

8 July 2003

**Coverage**  
 United Kingdom  
 (household access)

Great Britain  
 (individual access)

**Theme**  
 Social and Welfare

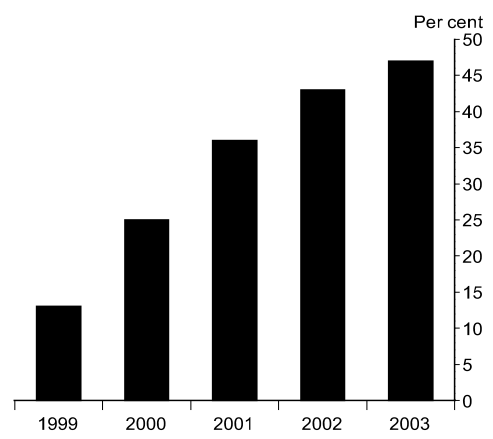
# Internet access

## Individuals and Households

Over the period January to March 2003 an estimated 11.7 million households in the UK could access the Internet from home, according to the Expenditure and Food Survey (EFS). That amounts to 47 per cent of all UK households.

According to figures from the April 2003 National Statistics Omnibus Survey, an estimated 54 per cent of adults in Great Britain had used the Internet in the three months prior to interview.

Proportion of households with home access to the Internet, UK, January to March quarters (1999 to 2003)



### Households with home access to the Internet, UK (by quarter) <sup>1</sup>

	Number of households with access to the Internet (millions)	Percentage of households with access to the Internet
<b>1999</b>		
January - March	3.2	13
<b>2000</b>		
January - March	6.5	25
April - June	6.9	27
July - September	7.8	32
October - December	8.6	34
<b>2001</b>		
January - March	9.2	36
April - June	9.5	38
July - September	9.7	39
October - December	9.8	39
<b>2002</b>		
January - March	10.5	43
April - June	11.1	45
July - September	11.4	46
October - December	11.4	45
<b>2003</b>		
January - March	11.7	47

**Issued by**  
 National Statistics  
 1 Drummond Gate  
 London SW1V 2QQ

**Telephone**  
 Press Office 020 7533 5702  
 E-mail: [press.office@ons.gov.uk](mailto:press.office@ons.gov.uk)  
 Public Enquiries 0845-601 3034

**Statistician**  
 Emma-Jane Cooper-Green  
 020 7533 5830  
 E-mail: [eSociety@ons.gov.uk](mailto:eSociety@ons.gov.uk)

**Internet**  
[www.statistics.gov.uk/releases](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/releases)

**Next publication date**  
 30 September 2003

Source - Family Expenditure Survey (April 1998 to March 2001); Expenditure and Food Survey (April 2001 onwards)

<sup>1</sup> Data up to April 2000 show households with access to the Internet through a home computer only, from April 2000 the data include all means of access.

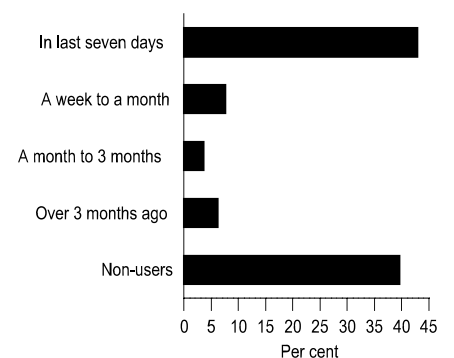
### Individual use of the Internet

For the first time in this series of releases, emphasis is being given to individuals' use of the Internet. The focus has been changed from adults who have ever accessed the Internet to those who have used it in the three months prior to interview; this being a more relevant measure of individuals' use of the Internet.

Sixty per cent of adults in Britain have used the Internet at some time prior to interview according to figures from the April 2003 National Statistics Omnibus Survey. This was an increase of five percentage points on the percentage reported in April 2002. Fifty-four per cent of adults in Britain have used the Internet in the three months prior to interview, showing a similar increase of five percentage points compared with April 2002. In April 2003, 57 per cent of men and 51 per cent of women had used the Internet in the three months prior to interview. Fifty-one per cent of adults in Britain had used the Internet in the month prior to interview.

The percentage of adults who had used the Internet in the three months prior to interview decreased steadily with age and ranged from 78 per cent of people aged 16 to 24 to 16 per cent for those aged 65 and over.

