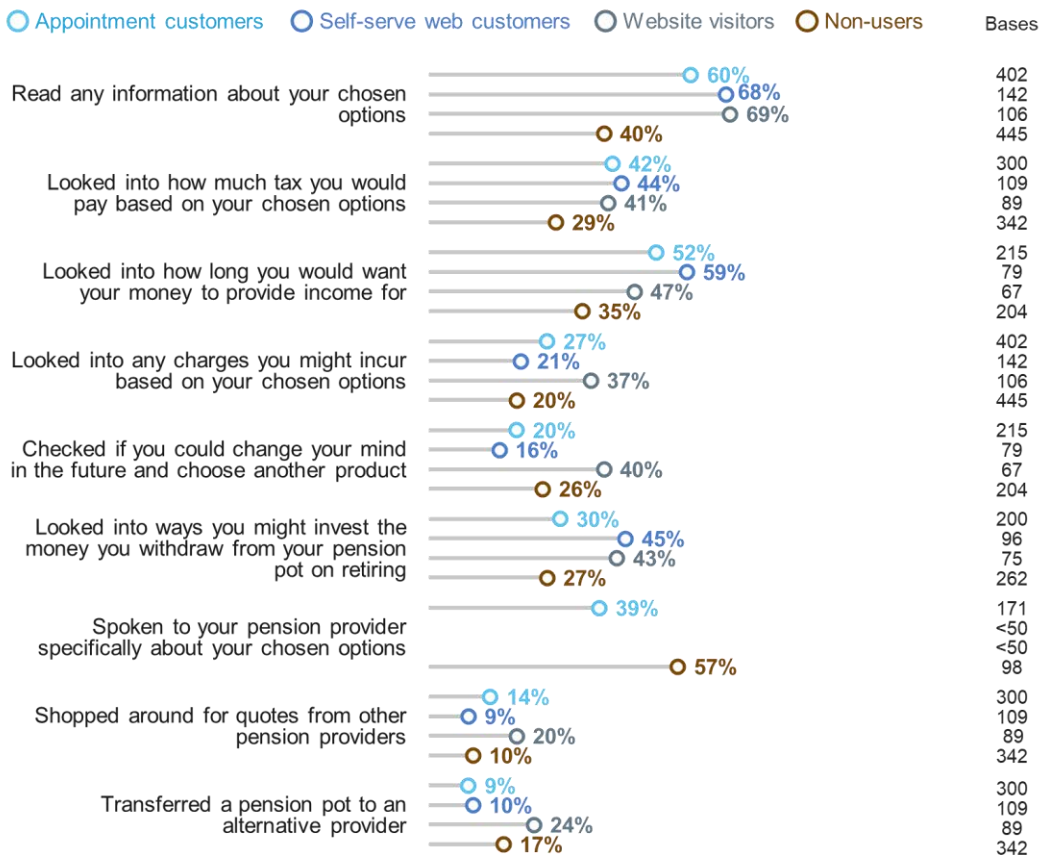
Audiences that engage with Pension Wise online (website visitors and self-serve customers) are among the most likely to have taken various actions across the four audience groups, such as reading up on their options and looking into how much tax they would pay. It may be that these individuals are naturally inclined to find more information online covering each of these steps, potentially around the same time that they end up visiting the Pension Wise website. This reflects a similar trend from the 2018/19 service evaluation.

Appointment customers are more likely than non-users to have read up about their preferred options (60% vs. 40%) and to have looked into how long they would want their money to provide an income for (52% vs. 35%). Non-users are more likely than appointment customers to have, before the appointment period being evaluated here, spoken to their pension provider specifically about their chosen options (57% vs. 39%) and to have transferred a pension pot to an alternative provider (17% vs. 9%).

The latter difference in pension pot transfers is consistent with the previous years of the service evaluation. While the other steps in Figure 12.5 are about information gathering, this step is different in that it is an irreversible course of action. It suggests that Pension Wise customers who are considering transferring their pension pots may be holding off, because they want to wait for their appointment and get appropriate guidance on the risks.

