

A woman with curly hair is looking at a tablet in a modern office. In the background, other people are working at desks.

# Modernising Communications

Public Sector Strategies  
for 2019



## Introduction

8x8 recently commissioned a survey of over 190 public sector employees throughout the United Kingdom carried out by Surveys in Public Sector, about their organisational goals and challenges related to digital transformation, communications and customer experience. While we hear a lot about austerity and reducing expenses, that is not the top concern for public employees. Indeed, 82% of respondents say improving customer experience and satisfaction is one of their organisation's top strategic objectives, while only 63% name cost reduction as a primary strategic objective - behind improving organisational efficiency (78%) and tied with modernising technology solutions. In every question, public sector employees identify

customer experience as the most important challenge and opportunity in the coming years.

Luckily for the public sector, an effective digital transformation strategy makes it possible to improve customer experience and modernise technology solutions while also reducing costs. But getting digital transformation right requires a cohesive strategy that includes communications - something that not all organisations have. Let's dive into what the survey results reveal - and what the public sector can do to modernise communications and meet customer expectations in the digital age.



# Improving Customer Experience: Key Opportunities and Challenges

The primary objective cited by respondents is improving customer experience and satisfaction, in line with observations that customers expect the same level of service from government organisations that they would

get from consumer brands. Omnichannel communications that give customers the ability to connect with the agency on their preferred channel is a key way to improve customer experience.

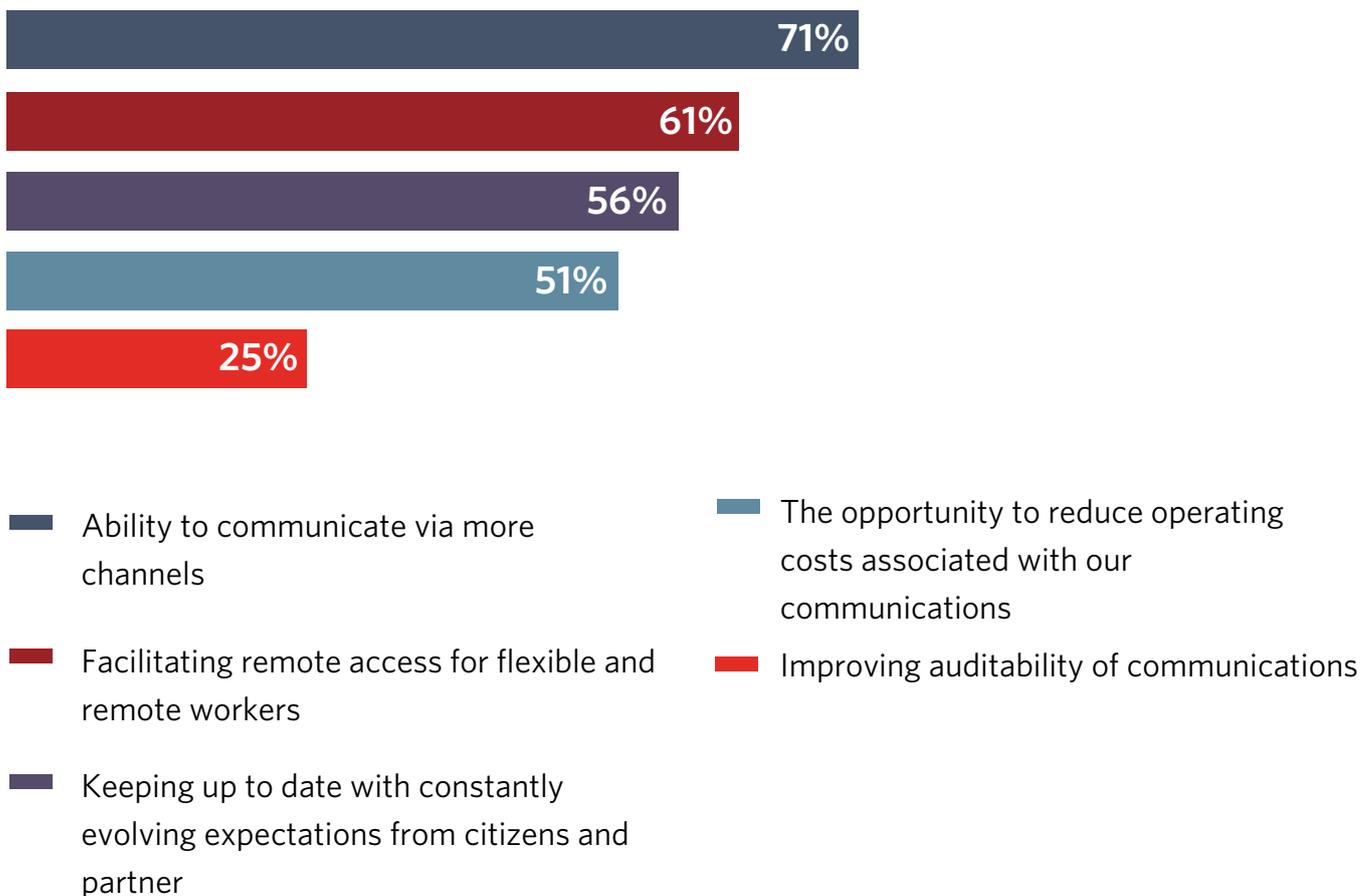
Figure 1: Looking ahead, what are the main objectives for your organisation as a whole?





Government employees see the importance of onmichannel communications, with 71% identifying the ability to communicate via more channels as the biggest communications opportunity in the coming years.

Figure 2: Which of the following areas do you believe provides your organisation with the biggest opportunities in the coming years?

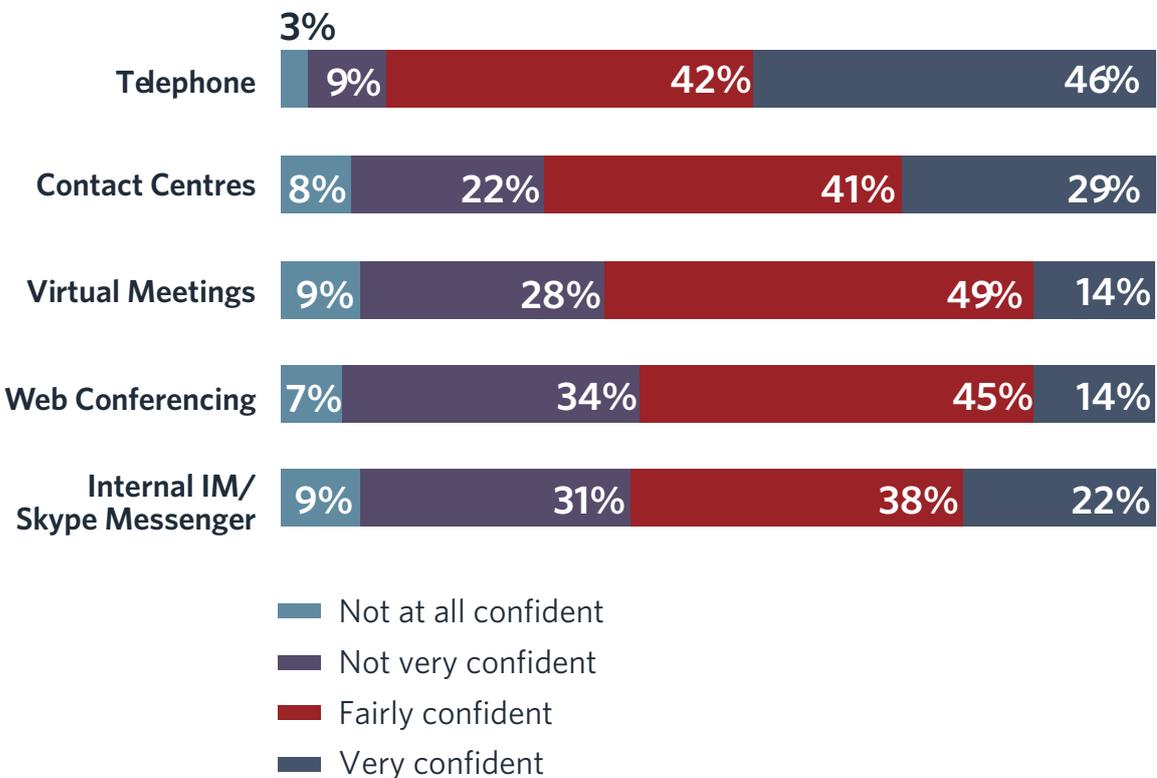




Public sector workers clearly understand the importance of omnichannel communication... but they also don't feel confident that their organisations are set up to do it effectively. The vast majority of public sector employees (88%) are either fairly confident or very confident

that their organisation can effectively handle voice calls. In comparison, just 57% are either fairly confident or very confident that their organisation could communicate effectively using messaging applications.

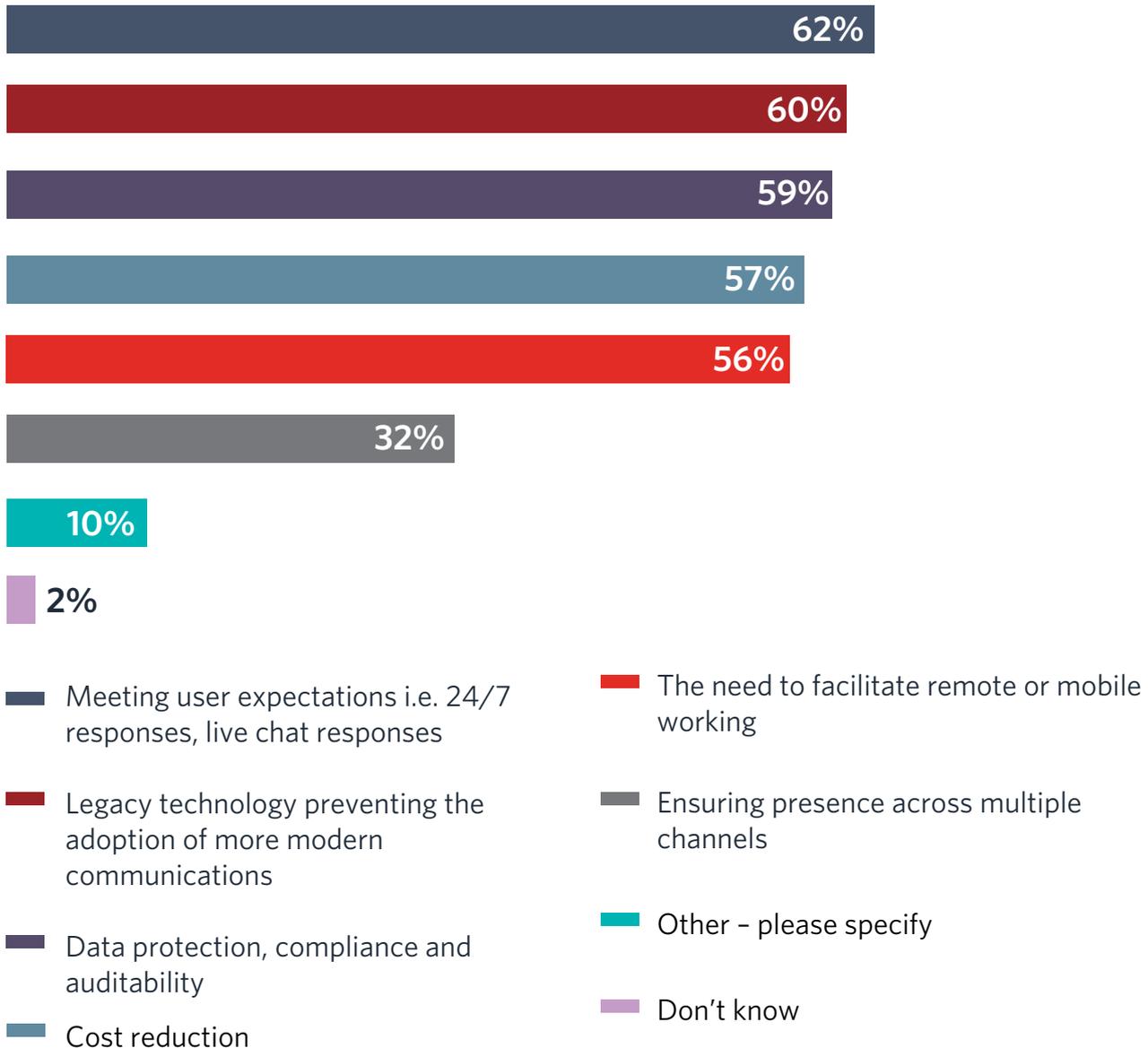
Figure 3: Regarding communications via the following channels, how confident are you that your organisations is able to do so effectively?