**Proportion of adults by when they last accessed the Internet, April 2003**



### Proportion of adults who have used the Internet in the three months prior to interview by age and sex (Great Britain)

April 2003

<b>All Adults</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Age in years</b>	
16 to 24	78
25 to 44	72
45 to 54	59
55 to 64	41
65 and over	16
<b>Sex</b>	
Men	57
Women	51

**How Individuals access the Internet**

Individuals can use a range of technologies to access the Internet but computers continued to dominate as the preferred method of access. In April 2003, 98 per cent of those who had accessed the Internet in the three months prior to interview had used a computer, of which 25 per cent had used a portable (laptop) computer. Approximately eight per cent of adults who had stated they had used the Internet in the last three months had done so using a mobile phone. Use of other means of access to the Internet such as Digital Television were also reported but the sample sizes were too small to give reliable estimates.

**Where people use the Internet**

Individuals were asked where they had used the Internet in the three months prior to interview. A wide range of locations were reported with the respondent's own home being the most popular location (82 per cent) followed by their workplace (45 per cent) and another person's home (24 per cent). Other notable locations were people's place of education (17 per cent), public libraries (10 per cent) and Internet cafes or shops (eight per cent).

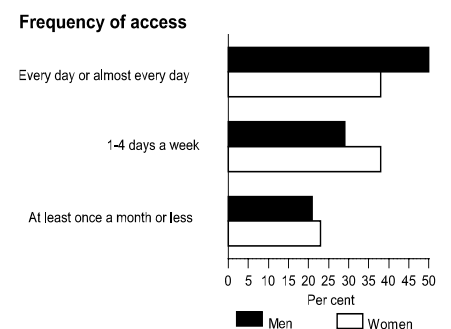
**Frequency of access**

Respondents were also asked how frequently they used the Internet. Men still use the Internet more often than women: half of all men who accessed the Internet in the three months prior to interview did so every day or almost every day compared with 38 per cent of women. A further 38 per cent of women tended to access the Internet one to four days a week compared with 29 per cent of men.

**What people do on the Internet <sup>1</sup>**

Among those who had used the Internet in the three months prior to interview 85 per cent of adults used it for e-mail, 80 per cent for finding information about goods and services and 69 per cent to search for information about travel and accommodation. Almost half of all adults who had used the Internet used it to order tickets, goods or services <sup>2</sup>. Forty-seven per cent of adults who had used the Internet in the twelve months prior to interview had accessed a government or public authority website. Eighty-six per cent of these adults visited these sites to obtain information, and 28 per cent of them did so to download a form.

**Frequency of access (adults who had used the Internet three months prior to interview), April 2003**



<sup>1</sup> Respondents can report more than one category for each activity.

<sup>2</sup> Excluding shares and financial services

## Internet Purchases

Respondents who had bought or ordered goods or services over the Internet, for personal or private use, in the twelve months prior to interview were asked what goods they had bought. The most popular purchases were travel, accommodation or holidays (54 per cent), tickets for events (41 per cent), books, magazines, e-learning or training material (40 per cent) and music or CDs (38 per cent).

---

### Proportion of respondents who have bought or ordered over the Internet, for personal or private use, in the 12 months prior to interview, by type of goods and services

---

April 2003

*Per cent*

Travel, accommodation or holidays	54
Tickets for events	41
Books or magazines/e-learning/training material	40
Music or CDs	38
Videos or DVDs	29
Clothes or sports goods	28
Computer software	24
Food or groceries	23
Household goods	21
Insurance	18
Electronic equipment	17
Computer hardware	15
Shares or financial services	9
Subscriptions, access to databases	9

Source - National Statistics Omnibus Survey

Note: percentages do not add to 100 per cent as respondents may give more than one answer

Of those who had purchased goods or services<sup>1</sup>, for personal or private use, in the three months prior to interview, 38 per cent reported spending a total of £100 or less in this period, while 22 per cent spent a total of over £500.

Forty-one per cent of Internet users had not bought anything over the Internet for personal or private use; their main reasons for not doing so were that they preferred to shop in person (30 per cent), they had no need (24 per cent) or that they had security concerns (23 per cent). Three quarters of the people that had bought goods over the Internet in the 12 months prior to interview reported that they had not encountered any problems.

