

2 July 2002

**Coverage**

United Kingdom  
(household access)

Great Britain  
(individual access)

**Theme**

Social and Welfare

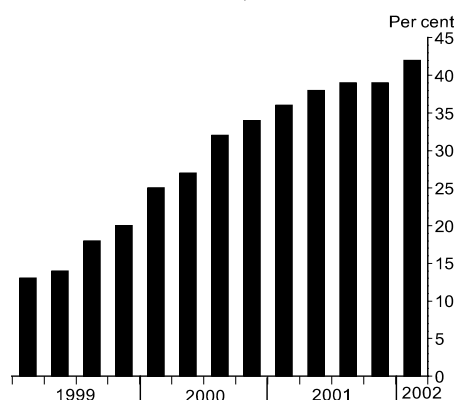
# Internet access

## Households and Individuals

Over the period January to March 2002 an estimated 10.7 million households in the UK could access the Internet from home, according to the Expenditure and Food Survey (EFS).

That amounts to over four in 10 (42 per cent) of all UK households.

Proportion of households with home access to the Internet, UK



An estimated fifty-five per cent of adults in Great Britain have accessed the Internet at some time according to figures from the April 2002 National Statistics Omnibus Survey. This is equivalent to approximately 25.2 million adults in Britain having accessed the Internet. In the month prior to the survey 46 per cent of adults had accessed the Internet.

### Households with home access to the Internet, UK (by quarter)

|                    | Number of households with access to the Internet (millions) | Percentage of households with access from home computers | Percentage of households with home access using all forms of access |
|--------------------|---|--|---|
| <b>1999</b>        |   |  |   |
| January - March    | 3.2   | 13   | ..  |
| April - June       | 3.5   | 14   | ..  |
| July - September   | 4.5   | 18   | ..  |
| October - December | 5.1   | 20   | ..  |
| <b>2000</b>        |   |  |   |
| January - March    | 6.5   | 25   | ..  |
| April - June       | 6.9   | 26   | 27  |
| July - September   | 7.8   | 30   | 32  |
| October - December | 8.6   | 33   | 34  |
| <b>2001</b>        |   |  |   |
| January - March    | 9.2   | 34   | 36  |
| April - June       | 9.5   | 35   | 38  |
| July - September   | 9.7   | 36   | 39  |
| October - December | 9.8   | 37   | 39  |
| <b>2002</b>        |   |  |   |
| January - March    | 10.7  | 40   | 42  |

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

.. data not available for these quarters

**Households with home access to the Internet**

Over the first quarter of 2002 an estimated 10.7 million households in the UK could access the Internet from home representing 42 per cent of all households. This is over three times the number three years earlier and is an increase of 6 percentage points from the 36 per cent reported in the first quarter of 2001.

Figures from April 2000 cover all forms of access including new technologies such as digital TV; earlier figures only include access from home computers. The table on page one shows that in the January to March 2002 quarter only a small percentage of households (two per cent) accessed the Internet exclusively using technologies other than home computers.

**Who has Internet access**

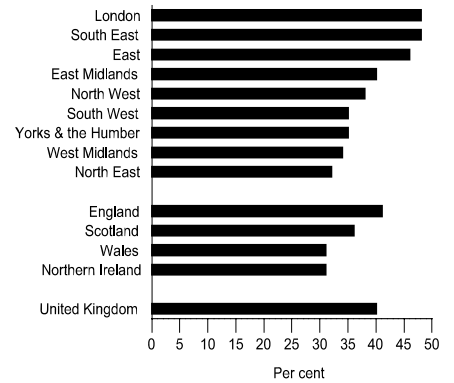
A more detailed analysis of Internet access has to be based on the full sample of the Expenditure and Food Survey (EFS) over a twelve month period. While 42 per cent of households had home access in the first three months of 2002, the average for the twelve months, April 2001 to March 2002, was 40 per cent, therefore this 40 per cent provides the base for the following household tables.



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

Levels of access vary greatly between different parts of the UK. In the financial year 2001-2002 the proportion of households with access was lowest in Wales (31 per cent), Northern Ireland (31 per cent) and the North East of England (32 per cent). Proportions were highest in London and the South East of England where nearly half of all households had Internet access (48 per cent).

**Home access to the Internet by Government Office Region and UK country, 2001-2002**



**Households with home access to the Internet by Government Office Region & UK country: 2001-2002**

2001-2002

Per cent

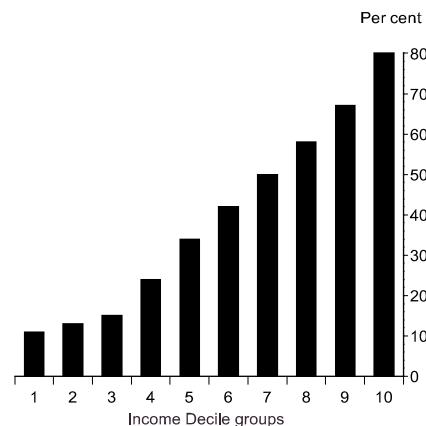
|                          |    |
|--------------------------|----|
| North East               | 32 |
| North West               | 38 |
| Yorkshire and the Humber | 35 |
| East Midlands            | 40 |
| West Midlands            | 34 |
| East                     | 46 |
| London                   | 48 |
| South East               | 48 |
| South West               | 35 |
| England                  | 41 |
| Wales                    | 31 |
| Scotland                 | 36 |
| Northern Ireland         | 31 |
| United Kingdom           | 40 |

Source - Expenditure and Food Survey

**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 2001-2002, levels of household access were lowest in the first three income groups (11, 13 and 15 per cent respectively). From the third decile group onwards the levels increased rapidly with income, from 15 per cent to 80 per cent for households within the highest income decile group.

**Home access to the Internet by gross income decile group, 2001-2002**



**Households with home access to the Internet, UK by gross income decile group: 2001-2002**

2001-2002

Per cent

|                      |    |
|----------------------|----|
| Lowest ten per cent  | 11 |
| Second decile group  | 13 |
| Third decile group   | 15 |
| Fourth decile group  | 24 |
| Fifth decile group   | 34 |
| Sixth decile group   | 42 |
| Seventh decile group | 50 |
| Eighth decile group  | 58 |
| Ninth decile group   | 67 |
| Highest decile group | 80 |
| All households       | 40 |

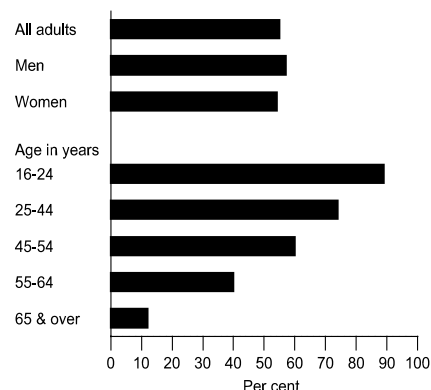
Source - Expenditure and Food Survey

### Individual Access to the Internet

Fifty-five per cent of adults in Britain have accessed the Internet at some time according to figures from the April 2002 National Statistics Omnibus Survey. This shows that the percentage of adults who had ever accessed the Internet by April 2002 was little different from February 2002. Although the April estimate of 55 per cent is slightly lower than the 56 per cent reported from the February 2002 Omnibus Survey, both estimates come from a sample survey which is subject to sampling error and therefore this change is likely to be due to sampling error rather than a fall in the number of people who have ever accessed the Internet.

Over 80 per cent of individuals who had accessed the Internet did so in the month prior to the survey (46 per cent of the adult population).

Proportion of men and women who have accessed the Internet at some time, 2001-2002



### Adults who have used the Internet by their characteristics

| Characteristics     | April 2002 |
|---------------------|------------|
| <i>Per cent</i>     |            |
| <b>All Adults</b>   | 55         |
| <b>Age in years</b> |            |
| 16 to 24            | 89         |
| 25 to 44            | 74         |
| 45 to 54            | 60         |
| 55 to 64            | 40         |
| 65 and over         | 12         |
| <b>Sex</b>          |            |
| