

7 Voice Risk Analysis

7.1 Introduction and summary

The Department is currently working with a number of local authorities (LAs) to test Voice Risk Analysis (VRA) technology. VRA works by analysing tiny changes in a caller's voice which may suggest they are misrepresenting the true details of their claim. The system doesn't detect lies – it detects the level of abnormal stress in someone's voice.

Results of initial trials of VRA were announced in spring 2008, a larger second wave of trials began in the summer of 2008. The evaluation of the trials will be available spring 2010 and will help determine the Department's position on VRA.

This section of the survey aimed to find out LAs' views of VRA within Housing Benefit (HB) and compare these views with those expressed in last year's survey. The two questions asked were a direct repeat of those asked last year in Wave 16.

The key findings based on all LAs answering are summarised in this section. These are followed by the main findings which include charts for all questions plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

LAs were given a description of VRA and were then asked whether or not their LA was planning on using it. Findings were overall slightly more positive than at the same time last year, with a slight increase in the proportion of LAs using VRA. The piloting authorities were currently using VRA and five per cent were planning to use it in the future (compared with three per cent at Wave 16). Over half (55 per cent) expressed interest, saying that they had no actual plans to use it but were interested in principle – this is almost the same as at Wave 16. More than a quarter of LAs (28 per cent) said that on the basis of what they knew, they are **not** planning to use it in the future, which is slightly fewer than at Wave 16 when 33 per cent gave this response.

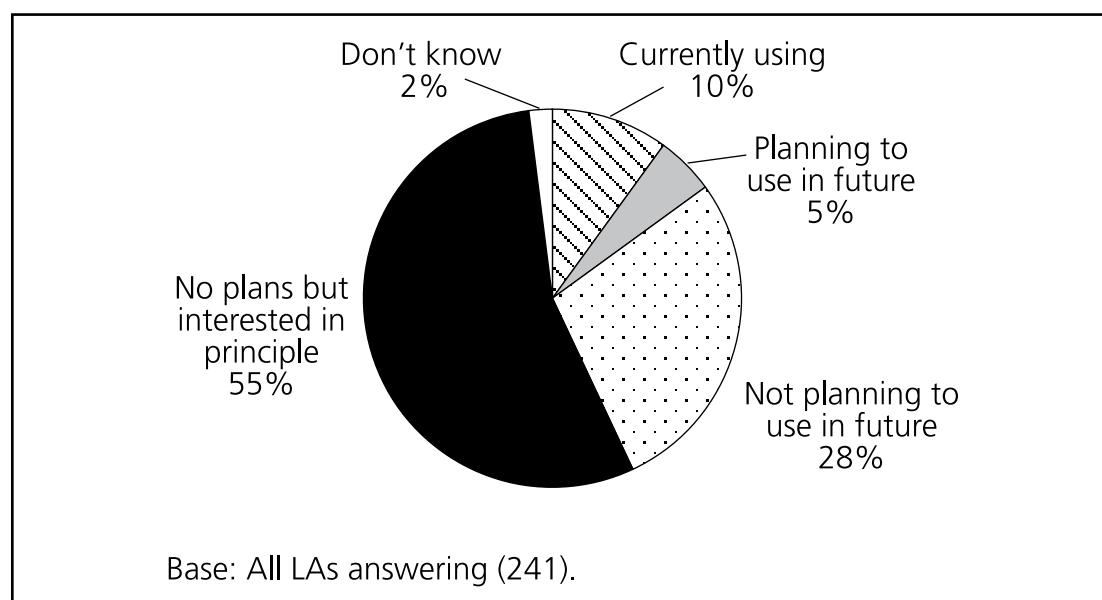
LAs showed equal amounts of interest in using VRA for both New Claims and Reviews, with nearly two in three expressing interest (63 per cent and 64 per cent respectively). These findings were again more positive than in 2008 when 58 per

cent expressed interest in using VRA for New Claims and 59 per cent expressed interest in using it for Reviews. One in four (24 per cent) said that they were not interested in using VRA for New Claims and 23 per cent were not interested in using VRA for Reviews.

7.2 Main findings

The following details the main findings and includes charts for all questions plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

Figure 7.1 Is your LA currently using, or planning to use, Voice Risk Analysis (VRA)?



Findings were overall slightly more positive than at the same time last year, with a slight increase in the proportion of LAs planning to use it in the future (five per cent compared with three per cent at Wave 16).

Over half (55 per cent) expressed interest, saying that they had no actual plans to use it but were interested in principle – this was almost exactly the same as at Wave 16. More than a quarter of LAs (28 per cent) said that on the basis of what they know, they are **not** planning to use it in the future, which is slightly fewer than at Wave 16 when 33 per cent gave this response. There were a couple of differences by LA type with London boroughs significantly more likely than Scottish authorities and English metropolitan districts to have said that they were not planning to use VRA in the future (50 per cent, nine per cent and 19 per cent respectively). It is also worth noting that no English unitary authorities were currently using VRA.