Even though government employees see the ability to communicate as a top opportunity, they also see meeting expectations as the biggest challenge - and that legacy / outdated technology is likely to be what makes meeting expectations so challenging.

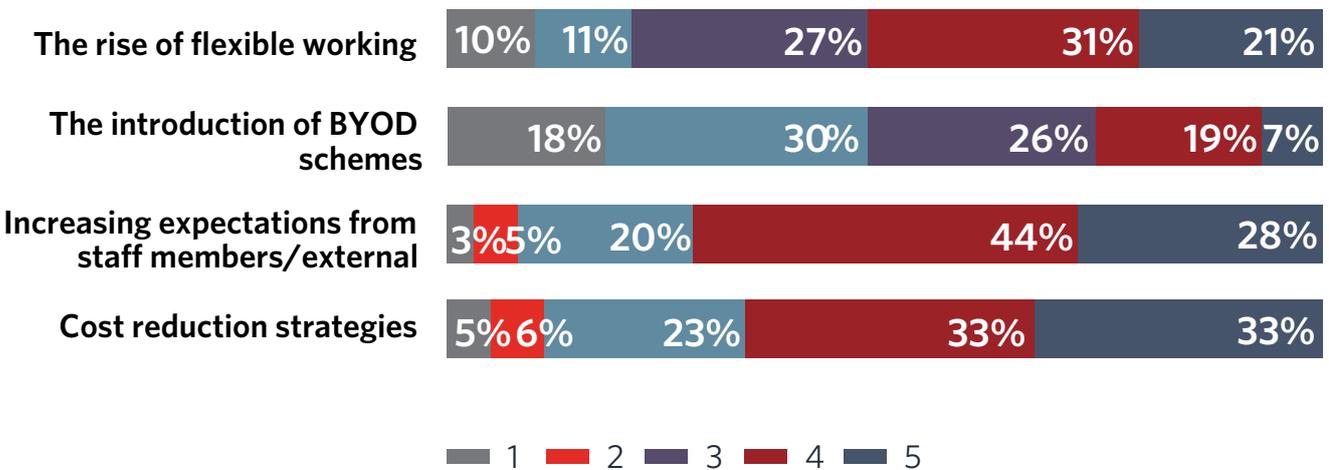
Figure 4: What do you believe are the biggest challenges your organisation currently faces when it comes to your communications strategy?





Increasing expectations is also the top factor public sector workers think will impact how their organisation communicates and interacts with citizens, partner agencies and other public sector organisations in the future.

Figure 5: Thinking about how your organisation communicates and interacts with external contracts, such as citizens, partners or other public-sector bodies, which of the following areas do you believe will impact how you do this going forward?





# From the ISDN Switch Off to the Cloud

Most technology running phone systems today is either 'integrated digital services network (ISDN) or public switched telephone network (PSTN). In 2025, BT is switching off its traditional phone network which means most conventional on-premise systems will no longer work.