Figure 12.5: Steps taken by customers before using Pension Wise, and by website visitors and non-users in the equivalent time period, among those who still have unaccessed pension pots

Q. More than three months ago/before your interaction with Pension Wise, had you done any of the following?



Bases (listed on side of chart): those who say they would choose an option where this is a potentially relevant next step. Figures are not shown where base sizes are under 50.

Telephone customers are more likely than face-to-face customers to have spoken to their pension provider specifically about their chosen options (51% vs. 32%) and to have looked into how much tax they would pay based on these options (52% vs. 37%) before their appointment. These differences were not found in the 2018/19 evaluation – in that year, telephone customers were more likely than face-to-face customers to have read up about their preferred pension options, though this has now levelled out (and is 60% for both).

Actions taken since using Pension Wise

In the three months after their appointments, appointment customers are more likely than before to have taken almost all these next steps, where they are relevant. The two exceptions are shopping around for quotes from other pension providers (14% before their appointment vs. 17% after it), as this difference is not statistically significant, and transferring a pension pot to an alternative provider (9% before vs. 8% after). The pension pot transfer again reflects that this might be considered an irreversible action, and one of the last steps people may take when finalising their pension access arrangements.

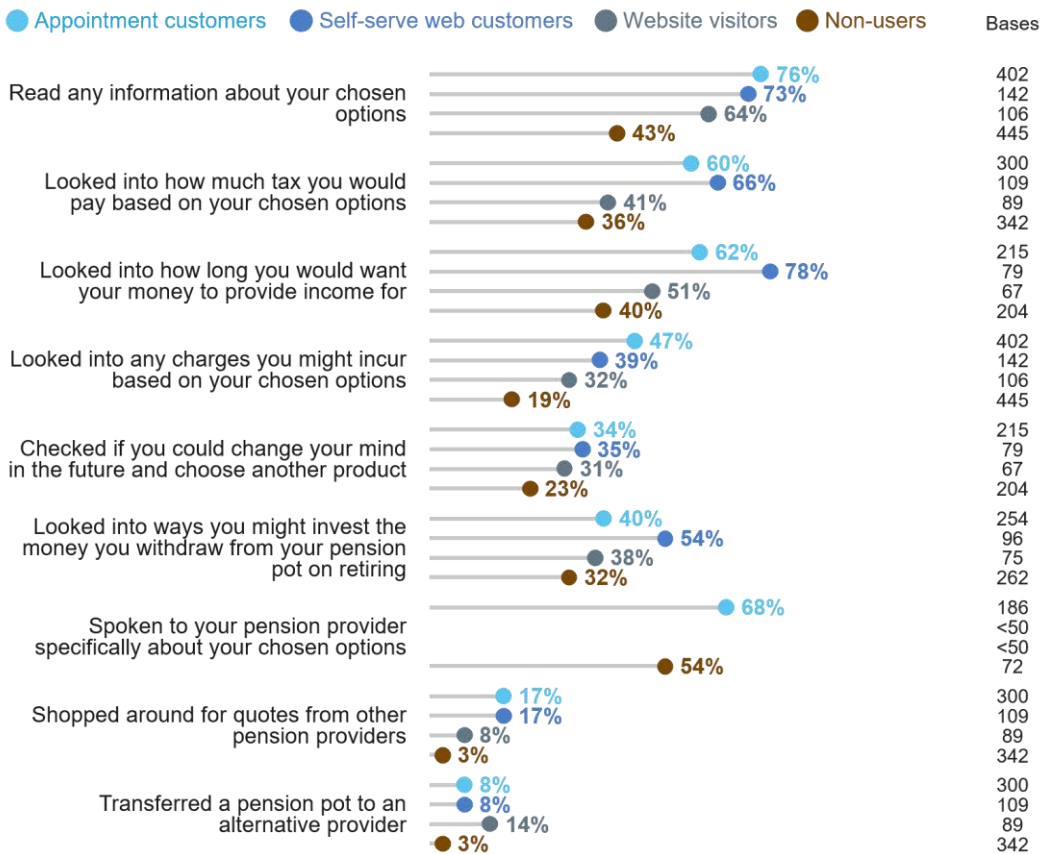
Similarly, self-serve customers are more likely to have taken almost all these next steps in the three months after accessing the self-service guidance on the Pension Wise website, than to have done so

before. Like appointment customers, few transfer their pension pots even after their appointment (8%), reflecting that this particular action requires a greater lead-in time.

As Figure 12.6 shows, customers are consistently more likely to take these actions following their appointment than non-users.

Figure 12.6: Steps taken by customers since using Pension Wise, by website visitors and non-users in the equivalent time period, among those who still have unaccessed pension pots (within three months of using Pension Wise, for customers)

Q. In the last three months/since your interaction with Pension Wise, have you done any of the following?



Bases (listed on side of chart): those who say they would choose an option where this is a potentially relevant next step

Overall, these results are broadly in line with the 2018/19 service evaluation.

Whether Pension Wise appointments prompt people to take relevant steps towards their preferred options

Again, we use the relative *distance travelled* by appointment customers and non-users to help understand the impact that Pension Wise has had. This analysis aims to account for any external factors that would also affect non-users over the appointment period. For clarity, we focus on appointment customers and non-users, rather than self-serve customers and website visitors.

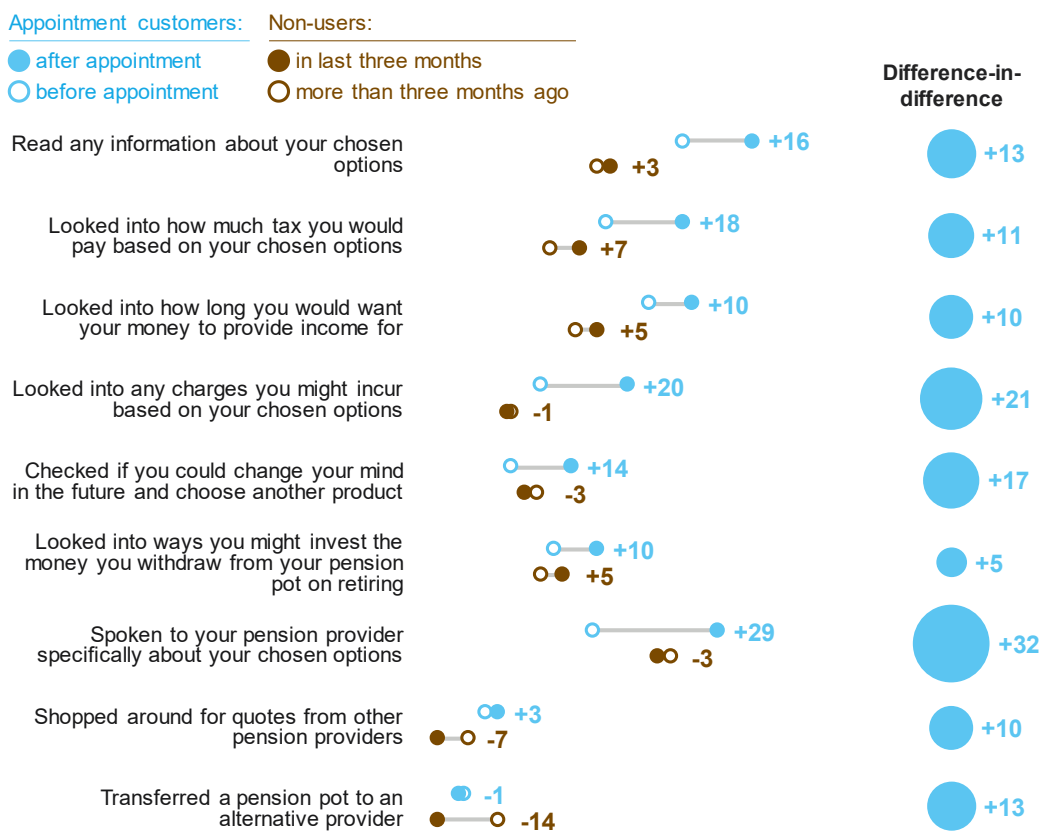
These calculations are laid out in Figure 12.7 and summarised in the difference-in-difference score (the blue bubbles). The positive difference-in-difference scores show that the distance travelled on these

actions by customers, before and after their appointments, is typically greater than that of non-users (over an equivalent time period).

This analysis suggests that Pension Wise customers are likely to have taken a wide range of relevant next steps as a result of their appointment. There are relatively high difference-in-difference scores for:

- speaking to pension providers specifically about their preferred options
- looking into any charges incurred
- checking if they can still change to another option in the future.

Figure 12.7: Distance travelled by appointment customers and non-users, in terms of the specific steps taken towards their preferred pension options



Bases: c.300 appointment customers (talking about actions before/since their appointment); c.400 non-users

It is not possible to test for statistically significant differences in these difference-in-difference scores. Nevertheless, taken alongside the same types of scores shown earlier in Figure 12.3, the findings suggest that Pension Wise has a similar level of impact in getting people to take specific, relevant steps to progress their preferred options, as well as getting people to take broader steps to plan for retirement in general.

The difference-in-difference score is especially high when it comes to customers and non-users speaking to their pension provider about the specific options they have chosen (+32). This is a similar pattern to the 2018/19 evaluation. It may be partly because many customers contact Pension Wise when they are ready to access their pensions, and the appointment encourages them to talk to their providers about specific withdrawal options.

Again, we should reiterate that the non-user group is not a perfect control group. However, we have weighted non-users to be demographically similar to appointment customers, and similar in terms of when they intend to access their pensions, to make them as comparable as possible to customers.

Reasons for not taking relevant steps

A very small proportion of appointment customers (4%) and self-serve customers (3%) take none of the specific steps outlined in Figures 12.4 through to 12.7, either before or after their interactions with Pension Wise. The survey asks these customers why they have not taken any steps to gather further information or advice.

As very few customers fall into this subgroup, there are too few responses to analyse quantitatively. The most common themes across the responses relate to not knowing enough or needing more information, that the value of their pension is too small or that they have simply been too busy to take action.¹⁶ These themes are similar to the findings from the previous service evaluations.

▪ ¹⁶ This is asked unprompted for telephone respondents and with a prompted list for online respondents, with the option to give an “other” response.

Appendix: survey technical details

Sampling approach

Appointment bookers and appointment customers

We carried out two surveys with these audience groups:

1. an initial experiences survey with people who booked face-to-face or telephone appointments with Pension Wise between September and November 2019
2. a follow-up survey of appointment customers (i.e. excluding those who did not attend or complete their appointments) who had appointments over the same period.

Pension Wise sent Ipsos MORI contact information for all the September to November 2019 appointment bookers who agreed to be contacted for research. They sent this in three batches, each month between October and December 2019.

For appointment bookers, Ipsos MORI took a random sample of between 800 and 1,000 leads each month that had a valid telephone number and then a random sample of 1,838 to 2,550 leads each month that had a valid email address. We prioritised the telephone sample as a first step because there were fewer telephone leads than email leads in the whole sample frame.

For the follow-up appointment customer survey, we sampled all the appointment customers who agreed to be contacted again in the earlier experiences survey.

The following table shows the volume of leads received each month, as well as the number released for both the initial and follow-up telephone and online surveys.

	Volume received	Initial experiences leads released		Follow-up leads released	
		Telephone	Online	Telephone	Online
September	7,303	800	1,838	170	295
October	9,048	1,000	2,550	203	399
November	7,968	900	2,190	215	346

Change in sampling approach after 2017/18

The approach for sampling appointment bookers is different from the 2016/17 and 2017/18 evaluations. In those years, we sampled those that only had a telephone number in the telephone survey, i.e. excluding those that had an email address *as well as* a telephone number in their Pension Wise records. Then everyone with an email address was randomly sampled for inclusion in the online survey.

