



Commission for  
**Communications Regulation**



## **Steps towards making telecommunications accessible for all - ComReg's experience**

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## Overview of presentation

1. Introduction
2. Background
3. ComReg Disability Forum
4. Survey of users with disabilities
5. ComReg's consumer guide for people with disabilities
6. Other Disability Forum initiatives
7. Looking to the future
8. Summary and conclusions



## 1. Introduction

- **Barbara Delaney – Consumer Policy Manager**
- **Thank you to ANACOM for inviting me to share my experiences on this topic with you**
- **I look forward to hearing your observations and questions and I am eager to learn from today's event too**

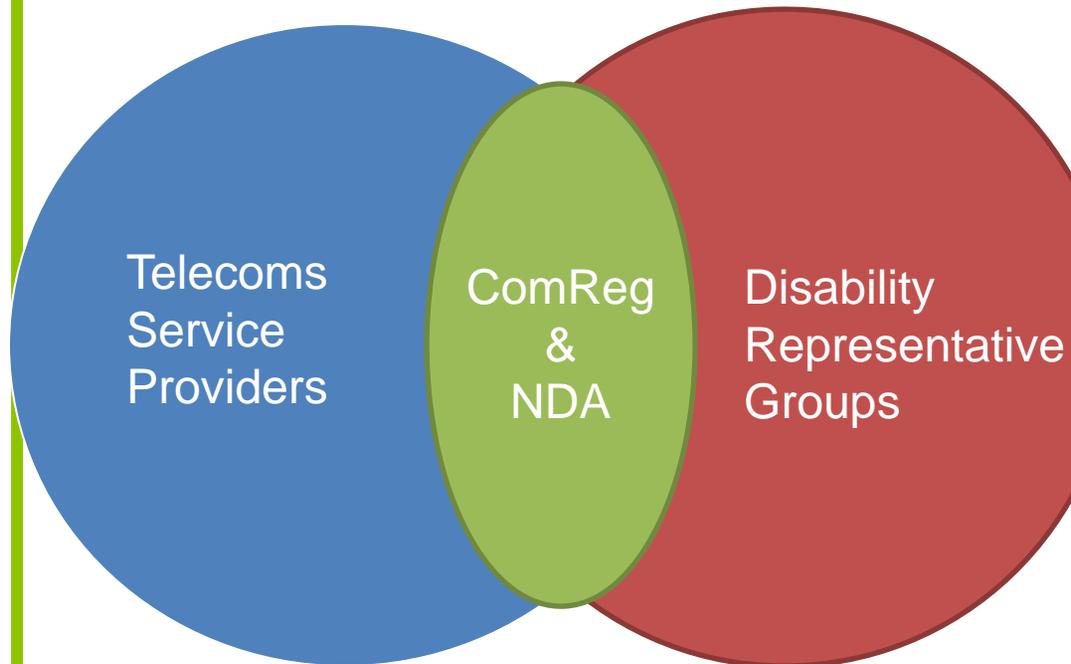


## 2. Background

- **The legislative basis for accessibility in relation to telecommunications is the Universal Service Directive 2002 (reviewed in December 2009 by the European Commission).**
- **In Ireland, Eircom is the current designated Universal Service Provider**
- **As the USP, Eircom was mandated in 2003 with the provision of accessibility measures for its customers.**
- **In 2006, ComReg established the ComReg Disability Forum**



### 3. ComReg Disability Forum



[The National Council for the Blind in Ireland](#) (NCBI),  
[National Disability Authority](#) (NDA),  
[People with Disabilities in Ireland](#) (PWDI)  
[National Association for Deaf People](#) (NAD)  
[Disability Federation of Ireland](#) (DFI).

