

Access to banking: Survey Results

June 2019

As part of the **Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee's** inquiry, the Committee conducted a survey to help understand the impact that bank closures have had on individuals, businesses and communities.

Survey promotion and analysis

The public were encouraged to take part in the survey through the Committee's and Assembly's social media channels. Facebook advertising was used to target a wide geographical spread, particularly in areas that have seen the closure of their last bank.

Results are calculated from the number of respondents who answered the specific question and not the overall number of respondents of the survey. Results have been arranged in a descending order - with the most popular response first.

Survey respondents

867 survey responses were collected.

Q1. As a personal banking customer, have the closure of bank branches had an impact on you?

Yes	87%
No	11%
Don't Know	2%
I don't have a bank account	0%

Q2. As a personal banking customer, how have previous bank branch closures impacted on you?

Restricted access to ATM or any other free cash withdrawal facilities	50%
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It now takes me up to an additional 30 minutes to access a bank branch	36%
Increased use of digital banking (mobile app, telephone, telephone etc)	34%
I now need to use the Post Office for banking	32%
It now takes me up to an additional 60 minutes to access a bank branch	29%
I struggle to use digital banking due to lack of internet and/or digital skills	16%
It now takes me over an additional hour to access a bank branch	13%
It now takes me over an additional hour to access a bank branch	13%
I changed to a different bank provider	8%
I don't have access to transport to travel to an additional bank branch	7%
It now takes me up to an additional 15 minutes to access a bank branch	6%
There has been little or no impact	1%

Other: 16%

Post Office	<p>"The Post office also closed in town and for 2 years there was none. Then the Spar shop opened a counter, which was much better than none BUT I would not like to use this for banking as there is NO privacy and it is so busy there most of the time it is unpleasant to have to use with the shop queue alongside you. Everyone is squashed."</p> <p>"Paying monies in via a post office (cash) takes an extra working day to show credits."</p>	14%
Digital banking	<p>"Internet banking is almost impossible due to lack of mobile signal."</p> <p>"I hate being forced to use digital banking. I don't trust it. I never remember my passwords/pass codes and answers to special questions. It's much harder to resolve problems without a person. I have to do my elderly neighbours banking on her behalf as she has never had either a mobile phone or computer."</p> <p>"It frustrates me as not everything can be done online. As much as I can check my balance online, so much I still can't do so it isn't helpful moving everything there. Internet speeds and phone signal in my valley is awful too."</p>	12%
ATM	<p>"The two cash machines in our bankless town often run out of cash at a weekend."</p>	9%

	<p>“Recent trend towards charging fee for ATM cash withdrawals is very worrying.”</p>	
Businesses and Employment	<p>“Cannot complete tasks in my business because a 24 mile round trip to bank a cheque takes half the morning.”</p> <p>“Mobile banking can only accept cheque deposits up to £300 so when I get paid I have to take time off to drive to the nearest large town as Narberth has closed.”</p>	8%
Travel	<p>“I have to make special trips to go to the bank as there is no bank near my work place or preferred shopping, meaning more travel costs and pollution.”</p> <p>“Cost to use public transport just to access bank.”</p> <p>“My nearest bank is a 20+ mile round trip my next nearest a 60+ mile round trip, but if I want to go in the opposite direction probably a 100 mile drive over the mountains and back. I now have to make sure I take out enough cash when I get to the bank to last me a couple of weeks.”</p> <p>“The branch had free parking which was really convenient.”</p>	8%
Loss of independence	<p>“Whilst I have not been able to drive due to operation, aged mother and I have had to depend on friends to get to an ATM or shop with cash Back!”</p> <p>“I have a physical disability that prevents me from using mobile banking occasionally. It also prevents me from going to the nearest branch miles away without organising help to assist me.”</p>	8%
Mobile Van	<p>“The mobile banks do not provide the same services i.e. limited amount I can withdraw.”</p> <p>“I have to do all my elderly mother's banking online, removing her privacy and her autonomy. She cannot stand in a cold carpark and wait in a queue for very restricted (and in my experience, rude) service from staff in a van.”</p> <p>“Natwest van only comes once a week.”</p>	7%
Cheques	<p>“It takes about 4 days for a cheque to reach my bank account. It happens straight away if I pay it into my own bank.”</p>	4%
Inability to change bank provider	<p>“I would change to another bank but they're all closing on Anglesey, appalling.”</p>	3%

Welsh	<p>“Lack of service through the Welsh language.”</p> <p>“Have to use more online banking which is only in English.”</p>	2%
Charity	<p>“As treasurer of small charity unable to pay in coins and unable to make international transfers without driving 40 mins.”</p> <p>“I work for a charity, having to travel further for banking adds to my working day and at month end I have to leave work earlier to make sure the takings are paid in on time as I have to go further to a bank.”</p>	2%
Changed bank provider	“Had to change bank.”	2%
Building Society	“Use local building society.”	1%
Credit Union	“Making use of a credit union provided pre-paid card.”	1%
Lack of trust in bank providers	“I have banked at Lloyd's Newcastle Emlyn for 35years. I was assured by bank staff that the branch would not close and that they had been upgraded in status. Within a year the closure was announced. I have no confidence that banks can be trusted in the way that I used to feel they could be. I no longer feel like a valued customer being provided with a service, but more like a nuisance because I am a human being.”	1%

Q3. If you've been negatively affected what could be done to help?

Regular access to a mobile banking van	40%
Community banking	35%
Post Office Banking services	28%
Better WiFi and/or internet connectivity	26%
Access to a credit union	8%
Don't Know	7%
Training on digital banking	5%
I have not been negatively affected	2%

Other: 29%

<p>Banks should not have closed in the first place, banks to re-open or banks to not to close last bank in a town</p>	<p>“Perhaps require at least 1 bank remains open in these towns in a rural area. Let the banks share this responsibility so that no particular bank is burdened unfairly.”</p> <p>“Bring the branches back! Some towns have more than one branch of the same bank, in London even on the same street. They can afford to be more community spirited! Mobile banking is useless - never there on the day you need them and poor pensioners have to queue in the rain!”</p>	<p>32%</p>
<p>More ATMs, especially more free ATMS that are reliable</p>	<p>“Local free cash machine.”</p> <p>“Installation of alternative ATMs when branches close.”</p>	<p>14%</p>
<p>Shared premises for different bank providers and/or other community services</p>	<p>“As Barclays are the last remaining branch in our town they have an obligation to the community and they're customers. They profit from us every year and based the closure of the branch on footfall figures when compared to larger towns. The government should force the banks to provide a single building with a multi brand banking facility in towns like mine (Abertillery)”</p> <p>“The banks could work together to provide, in effect, a bank internet cafe. Trained bank staff could support customers' use of terminals or offer conventional counter services covering all banks. The banks would gain by having a presence in all small towns with shared operating costs (one building, reduced staff), direct support and training to encourage use of internet bank access and a facility for peripatetic bank advisors. The inclusion of other service, Tourist Information, Police could make the operating costs even lower with much improved public service!”</p>	<p>12%</p>
<p>Mobile vans more often and in more locations</p>	<p>“Mobile banking van on Saturday to enable use by those who work during the week.”</p> <p>“Mobile banking should be compulsory in EVERY town that they close the bank.....With times and places sent out to each of their customers in the locality.”</p>	<p>4%</p>

<p>Longer opening hours and opening on a weekend</p>	<p>“Reopen branches at convenient times some of us work full time and can’t travel 2 hrs in our lunch break.”</p> <p>“Longer opening hours for existing branches to allow those who work full time to visit.”</p>	<p>4%</p>
<p>Better Post Office banking services</p>	<p>“Post office offers limited banking services. I was told they would be able to offer all services. NOT true. Very misleading.”</p> <p>“Have ticked Post Office, but only if their deposit system could be speeded up, current 5 day turnaround is useless.”</p> <p>“Our post office also changed last year to a supermarket. It is badly designed. Queues from the supermarket collide with the PO queue. And people can over hear your conversations.”</p>	<p>3%</p>
<p>Digital banking - better online security and easier to access telephone services</p>	<p>“More confidence that if security of online banking fails my account won't be emptied.”</p> <p>“UK based first-language-English telephone banking services.”</p>	<p>3%</p>
<p>Face-to face service provision</p>	<p>“Local access for financial advice. With all the scams that happen these days, I feel far safer speaking face to face with banking staff.”</p> <p>“Home visit appointments to talk about your account or opening accounts etc. Things you need to discuss and make appointments for.”</p>	<p>2%</p>
<p>Welsh Language provision</p>	<p>“If closing branches where customer service was available through Welsh, there is a need to ensure that Welsh language services are available online, by telephone (and more than just answering a number in a call centre-they need to be able to deal with us whatever the need). It is also necessary to ensure that in our towns there are hole in the walls that are fully bilingual e.g. Morrisons, Homebargains, Shell garage etc.”</p>	<p>1%</p>
<p>Community banking</p>	<p>“Create a Bank of Wales, and have branches locally in perhaps Council Offices or Libraries.”</p>	<p>1%</p>

	"...The only solution I can see is a completely new kind of national bank, so that people who don't want to be disrespected can leave and bank elsewhere."	
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Q4. Are you aware of any future plans to close bank branches in your area?

Yes	19%
No	48%
Don't Know	33%

Q5. Have the closure of local banks had an impact on the wider local economy in your area?

Yes	78%
No	4%
Don't Know	18%

Q6. If "Yes" what have these been?

Empty and/or deteriorating High Street buildings	59%
Reduced footfall in the high street	52%
Negative impact on sense of community	47%
Higher costs for businesses	36%
Negative impact on tourism	31%

Other: 14%

Businesses	<p>"I also own a business and I take cash payments but I am now limited as to where and when I can pay this in. My local branch is still open but is only part time which means if I take big payments one day I have to hold onto it to pay it in or make a journey elsewhere."</p> <p>"I manage the local market and it's had a MASSIVE impact. It is a cash based economy and with the only ATM in the post office regularly out of money or broken people are not shopping at the market."</p>	30%
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Less ATMs and/or ATMs running out of cash	<p>“The ATM has closed. With the Green Man Festival attracting 25,000 visitors each August there was always a long queue for the cash machine. It also increased visitors to the town. They now have to use machines on site and pay an extra fee.”</p> <p>“We now have one bank machine that frequently runs out of money. This one bank machine also does not accept certain foreign bank cards.”</p>	17%
Less attractive High Street	<p>“Graffiti on Natwest Ammanford, deterioration on HSBC & especially former Lloyds have dragged the town down.”</p>	16%
Reduced footfall in the high street	<p>“People can't go into the branch locally so they visit the next branch and spend their money in that town instead.”</p> <p>“Affects spend in the town during major festivals e.g. Machynlleth Comedy Festival, Dyfi Enduro, Lantern Procession etc.”</p>	15%
Tourism	<p>“All ATM in Barmouth ran out of money Easter Weekend, plus the shops STOP giving cashback. This must have had an effect on the little shops, Not a good impression to visitors to the area, Would you go back to an area, that you cannot buy an ice cream?”</p> <p>“I am in the tourism business and hear constantly foreign tourists complaining about lack of cash machines, this means they are spending less in our towns.”</p>	11%
Older people	<p>“Very difficult for my ageing tenant to get cash to pay her rent when she needs to. Only open few days a week, bank holidays reduce that too.”</p> <p>“Inconvenience for elderly and disabled who can't hop on a bus or do internet banking.”</p>	7%
Empty buildings	<p>“Four large buildings now empty and independent traders cannot afford rents, rates or purchase price. At the same time other small businesses have closed so Newcastle Emlyn town is looking quite sad these days.”</p>	5%
Travel Costs	<p>“Higher costs travelling, high costs in parking fees and I need to arrange assistance to travel out of town as do others. All costly. Have to spend on bus fare and 2 hours travel so have to do other shopping there too. So can't support local as we would like.”</p>	5%
Loss of jobs	<p>“How about the specialist staff who have lost their jobs and gone is the personal touch and extended knowledge only a human can bring.”</p>	3%

	“Our Town is turning into a ghost town as people travel to the next big town to do their banking and shopping too. Local jobs lost, sense of desperation and empty gloomy high street.”	
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Q7. Do you have a business bank account?

Yes	25%
No	73%
Don't Know	2%

Q8. Have bank branch closures had an impact on your business?

Yes	78%
No	18%
Don't Know	4%

Q9. How have previous bank branch closures impacted your business?

More difficult to deposit takings	82%	
Limits access to business support and advice	56%	
More difficult to access to ATM or any other free cash withdrawal facilities	50%	
More difficult to access change (till float)	47%	
Added difficulty in paying bills/invoices	40%	
I now need to use the Post Office for banking	38%	
Increased use of digital banking (online, mobile app, telephone, etc.)	33%	
It now takes me up to an additional hour to access a bank branch	32%	
It now takes me up to an additional 30 mins to access a bank branch	30%	
Negative impact on customers	27%	
It now takes me over an additional hour to access a bank branch	20%	

It now takes me up to an additional 15 mins to access bank branch	3%	
Little or no impact	0%	

Other: 19%

Post Office	<p>“It is not professional to use the post office for business banking next to someone buying bananas.”</p> <p>“Used to be able to deposit at the post office, but that has now closed as well.”</p> <p>“the post office does not accept bankings into my business account!!!! CRAZY as I am the one that pays.. NOT happy!!”</p> <p>“Have to queue for at least 30mins at the post office before being served!”</p>	38%
Mobile Van	<p>“Staff in mobile banking vans are unable to solve a problem caused by staff on telephone banking.”</p> <p>“Mobile van is limited to how much coin it can accept.”</p>	7%
Welsh Language	<p>“We are forced to deal with our banking issues in English, as the service is only available online or by phone. This goes against the principles of the company and the committee that I represent.”</p>	10%
Long queues	<p>“I now have to use a different branch 15 minutes away. It is always busy with queues. Last time I went there I was in the queue for 22 minutes before being served!”</p>	7%
Cheques	<p>“Unable to take checks to the bank easily. Takes 1 extra day for clearance checks when going to the post office.”</p>	7%
Rely on other people	<p>“Now have to get someone else to travel to another town pay in cash/cheques in because I work full time.”</p>	7%
Charities	<p>“Charity account so can't use ATMs or digital banking making it impossible to withdraw cash meaning we have to hold more cash in our home which is not safe.”</p>	7%
WiFi	<p>“Digital network deficits in the countryside. The service to reach the world wide web is very volatile, and the cost is terrible. £ 75 per month for broadband access, on specific data (limited data). The banks have a significant lack of understanding of the shortcomings in the countryside of trying to access their services on the web.”</p>	7%

Higher costs	"Yes, in cost terms, both as we have to travel extra and in cost time terms."	7%
Local Knowledge	"Loss of local knowledge and support."	7%

Q10. If your business has been negatively impacted, what could be done to help?

Regular access to a mobile banking van	40%
Better WIFI and/or internet connectivity	31%
Community banking	33%
Post Office banking services	28%
Don't Know	7%
Training on digital banking	6%
Access to a credit union	4%
My business has not been negatively impacted	3%

Other: 32%

Re-open, stop closing or one bank minimum	"At least one bank should remain open in every town." "Don't close Barclays all of my older generation customers use checks when we deliver they don't like to keep cash or can't access cash but to take checks now means a two hours journey to deposit them this does not make good business sense."	43%
Shared hub	"Need to have one bank building, with access for Nat West, HSBC and Barclays customers in it."	12%
Welsh language	"The Welsh Language Commissioner and the Welsh Government need to take steps to force banks to offer a Welsh language service on-line and on the phone (e.g. not a limited service in a call-centre as is currently available!)"	6%
ATM	"More cash point facilities and cheaper ways to accept cards." "Free to use cash machine."	6%
Mobile Van	"Increased hours of the mobile bank. 1 hour a week not enough. Often very large queues and waiting outside in the rain. Quite often the computer connections don't work."	6%