The current approach, used in 2018/19 and 2019/20, can be considered an improvement, as it leads to less of a skew in the telephone sample, and more accurately reflects the overall population of Pension Wise appointment bookers.

This change means that the achieved telephone survey samples for 2018/19 and 2019/20 are more likely than in previous years to include people who use the internet (because they supplied an email address to Pension Wise). The telephone interviews are weighted to comprise around one-third of the overall sample, with the online survey making up the remaining two-thirds.

As a check to see how this may have affected the comparability of the survey data to previous years, we tested an alternative weighting approach for the 2018/19 appointment bookers' data. This involved matching them to the 2017/18 appointment booker profile based on internet usage (i.e. weighting down the proportion of 2018/19 appointment bookers that used the internet to 84%). Based on this test, we are confident that this change in approach does, broadly, not affect the comparability of findings across years. There are three specific exceptions, where the findings from 2016/17 and 2017/18 are not comparable with later years:

- the proportion of appointment bookers and appointment customers who use the internet due to the change in the sampling
- the proportion of all appointment bookers who arranged their Pension Wise appointments online and by telephone
- the proportion of all appointment customers who received their summary documents as an online download following their appointment.

Self-serve web customers

We carried out two surveys with self-serve web customers:

1. an initial experiences survey with people who had used the digital self-serve guidance on the Pension Wise website largely between September 2019 and March 2020
2. a follow-up survey of this same group.

Pension Wise sent Ipsos MORI contact information for all the September to November 2019 and January to March 2020 self-serve web customers who agreed to be contacted for research. This amounts to all those who submitted an email address before accessing the self-serve guidance on the website.

Pension Wise sent this sample in five batches, with each batch covering around one to two months' worth of self-serve customers (the January and February customer samples were combined into a single batch). We then de-duplicated these batches (based on the email address provided) against previous batches, and against previous and current appointment booker samples. This excluded those who have accessed both face-to-face or telephone guidance and self-serve guidance online. We ended up removing a handful of leads (under 10) in each batch through this process.

All leads with a valid email address were included in the initial experiences survey. For the follow-up survey, we sent an invite to all the leads that had given permission to be re-contacted in the initial survey. There were a total of 3,371 leads for the initial experiences survey and 489 leads for the follow-up survey (excluding any leads supplied that lacked a usable email address and after de-duplicating).

Website visitors and non-users

Ipsos MORI purchased the website visitor and non-user telephone sample from the UK Changes database. We recruited the online sample for these audiences from the Ipsos MORI online panel

database. Screener questions in the questionnaire were used to screen out those who would not have been eligible for the Pension Wise service in 2019/20, i.e. those who did not have an unaccessed defined contribution pension at any point in the previous 12 months. An additional question identified which of the individuals sampled had previously used the Pension Wise website, to classify them as website visitors rather than non-users.

Fieldwork (quotas and timings)

Appointment bookers and appointment customers

For the appointment booker and customer surveys, c.69% of interviews were conducted online and c.31% were conducted by telephone (reflecting that around 66% of the sample received from Pension Wise had email addresses, and so could be surveyed online).

The telephone survey was a quota survey. For the initial experiences survey, interviewers were instructed to meet a target of 200 achieved interviews for each monthly batch of appointment booker sample. For the follow-up survey, this target was 100 achieved interviews per batch. Aside from this overall per-batch target, there were no other demographic quotas. However, the research team monitored the demographic profile of the achieved interviews to ensure there were no unusual skews by gender or age band.

The online survey did not have any quotas. Over the course of fieldwork, each batch of online sample received one email invite and two further email reminders from Ipsos MORI to encourage them to complete the survey. Each email had varied text to emphasise different reasons for taking part each time, with a view to maximising the response rate.

The following table shows the fieldwork dates for each batch of sample, for the initial and follow-up surveys.