#### Goals

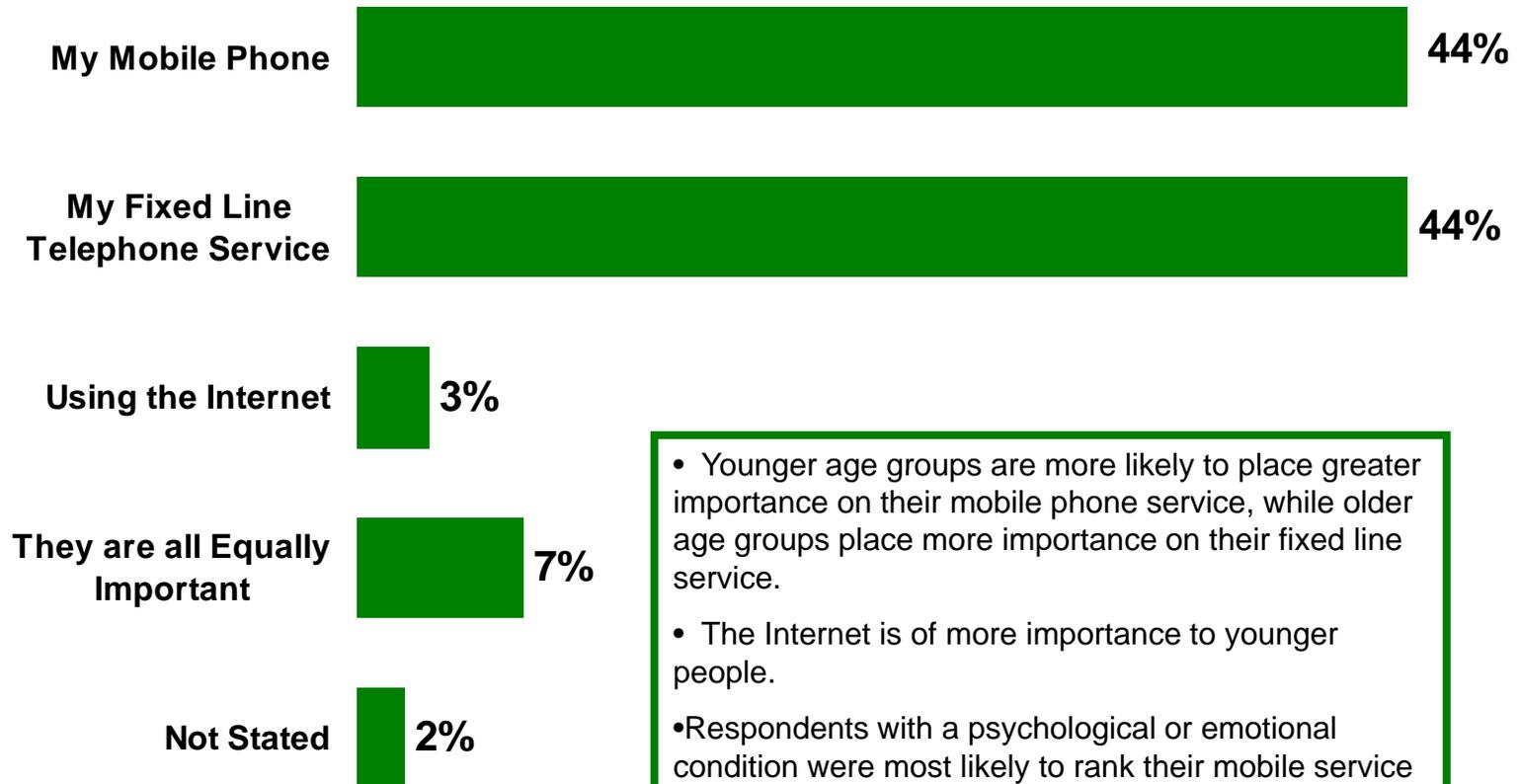
- The identification of services currently provided
- The identification of accessibility issues for people with disabilities in relation to communications services.
- The promotion of good practice by service providers
- The promotion of accessible information provision by service providers to users with disabilities so that such users can exercise choice in respect of services and service provider
- The promotion of the needs of users with disabilities through a review of the effectiveness of existing services in meeting the needs of users with disabilities and to recommend improvements and/or new services



## 4. ComReg's Disability Survey

- **1,010 people surveyed aged 15–74.**
- **An additional 394 people with disabilities interviewed using Central Statistics Office definitions of disability.**
- **Surveys were conducted face-to-face in respondents' own homes at over 100 different locations.**

# Most Important Service in meeting Communications Needs



- Younger age groups are more likely to place greater importance on their mobile phone service, while older age groups place more importance on their fixed line service.
- The Internet is of more importance to younger people.
- Respondents with a psychological or emotional condition were most likely to rank their mobile service highest.

*Q.54 Please rank the following sentences in order of their importance in meeting your communication needs, telling me... a) The most important? b) The second most important? c) And the third most important service? N=394*



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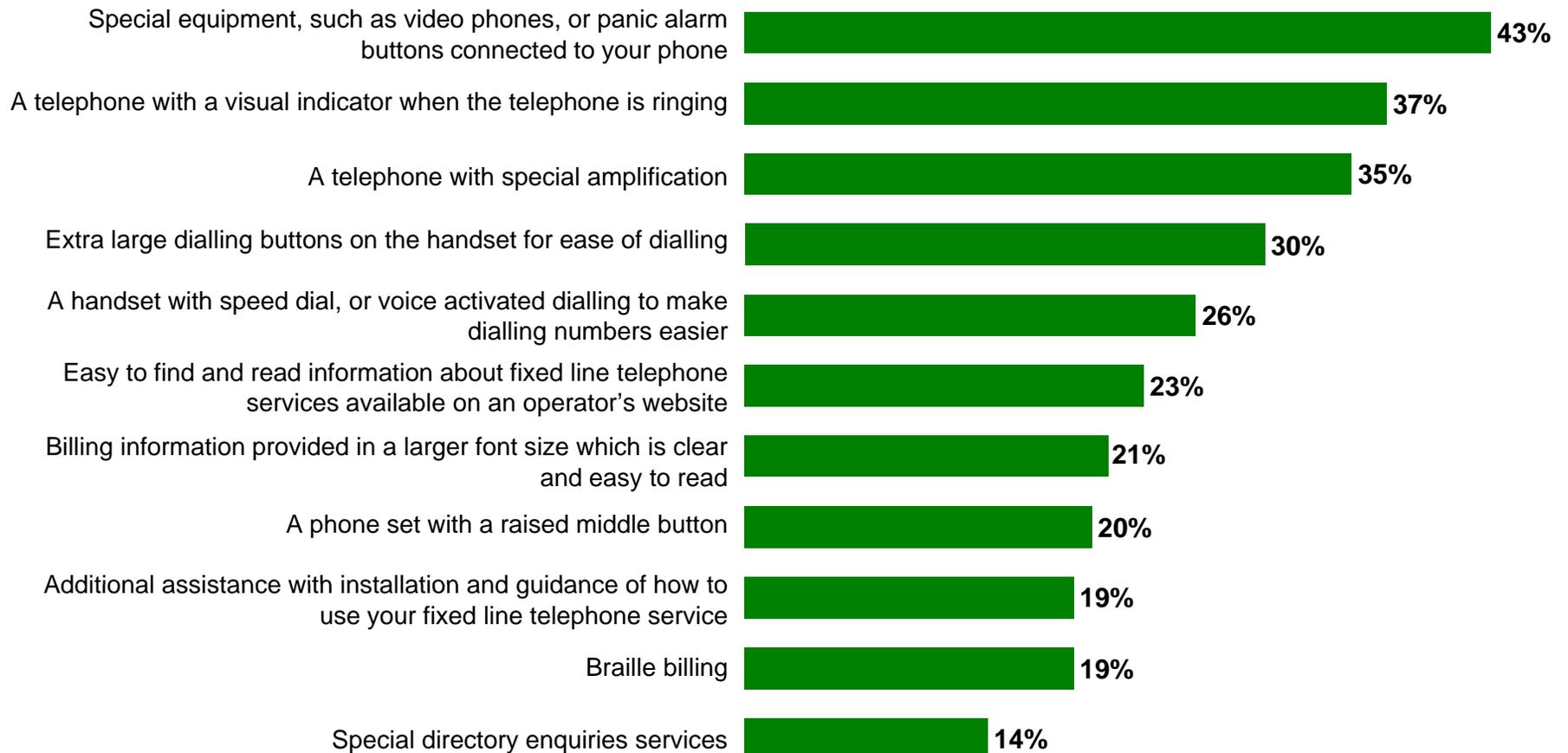
# Summary of Findings – Fixed Line Phone

- ❏ Respondents with disabilities were just as likely as the overall population to have a subscription to a fixed line telephone service in the home.
- ❏ Respondents with disabilities were more likely than the overall population to cite the cost of calls and line rental as the reason why they did not subscribe to a fixed line service.
- ❏ Fixed line users with disabilities were less likely to report having shopped around to compare prices between operators. Fixed line customers with disabilities were also more likely than the overall population to cite the reputation of the operator as an important factor when choosing a fixed line provider.
- ❏ Fixed line customers with disabilities spend on average €85.56 every 2 months on fixed line telephone services compared with €97.20 for all fixed-line customers.
- ❏ Over 50% of disabled respondents were not aware of any special products, services or provisions made by operators to support their use of fixed line voice services. Awareness of items of 'hardware' and assistive technology is higher than that of service elements such as customer service initiatives and billing provisions by operators.
- ❏ Less than 1 in 10 fixed line subscribers with disabilities have approached their fixed line service provider directly seeking special services or equipment.



# Awareness of special equipment higher than operator services to aid subscribers with disabilities.

## % Aware



*Are you aware of the following fixed line telephone services which are aimed at making fixed line telephone services more accessible to disabled users? N=270*



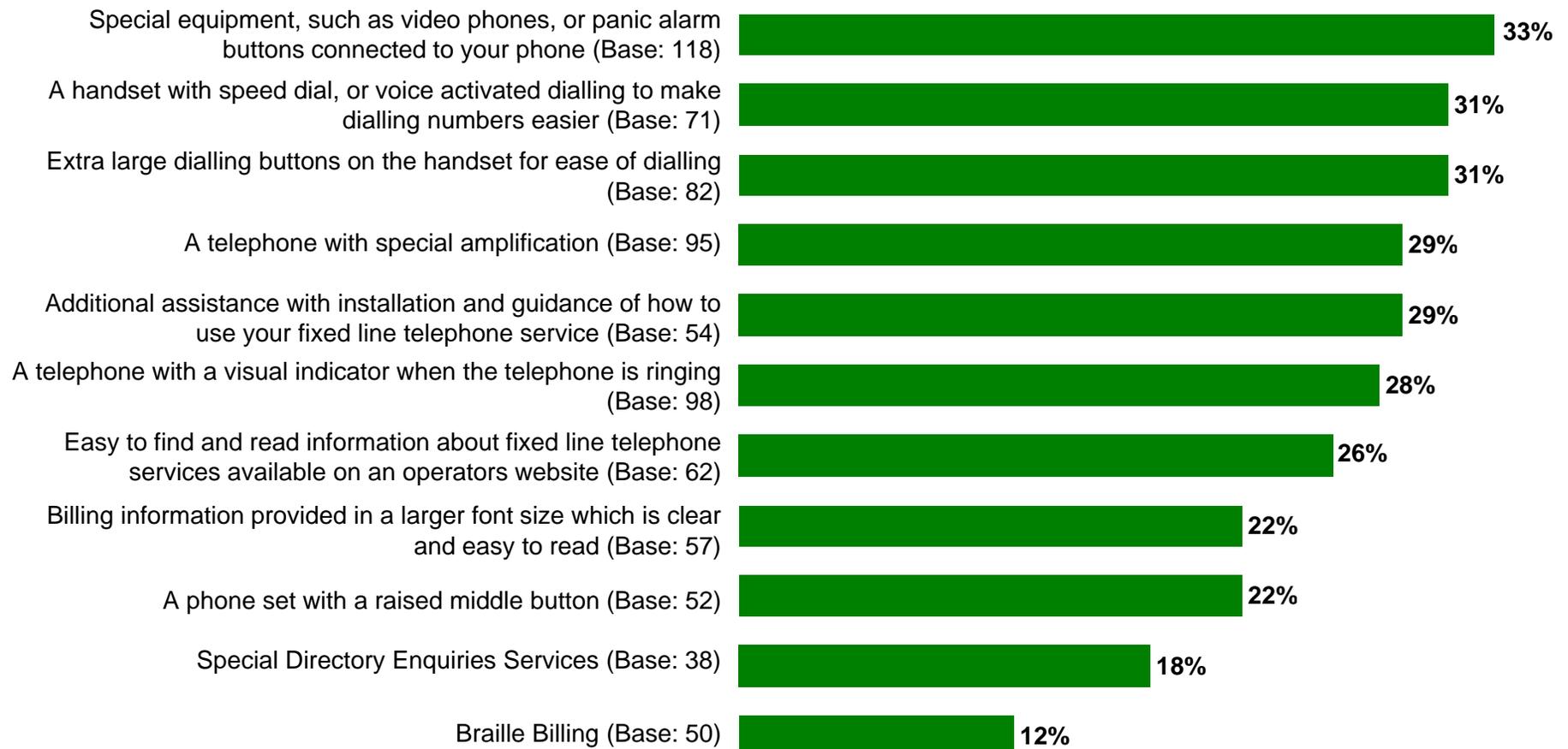
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# Relatively low numbers of users with disabilities availing of a variety of aiding services.