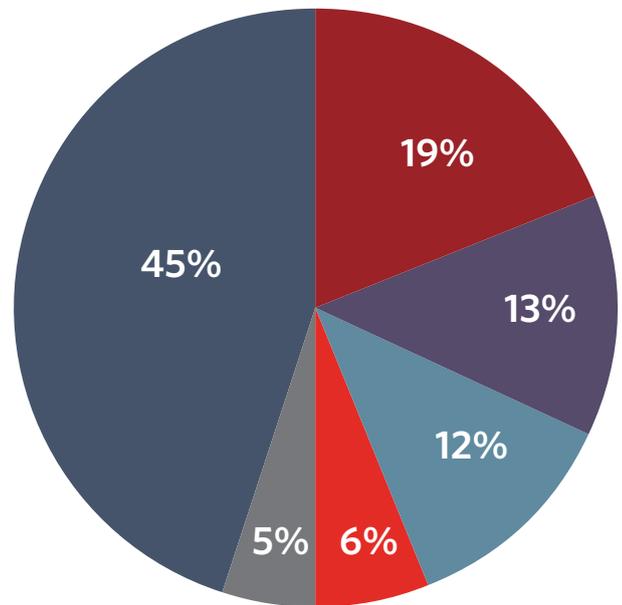
According to our research, just 19% of participants are prepared for the switch off and have a fully defined strategy. Surprisingly, 45% of those who took part said that they don't know if they have a strategy, while 12% say they

don't currently have a strategy, and just 13% of participants say they have begun to develop a strategy.

Being cut off from citizens is not an option but by considering the alternatives now, public sector organisations have the opportunity to put in place a modern communication system that is more scalable, cost-effective and packed with feature to revolutionise both customer and employee experiences.

Figure 6: BT have now announced the switch-off of the Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN). Does your organisation have a strategy to deal with this?

- Yes, we have a fully defined strategy for this
- We have begun to develop a strategy
- No, we don't currently have a strategy
- We were not aware of this and would need guidance to fully understand its implications for our organisation
- Other - please specify
- Don't know