---

<sup>1</sup> Excluding shares or financial services

### People who do not use the Internet

Those adults who had never used the Internet (40 per cent) were asked why they had not used it. Half of these non-users said that they did not want to use or had no need or no interest in the Internet, 39 per cent had no Internet connection and 38 per cent felt they lacked knowledge or the confidence to use it.

#### Reasons for not using the Internet (adults who have never used the Internet)

Reasons	April 2003
<i>Per cent</i>	
Do not want to/need to/or have an interest	50
No Internet connection	39
Lack of knowledge or confidence	38
Internet offers no benefits	15
Cost is too high	15
Someone else uses the Internet for me	14
Concern about security on the Internet	9
No time to use the Internet	9

Source - National Statistics Omnibus Survey

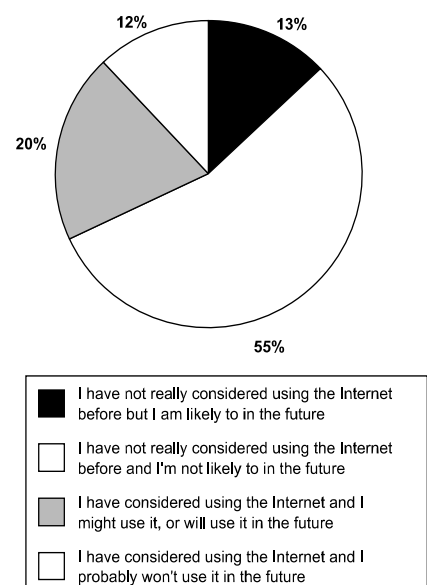
Note: percentages do not add to 100 per cent as respondents may give more than one answer

Adults that had never used the Internet were also asked which of four statements best described what they thought about using the Internet. Over half of non-users chose the statement "I have not really considered using the Internet before and I am not likely to in the future". This core group of non-Internet users represents 22 per cent of all adults.

### Household Broadband access

In the National Statistics Omnibus Survey people who stated that their household had Internet access were asked about the type of Internet connection used in the household. In April 2003 just over eight in ten households (81 per cent) had a dial-up telephone line connection, and 17 per cent of households reported that they had a broadband connection.

Statements that best describe the views of adults who have never used the Internet, April 2003



**Households with home access to the Internet**

The following information on household Internet access comes from the Expenditure and Food Survey (EFS). Over the first quarter of 2003 an estimated 11.7 million households in the UK could access the Internet from home representing 47 per cent of all households. This is nearly twice the number three years earlier and is a continued increase from the 43 per cent reported in the first quarter of 2002.

**Who has Internet access**

A more detailed analysis of Internet access has to be based on the full sample of the Expenditure and Food Survey over a twelve month period. While 47 per cent of households had home access in the first three months of 2003, the average for the twelve months, April 2002 to March 2003, was 46 per cent, therefore this 46 per cent provides the base for the following household data.

**Differences between the countries and regions of the UK**

Levels of access vary greatly between different parts of the UK. In the financial year 2002-2003 the proportion of households with access was lowest in Northern Ireland (35 per cent), Wales (38 per cent), and the North East of England (40 per cent). Proportions were highest in the East of England and the South East of England where over half of all households had Internet access (53 and 52 per cent respectively).

**Home access to the Internet by Government Office Region and UK country, 2002- 2003**



**Households with home access to the Internet by Government Office Region & UK country: 2002-2003**

	2002-2003
<i>Per cent</i>	
North East	40
North West	42
Yorkshire and the Humber	42
East Midlands	50
West Midlands	41
East of England	53
London	50
South East	52
South West	45
England	47
Wales	38
Scotland	41
Northern Ireland	35
United Kingdom	46

### Differences between income groups

For this analysis households have been divided into 10 equal groups (deciles) according to their gross income. Levels of access depend very strongly on income. In the financial year 2002-2003, levels of household access were lowest in the first two income groups (12 and 14 per cent respectively). From the second decile group onwards the levels increased rapidly with income, from 14 per cent to 86 per cent for households within the highest income decile group.

---

### Households with home access to the Internet, UK by gross income decile group: 2002-2003

---

2002-2003

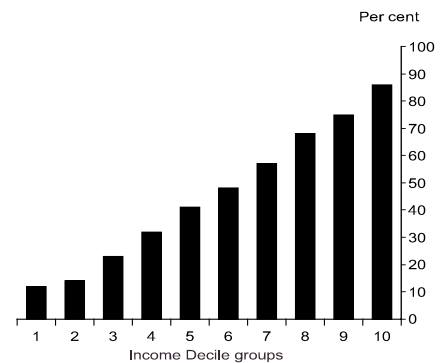
*Per cent*

Lowest ten per cent	12
Second decile group	14
Third decile group	23
Fourth decile group	32
Fifth decile group	41
Sixth decile group	48
Seventh decile group	57
Eighth decile group	68
Ninth decile group	75
Highest decile group	86
All households	46

---

Source - Expenditure and Food Survey

Home access to the Internet by gross income decile group, 2002-2003



## BACKGROUND NOTES

1. This First Release on Internet Access shows information about both households with home access to the Internet and about individuals' access to the Internet. This information comes from two different data sources. The main source for households is the Family Expenditure Survey (July 1999 to March 2001) and from April 2001 onwards, the Expenditure and Food Survey. The most recently available information from this survey covers the January to March 2003 quarter. The National Statistics Omnibus Survey is the source for individuals' access to the Internet. These data were last collected in April 2003 (See notes 4, 5 and 6).
2. The Expenditure and Food Survey (formerly the Family Expenditure Survey) is carried out by interviewing a nationally representative sample of households in the United Kingdom. About 1,700 households provide information each quarter, and estimates are subject to sampling variability, like those from all sample surveys. Quarterly estimates are provisional and may be revised when the survey's report *Family Spending* is published. The 95 per cent confidence intervals for the estimate of the proportion of households with home Internet access in the quarter January to March 2003 were 45 per cent to 50 per cent (the survey estimate was 47 per cent).
3. Results from the Family Expenditure Survey/Expenditure and Food Survey are based on data that have been weighted in two stages to reduce the effect of non-response bias and to match population estimates (for more information see *Family Spending* published in January 2003). These weights are based on the best population estimates available before the results of the 2001 Census were published. The 2001 Census results may change the estimates but the relevant data are not yet available.
4. The National Statistics Omnibus Survey is a multi-purpose survey developed by the Office for National Statistics for use by government departments, other public bodies, charities and academics. It provides a fast, cost-effective and reliable way of obtaining information on topics too brief to warrant a survey of their own, and for topics of immediate interest. The Omnibus Survey is carried out eight times a year and each month the survey runs a random sample of about 1,800 adults, aged 16 and over, living in private households throughout Britain. Each month's questionnaire covers a variety of topics, and results are available to users within three weeks of the end of fieldwork. (For general information on the National Statistics Omnibus Survey, contact 020-7533-5310, [omnibus@ons.gov.uk](mailto:omnibus@ons.gov.uk)).
5. Questions on individuals' access to the Internet were included in the National Statistics Omnibus Survey for the first time in July 2000 and are being placed on the survey on a quarterly basis. Figures from the National Statistics Omnibus Survey presented in this release are from April 2003. The results from the National Statistics Omnibus Survey are subject to

sampling error, like those from all sample surveys. The 95 per cent confidence intervals for the estimate of the proportion of individuals who had ever accessed the Internet in April 2003 were 58 per cent to 63 per cent (the survey estimate was 60 per cent).

6. The majority of data in this First Release are not directly comparable with data prior to April 2003. This is due to a recent review of the Internet access questions on the National Statistics Omnibus Survey. Changes have been made to achieve a more relevant and stable set of questions, and these will form the basis for individual data presented in this and future First Releases on Internet Access. The main changes include a shift of focus from ever accessed the Internet to use of the Internet in the three months prior to interview, and from personal to general use of the Internet. Other changes include new questions for non-users and the use of government services on the Internet. Where possible historic time series have been created for the new data. These will be available on StatBase on the National Statistics Website (<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/>). For further information, contact Elaine Chamberlain on 020-7533-6123, ([elaine.chamberlain@ons.gov.uk](mailto:elaine.chamberlain@ons.gov.uk)).
7. This release should not be confused with the *National Statistics First Release Internet Connectivity*. This is a separate release which presents an index of Internet connectivity showing changes in the levels of subscribers to the Internet (business and non-business). This information comes from the monthly survey of Internet Service Providers.
8. Details of the National Statistics policy governing the release of new data are available from the press office. Also available is a list of the names of those given pre-publication access to the contents of this release.
9. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference. © Crown Copyright 2003.