% Use

**Note: Small Bases**



*Are you aware of the following fixed line telephone services which are aimed at making fixed line telephone services more accessible to disabled users?*



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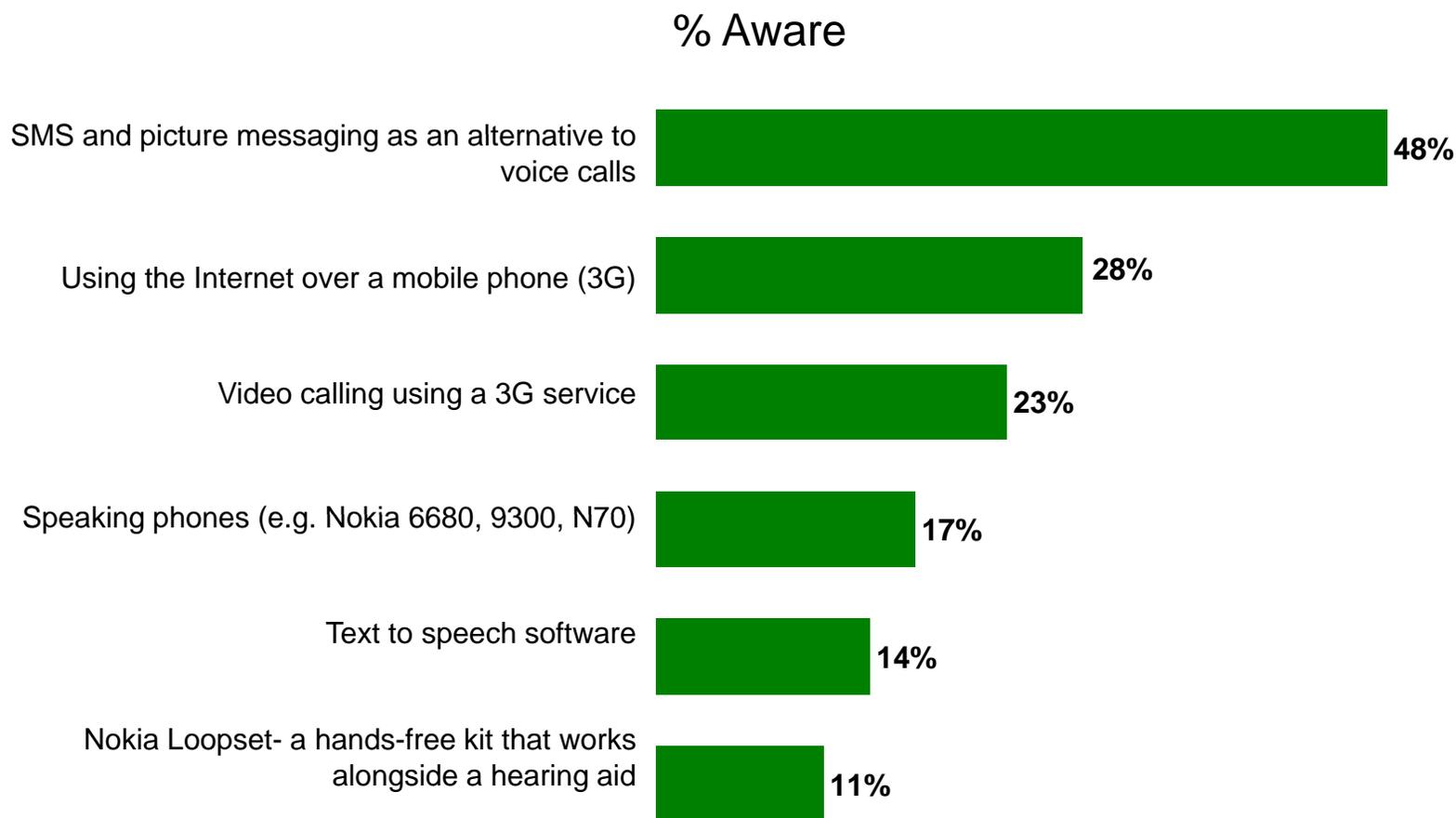
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# Summary of Findings – Mobile Phone

- 67% of respondents with disabilities reported having a mobile subscription, compared to 85% usage reported in the overall population.
- Use of prepaid mobile phones is higher among people with disabilities at 87% than among the overall population (73%), although there is no difference in terms of the providers used and in take-up of 3G technology.
- Mobile phone users with disabilities make an average of 4 mobile calls a day, and send on average 4 text message.
- 27% of mobile phone users with disabilities had shopped around to compare prices between mobile operators, compared to 41% of the overall population.
- While almost half of mobile users with disabilities were aware of the use of text and picture messaging as an alternative to voice calling, awareness of other assistive technologies was relatively low.
- Only 5% of mobile users with disabilities who have a mobile phone have approached their provider directly regarding equipment or services which may aid their use of mobile phone services.



# Awareness of services which enable easier use of mobile services for users with disabilities



*Are you aware of the following mobile telephone services which are aimed at making mobile phone use more accessible to disabled users? Base N=251*

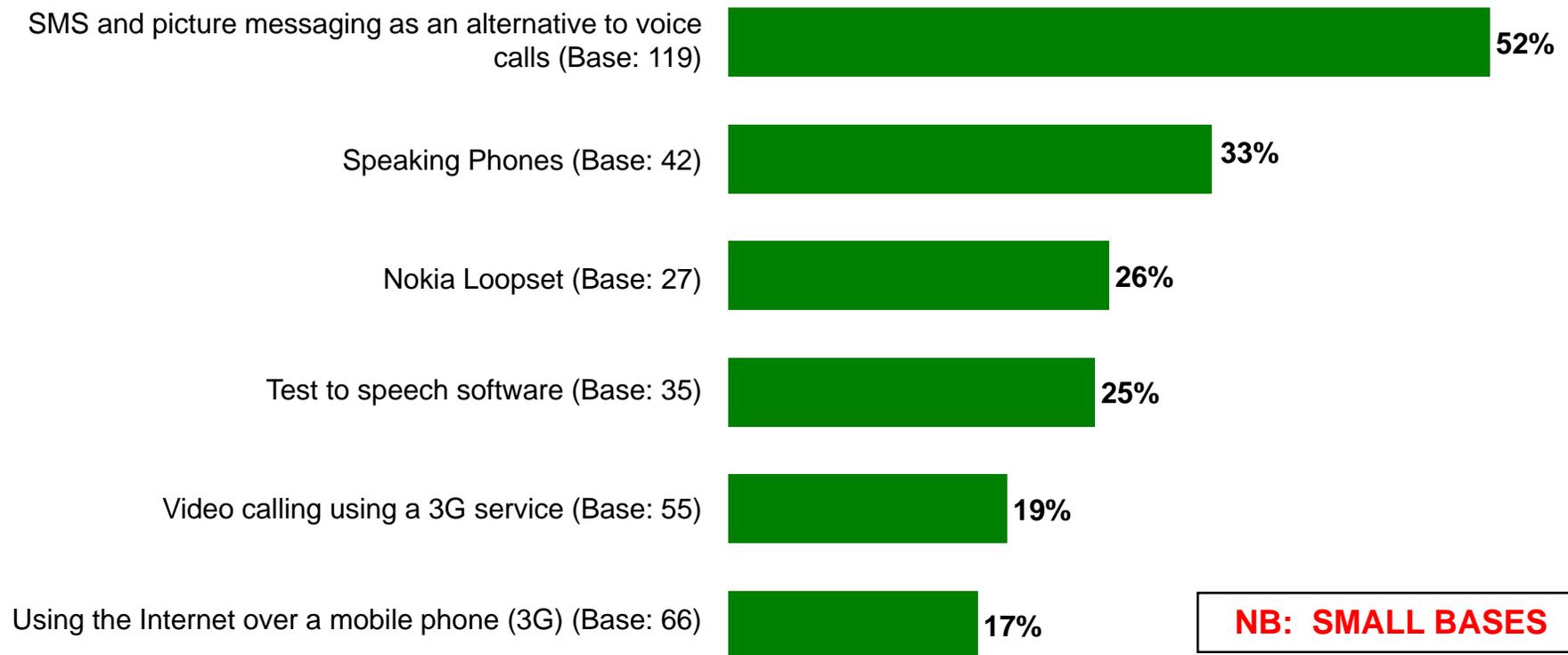


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# Usage of mobile phone services which may enable easier use of mobiles for users with disabilities