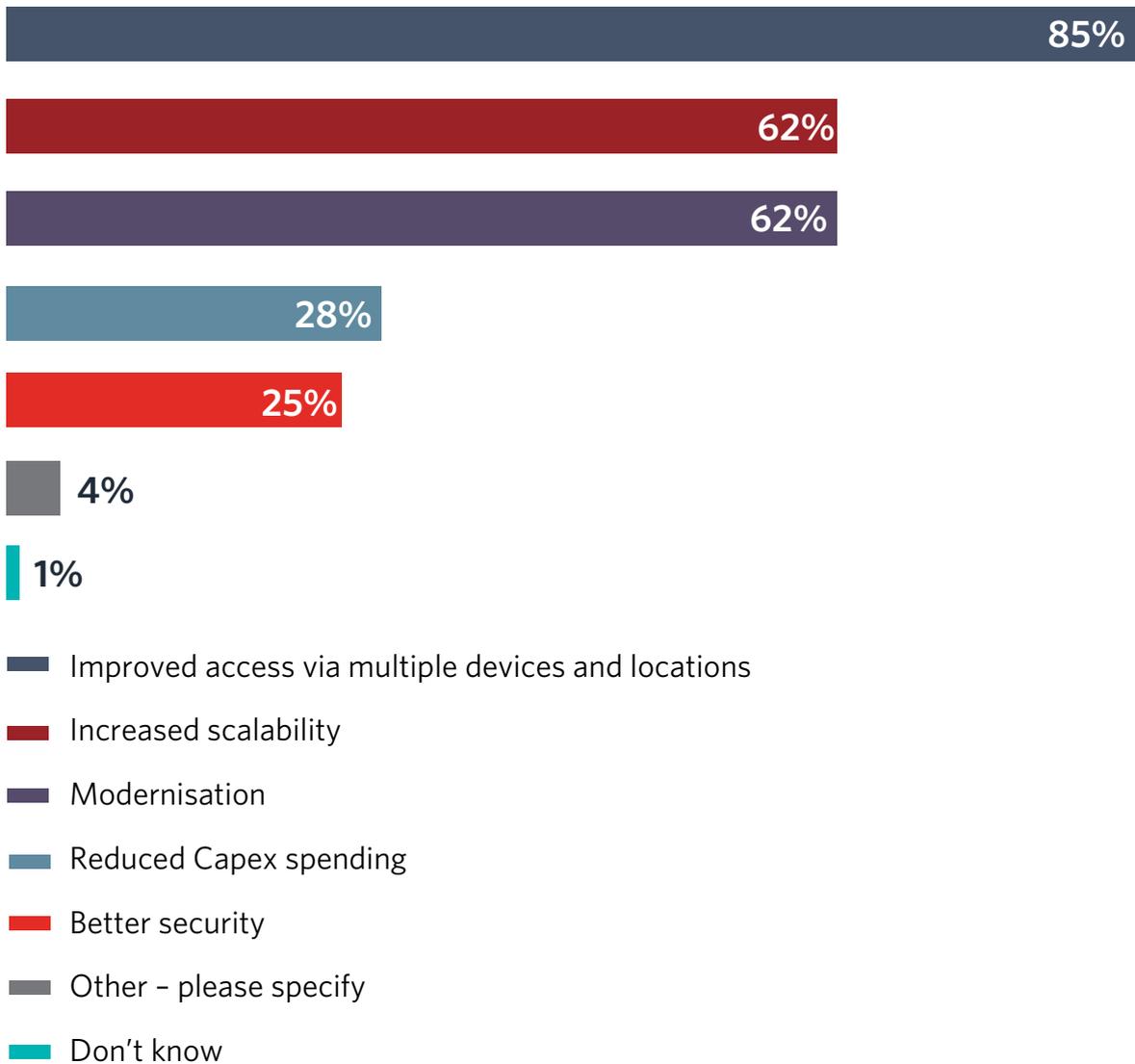


# Moving to the Cloud: Perceived Benefits and Barriers

When asked what the biggest benefits are to moving to a cloud-based technology in general, 85% of respondents cited the improved access and ability to use the technology from multiple devices and multiple locations. This points to a

desire to improve employee experience as well as the importance of continuity in customer and employee interactions. Tied for second place are the ability to scale easily and modernising technology.

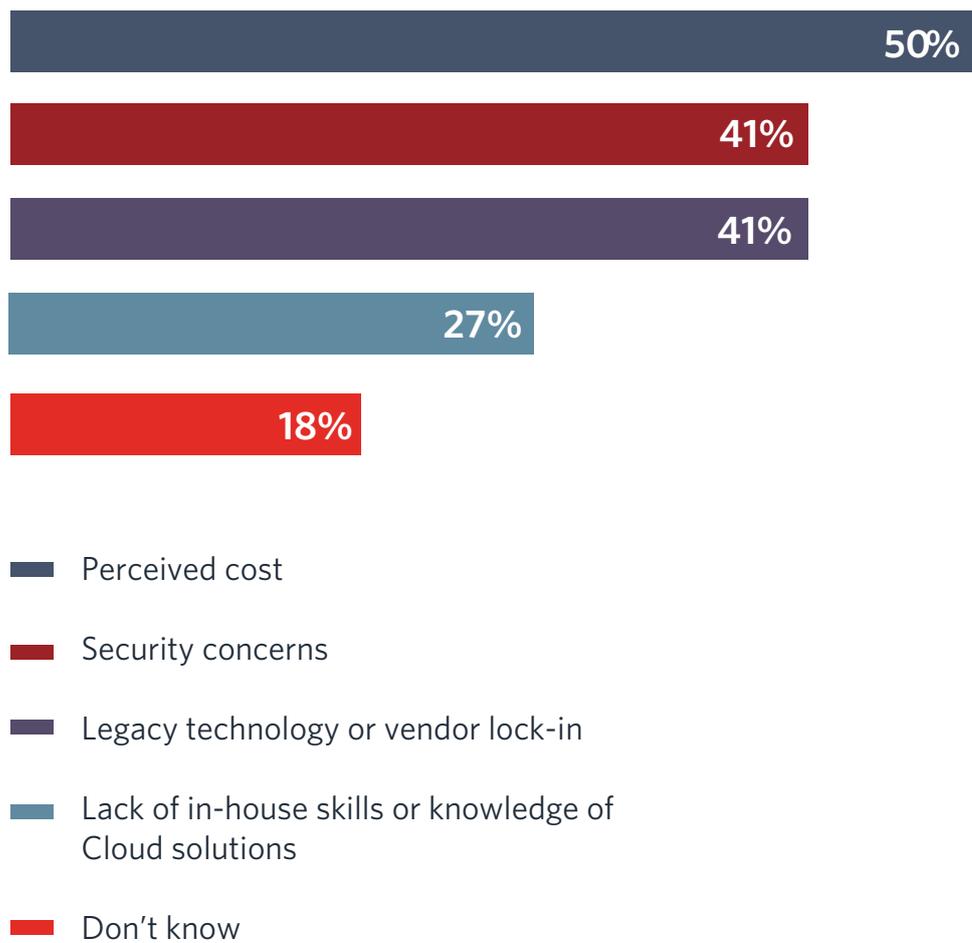
Figure 7: What do you see as the biggest benefits of cloud-based technology?