	<p>“Mobile van for all banks would be great and longer hours.”</p> <p>“Regular access to a banking van is not for 2 hours one day a week!”</p>	
Post Office	<p>“Builth wells desperately needs a main post office, not a branch one in a bedding shop.”</p> <p>“Remove the need for ID when paying in cash/cheques in Post Office.”</p> <p>“As a charity, we have 2 signatories for our account and no bank card, so cannot use post office. Remove the need for ID when paying in cash/cheques in Post Office.”</p>	6%

Q11. Have you visited a mobile banking van for your personal banking/business in the last year?

Yes	13%
No	85%
Don't Know	2%

Q12. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the mobile banking branch as an alternative for a bank branch?

Very dissatisfied	24%
Dissatisfied	47%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	19%
Satisfied	7%
Very satisfied	4%

Q13. If very dissatisfied or dissatisfied, what were the reasons for this?

It wasn't private enough to deal with personal finances	67%
It didn't have convenient opening hours for banking	67%
The queues/waiting times are often long	53%

I would prefer to deal directly with my bank	48%
It wasn't at a location that is convenient for me	24%
The banking process wasn't easy	14%
It didn't have disability access	14%

Other: 41%

It did not offer a full service	<p>"Couldn't do something as simple as change of address."</p> <p>"They couldn't help, told me to visit a branch!"</p> <p>"It did not offer the services I used to go to the bank for... >300 cash, foreign currency, personal banking."</p>	36%
Queuing outside	<p>"Because only 2 people are allowed in the back of the van I have had to queue outside in the rain. This is totally unacceptable. It is unpardonable to expect people to believe the myth that they are valued customers if they are expected to queue outside."</p> <p>"It only allows 2 people inside at a time so you often have to queue outside in the rain."</p> <p>"I had to line up for 25 minutes in the rain, my mother is disabled and can't stand that long."</p>	25%
Inconvenient opening hours	<p>"One visit for 30 minutes a week is totally impractical, at least 2 preferably 3 visits for at least for 2 hours I need to bank when I can get away from the business, you can't just shut up shop in a small business to drive 15minutes to the mobile bank location to find there are too many people queuing and you get turned away."</p>	11%
Lack of cash	<p>"I was unable to get £5 notes for a float and could not pre-order either."</p> <p>"They didn't have enough cash. One of the staff had to use his own money."</p>	8%
Privacy	<p>"Confidentiality is non-existent in a van."</p>	8%
Inexperienced or rude staff	<p>"The staff were rude and unhelpful and couldn't even remember what the details of using post office banking instead were."</p>	8%
Accessibility	<p>"No access for a pushchair with two small babies."</p>	6%

No signal	"Very often it cannot pick up a signal so cannot do what I want."	3%
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Survey respondents

Age:

Under 16	1%
16 to 17	2%
18 to 24	3%
25 to 34	9%
35 to 44	18%
45 to 54	23%
55 to 64	23%
65 to 74	15%
75 or older	3%
Prefer not to say	3%

Location:

Blaenau Gwent	1%
Bridgend	2%
Caerphilly	1%
Cardiff	2%
Carmarthenshire	12%
Ceredigion	14%
Conwy	3%
Denbighshire	11%
Flintshire	1%
Gwynedd	7%
Isle of Anglesey	3%
Merthyr Tydfil	1%
Monmouthshire	1%

Neath Port Talbot	1%
Newport City	1%
Pembrokeshire	9%
Powys	19%
Rhondda Cynon Taf	4%
Swansea	1%
Vale of Glamorgan	1%
Torfaen	1%
Wrexham	1%
Prefer not to say	3%