Tables 7.1 and 7.2 show findings by LA type for both Wave 16 and Wave 18 (2008 and 2009). Among English districts there were more LAs planning to use VRA in 2009 (five per cent), while a higher proportion of English unitary

authorities said in 2009 that they were not planning to use it at present but were interested in principle (67 per cent in 2009 versus 48 per cent in 2008) and fewer were not planning to use it in the future at all (27 per cent in 2009 versus 44 per cent in 2008).

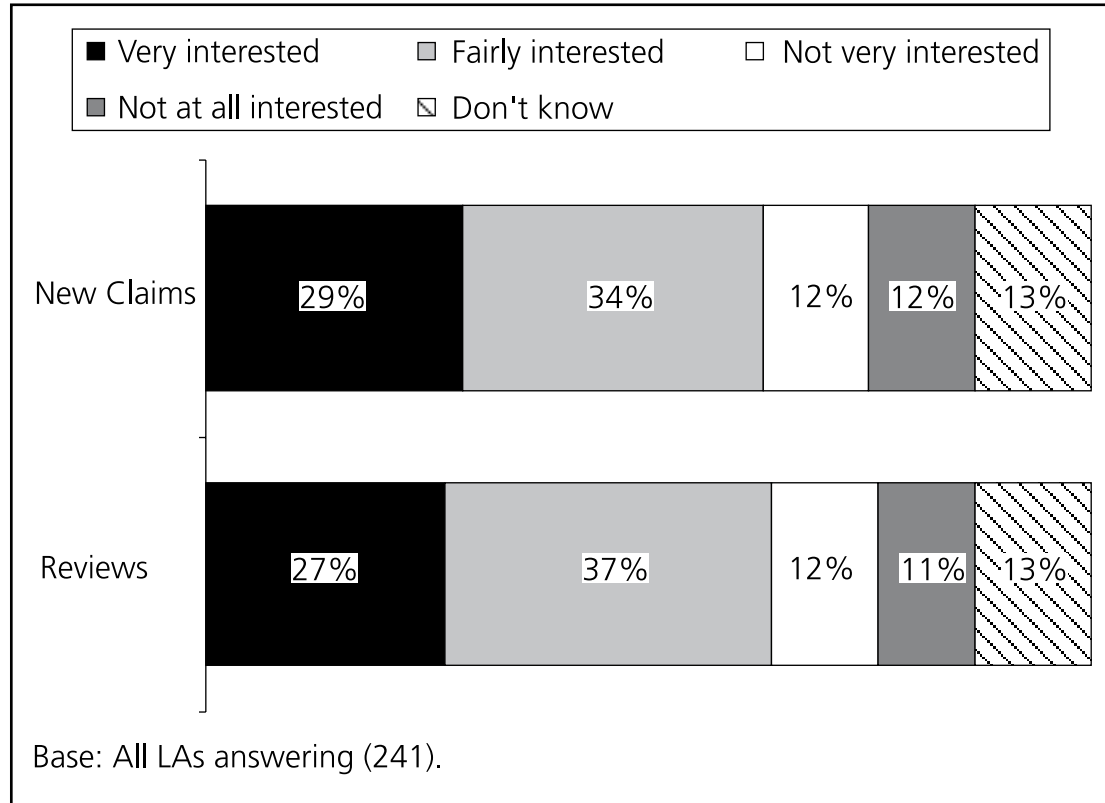
Table 7.1 Wave 16

	Welsh %	Scottish %	English unitary %	English metropolitan %	English district %	London borough %
Currently using	–	5	–	4	5	5
Planning to use in the future	–	5	8	7	1	5
Not planning to use in the future	17	11	44	19	36	47
Not planning to use at present but interested in principle	83	79	48	70	51	37
Don't know	–	–	–	–	6	5
<i>Base</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>152</i>	<i>19</i>

Table 7.2 Wave 18

	Welsh %	Scottish %	English unitary %	English metropolitan %	English district %	London borough %
Currently using	18	14	–	19	9	6
Planning to use in the future	–	9	3	4	5	6
Not planning to use in the future	18	9	27	19	31	50
Not planning to use at present but interested in principle	64	68	67	54	52	31
Don't know	–	–	3	4	3	6
<i>Base</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>136</i>	<i>16</i>

Figure 7.2 How interested would your LA be in using VRA for each of the following activities (if the pilots are successful)?



LAs showed equal amounts of interest in using VRA for both New Claims and Reviews, with nearly two in three expressing interest (63 per cent and 64 per cent respectively). These findings were again more positive than in 2008.

English unitary authorities and London boroughs were particularly uninterested in using VRA for either New Claims or Reviews: 30 per cent of English unitary authorities and 31 per cent of London boroughs were not at all interested in using VRA for New Claims and 23 per cent of English unitary authorities and 25 per cent of London boroughs were not at all interested in using it for Reviews.

LAs were also given the opportunity to write in any other activities for which they would be interested in using VRA. Twenty-one LAs expressed interest in using it for change of circumstances (seven in 2008), 17 for council tax discounts/single person discounts (11 in 2008), five for fraud investigations (five in 2008) and two for overpayment recovery (no LAs mentioned this in 2008).