% Use



*Do you use any of these services?*



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# Summary of Findings – Internet and Technology

- ❑ Only 1 in 4 people with disabilities use the Internet, compared to almost half of the population in general. Younger age groups with disabilities are more likely to be Internet users than those in older age-groups.
- ❑ The most common location for using the Internet is the home, with work and school/college also popular locations. Cyber cafes are used by 1 in 20 people with a disability. There is very little difference between the disabled and overall populations with regards to their frequency and level of usage of the Internet.
- ❑ While there is little difference in terms of internet usage levels between people with disabilities and the overall population, people with disabilities are almost half as likely as the overall population to have home Internet access and are less likely to feel that they will get a home Internet connection in the future.
- ❑ Awareness of assistive technologies in relation to use of the Internet is relatively low, with less than 3 in 10 aware of all of these services.
- ❑ More than 7 in 10 people with disabilities believe that the Internet is of benefit to them in terms of accessing otherwise unavailable services, while 6 in 10 find the Internet easy to use. Relevant content, however, seems to be lacking, with just a third of people with disabilities agreeing that there is a wide range of content suitable for them to access on the Internet.
- ❑ When asked to rank telecommunications services in order of their importance in meeting communication needs, younger age groups placed more importance on mobile phones and Internet access, while older age groups ranked fixed line phones most highly.



# Awareness of Internet Services for People with Disabilities

% Aware



*Are you aware of the following Internet services which are aimed at making using the Internet more accessible to disabled users? Base, N=80*



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# Usage of Internet Services for People with Disabilities

% Use

Voice and video calling using Skype (Base: 19)



28%

Additional assistance from operator in connecting to internet services (Base: 21)



17%

Larger font size on internet sites to help me read the content (Base: 26)



14%

Text to speech software to help me use the internet (Base: 19)



5%

**NB: SMALL BASES**

*Do you use the following Internet services which are aimed at making using the Internet more accessible to disabled users?*



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## 5. ComReg Consumer Guide

- **Phones and Broadband – a guide for people with disabilities and older people**
- **The purpose of the guide is to give straightforward, accessible and useful information on the services available for people with disabilities and for older people.**
- **In order to reach the widest possible audience the guide is available in Large Print, Easy to Read, Accessible Electronic, Braille and Audio Formats.**





## Useful Phone Services

- **Text Messages and SMS to speech**

- **Textphone – minicom service**



- **Text relay service**



- **Video calling**



- **Free Directory Enquiries**



- **Delivery Reports**



## Useful features of home phones and mobile phones

- Large Keys
- Hands-Free
- Hearing-aid compatible
- Headsets
- Voice Output
- Volume
- Text Size
- Display Contrast
- Backlit Keypad
- Voice Dialling
- Quick Dial Keys
- Flashing indicator
- Vibration function





## Useful broadband internet services

- Internet calling 
- Instant Messaging 
- Email 
- Listening to websites



<http://www.browsealoud.com>



## Reading bills and other information

- **Other bill formats**
- **Other information in other formats**
- **Online access to services**
- **Customer Support**
  - Set-up assistance
  - User guides





## 6. ComReg Disability Forum – Other Initiatives

- **One Click Initiative**
  - Each service provider to provide information on services and facilities for customers with disabilities on accessible web page, one click from home page.
- **Bill Presentation Standard**
  - Accessibility Section
    - Clear Language
    - Typeface, font size, colour, paper colour, capital letters, bold, italics (See it Right)
    - Large print & Braille
- **Industry Briefings on Universal Design**
- **Free Directory Inquiry services for disabled consumers provided by all service providers**



## 7. Looking to the future

- **The new legal framework**
  - 'Ensuring equivalence in access and choice for disabled end-users.'
- **Key driver for ComReg's work in this area**
- **ComReg plan 2<sup>nd</sup> survey of users with disabilities in 2010**
- **Survey results will inform regarding required facilities/services**
- **Continue to work through the ComReg Disability Forum to develop pragmatic and effective solutions**



## 8. Summary and conclusions

- **ComReg's experience of this method of engagement has been positive and productive**
- **Through discussion and engagement**
  - Gather information about needs – through disability groups
  - Develop and implement practical, proportionate and effective solutions
- **Continue to adopt this approach in light of new legal framework**



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**Thank You!**

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