	Appointment month	Initial survey fieldwork	Follow-up survey fieldwork
Batch 1	September	14/10/19 to 01/11/19	13/01/20 to 31/01/20
Batch 2	October	11/11/19 to 29/11/19	10/02/20 to 28/02/20
Batch 3	November	09/12/19 to 17/01/20	09/03/20 to 27/03/20

Self-serve web customers

The online surveys for self-serve web customers were similarly administered to the ones for appointment bookers and appointment customers. Again, they did not have any quotas. Over the course of fieldwork, each batch of online sample received one email invite and four further email reminders from Ipsos MORI to encourage them to complete the survey. We opted to send two more reminder emails to this group than to appointment bookers and customers, to maximise the response rate from the relatively small, finite sample.

Again, each email had varied text to emphasise different reasons for taking part each time.

The following table shows the fieldwork dates for each batch of sample, for the initial and follow-up surveys.

	Website visit dates	Initial survey fieldwork	Follow-up survey fieldwork
Batch 1	09/09/19 to 30/09/19	19/10/19 to 19/01/20	11/01/20 to 05/04/20
Batch 2	01/10/19 to 31/10/19	16/11/19 to 19/01/20	15/02/20 to 05/04/20
Batch 3	01/11/19 to 30/11/19	07/12/19 to 19/01/20	07/03/20 to 05/04/20
Batch 4	01/01/20 to 29/02/20	14/03/20 to 09/05/20	06/06/20 to 26/07/20
Batch 5	01/03/20 to 31/03/20	11/04/20 to 09/05/20	04/07/20 to 26/07/20

Website visitors and non-users

For the website visitors and non-user survey, c.64% were online and c.36% were by telephone, with the balance between online and telephone surveying intended to mimic that of the appointment booker and customer surveys.

Both the telephone and online surveys for these audiences were quota surveys. We had quota targets for gender, age band (50-59, 60-64 and 65-70) and geographic region. These targets matched the profile of appointment bookers and were based on the population profile information that Pension Wise had previously sent us. They ensured that the achieved interview profile resembled the demographics of Pension Wise customers. The weighting, detailed later in this appendix, made further adjustments to match the website visitor and non-user profiles to appointment bookers.

Fieldwork for these surveys took place from 8 February 2020 to 29 March 2020, around the same time as the follow-up survey of appointment customers.

Differences between data collection modes

Some questions, which we outline throughout in the report, are asked with a prompted list of response codes for online respondents and are unprompted for telephone respondents. This is consistent with how the questions were asked in both previous service evaluations. It is a common approach taken in multi-mode surveys for these types of questions and reflects that it is unfeasibly time-consuming for an interviewer to read out all the response options during a telephone interview.

It may be that people pick more responses when presented with a prompted list than if they have to respond spontaneously, without prompting. Having the question entirely unprompted online (where people have to write their answers in an open-text box), however, may also under-represent people's real answers. This is because people may find open-text boxes on surveys a burden to complete and leave them blank. This means that it is not necessarily better nor worse in terms of the accuracy of the data for the online survey to have a prompted list at these questions.

These questions may be subject to mode effects, where people are inclined to answer the same question differently online versus by telephone. At the same time, we cannot assume that all the differences between online and telephone responses are just because of the data collection mode. There may also be differences in the profile of online and telephone respondents that effect the way they answer.

Response rates and cooperation rates

The following table shows the response rates¹⁷ for all the online and telephone surveys. It also shows the cooperation rates¹⁸ for the telephone fieldwork. A cooperation rate gives an indication of the extent to which respondents who were approached were willing to take part in the research, and is a measure typically used to judge the quality of quota sample surveys such as these.

The follow-up survey samples only included the customers that consented to be re-contacted after taking part in their respective initial surveys. The proportion of respondents giving permission for re-contact was high for both customer groups, at 79% for appointment customers and 80% for self-serve web customers.

	Appointment bookers		Appointment customers		Self-serve customers	
	Initial surveys		Follow-up surveys		Initial	Follow-up
	Telephone	Online	Telephone	Online	Online	Online
Response rate	27%	24%	57%	50%	18%	61%
Cooperation rate	71%	N/A	89%	N/A	N/A	N/A

We made several efforts to maximise the response rates for the surveys, including offering reassurances on confidentiality, setting up a survey website and sending various tailored reminder emails to the online sample. Nevertheless, there were several constraints that restricted the response and cooperation rates that it was feasible to achieve:

- Fieldwork for each monthly batch of sample was relatively short, at around three to four weeks.
- Response rates for general public surveys are typically lower around the Christmas period. Fieldwork for the third batch of the appointment booker initial survey took place shortly after Christmas. For the third batch of the self-serve web customer initial survey, it took place over Christmas. Where possible, we delayed telephone calls and reminder emails to avoid the two Christmas and New Year weeks. However, this also means that there was a slightly greater gap between people's interactions with Pension Wise and their survey interviews, which might also have lowered their propensity to take part.
- For the telephone surveys, there was a fixed target of achieved interviews per batch of sample (200 for the initial survey and 100 for the follow-up), so the response rate simply reflects the ratio of available leads to this target. The cooperation rate indicates that relatively few respondents refused to take part in the survey when interviewers managed to contact them.

¹⁷ This is [total completed interviews] / [total number of customers contacted for the study] and can be used, in conjunction with other measures, to assess the quality and representativeness of a study.

¹⁸ This is [total completed interviews] / [completed interviews + refusals].

Weighting

Appointment bookers and appointment customers

The data for the appointment booker and customer surveys have been weighted to represent all of those who booked Pension Wise face-to-face and telephone appointments across September to the end of November 2019. This is based on population profile information that Pension Wise gave to Ipsos MORI. Weighting was applied for Pension Wise delivery partner (TPAS, Citizens Advice in England and Wales, Northern Ireland Citizens Advice Bureau, Citizens Advice Scotland and Teleperformance), appointment status (whether they completed their appointment or not), gender, age band (50-59, 60-64 and 65+), and data collection mode.

The weights by data collection mode ensured that the proportion of online vs. telephone respondents in the sample was consistent with previous years of the service evaluation. This helps to neutralise the impact of any modal effects when making year-on-year comparisons.

Self-serve web customers

The sample for self-serve web customers comes from those who leave their contact details on the Pension Wise website. Self-serve customers are not obliged to do this. Therefore, the profile of the sample frame that we received from Pension Wise does not necessarily reflect the population profile, for everyone using the digital self-serve guidance on the website.

On the basis of there not being any population profile information, we agreed with Pension Wise to not weight the self-serve web customer data.

Website visitors and non-users

In order to act as a comparison group, website visitors and non-users have also been weighted to match the appointment booker profile. The combined sample of website visitors and non-users is weighted on gender, age band (50-59, 60-64 and 65-70), internet use, data collection mode and proximity to accessing pension pots (measured in terms of when people expect to make final arrangements to access their defined contribution pension pots).

The gender and age band weights matched the appointment booker population profile that Pension Wise supplied. The internet use and proximity to pension pot access weights matched the achieved weighted results in the appointment bookers initial survey. These latter two weight variables are not part of the demographic profile data that Pension Wise collects. Including these ensured that the website visitor and non-user survey did not overrepresent people who use the internet and did not overrepresent those who were unlikely to choose their pension options anytime soon. People who use Pension Wise are, as expected, typically closer to the point at which they make these decisions than the average 50+ defined contribution pension holder.

Note on statistical significance

The final data from the survey are based on samples, rather than the entire population of Pension Wise appointment booker and customer groups (or website visitors and non-users). Percentage results are therefore subject to margins of error, which vary with the size of the sample and the percentage figure concerned.

This report only comments on differences between samples and subgroups that are found to be statistically significant. Strictly speaking, significance testing applies only to random probability samples. It is commonly carried out for quota surveys like this one, with the assumption being that the achieved sample behaves like a random probability sample. In such cases, the significance testing is intended to provide a rough guide to the margins of error governing the survey.

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The Social Research Institute works closely with national governments, local public services and the not for profit sector. Its c.200 research staff focus on public service and policy issues. Each has expertise in a particular part of the public sector, ensuring we have a detailed understanding of specific sectors and policy challenges. This, combined with our methods and communications expertise, helps ensure that our research makes a difference for decision makers and communities.