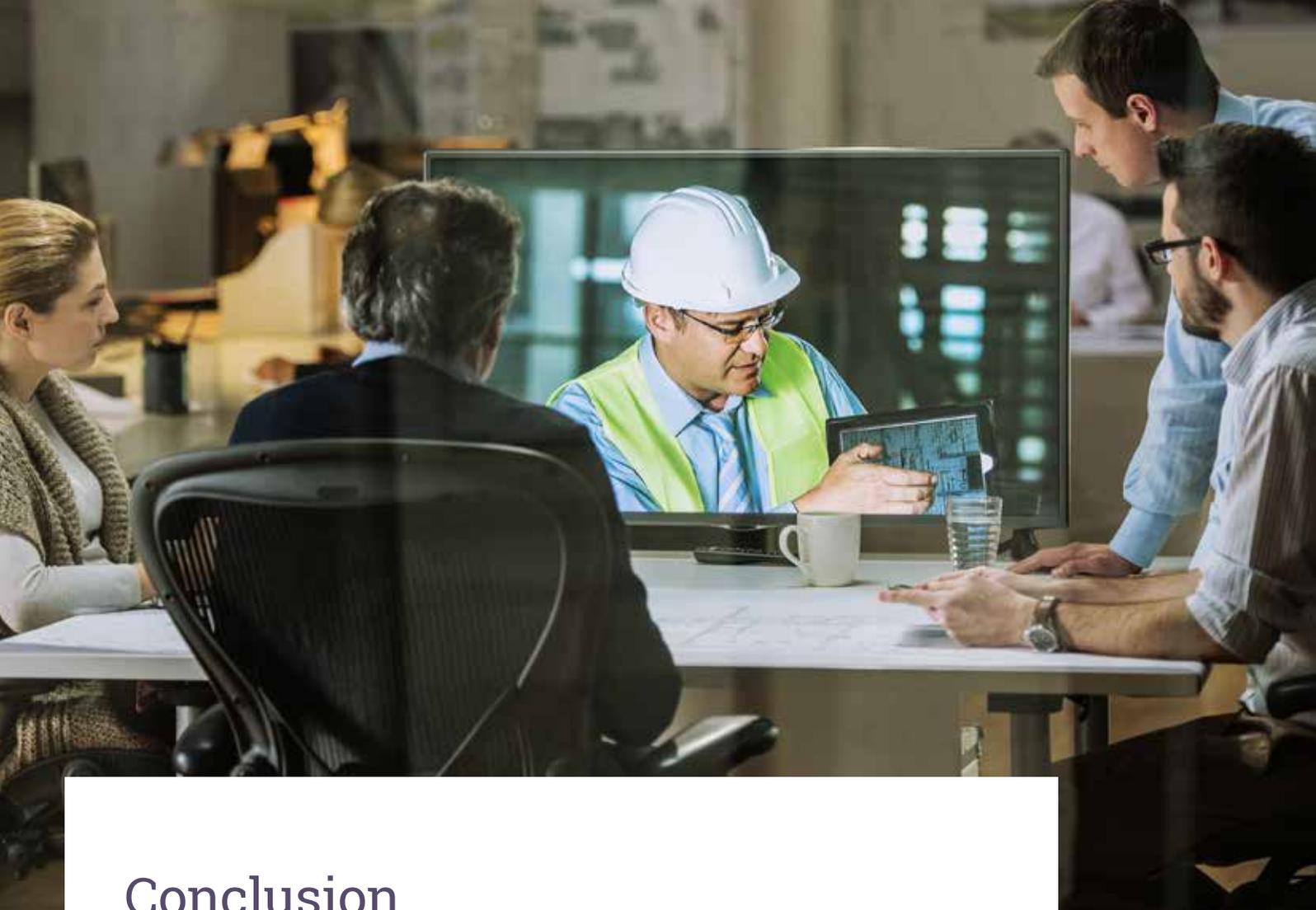




On the other hand, perceived cost is the top barrier to adopting cloud-based technology government employees identified, followed by concerns about security and vendor lock-in.

Figure 8: Is your organisation experiencing any barriers to the adoption of cloud-based technology?





## Conclusion

Government employees understand that citizens expect the same type of experience when contacting their local council as they get when interacting with their favorite brands. Delivering this customer experience requires omnichannel communications and advanced, cloud-based communications technology.

While respondents seemed to understand that meeting customer expectations in the future depends on cloud communications technology, there seemed to be misconceptions about the

cost of these technologies. Perhaps because providing an omnichannel experience with legacy technology would be cost-prohibitive for most government agencies, respondents assumed cloud-based communications that provide advanced communications options would be expensive.

Fortunately, moving to cloud communications makes it possible for the public sector provide better customer service while still reducing expenses.



## 8x8 Insight

**Russell Tilsed, Public Sector Sales Director at 8x8**

In an attempt to avoid significant capital outlay, many public sector organisations have chosen to prioritise maintenance over modernisation. In the meantime, technology has moved on. People are actively using a range of communication channels through mobile devices and smartphones. This has created a gap between expectations and reality. In lieu of workplace collaboration tools, many public sector workers use informal, consumer messaging apps to communicate with colleagues quickly, which creates information black holes from which data cannot be retrieved. Using consumer platforms can also leave organisations liable for data breaches. More worryingly, an overreliance on out-of-date software has also left the public sector vulnerable to cyberattacks.

We're used to hearing about how the public sector needs to do more with less, budget-wise. But research shows that meeting customer and employee expectations - not budget constraints - are now the greatest challenge for ICT decision makers.

According to the [peoplehr.com](http://peoplehr.com), millennials now account for 35% of the workforce. They have grown up with technology and they have high expectations when it comes to communications. They want information at their fingertips. This tech savvy workforce expects to communicate whenever and wherever they happen to be; in fact, remote working is proving to be a cost-effective solution for many cash-strapped organisations.

The public sector has been slow to move communications to the cloud and there are some benefits to being late adopters. The market is more mature, with more vendors and more offerings, which has driven costs down and increased overall quality.

Cloud-based communications solutions are a way for the public sector modernise its infrastructure, meet customer and employee expectations and reduce costs. Most SaaS-based cloud communications providers host and maintain all the infrastructure, so ICT teams don't have to.

With one platform for voice, video, chat and contact centre and one system of intelligence to provide key insights, 8x8's cloud communications solution is helping more and more public sector organisations to modernise services and manage resources more efficiently. Our products and services help agencies manage voice, chat, social and e-mail transactions and helping customers navigate web forms using our co-browse feature.

8x8 also provides out-of-the-box integrations with leading business software, giving the public sector detailed visibility into the customer journey across multiple communication channels, which can lead to better decisions about resource allocation. With better insights, the UK's public sector can work smarter to achieve more.



## Ready for the next step?

If you're interested in learning more about what cloud communications can do for your business, contact 8x8. We'll help you explore the many ways you can save money and enhance employee productivity with our industry-leading solutions.

To learn more about how 8x8 can help you improve both customer and employee engagement, contact one of our Solution Experts on **0333 043 8888** or visit **[8x8.com/uk](https://www.8x8.com/uk)** to learn more about how 8x8 can help improve both customer and employee engagement.



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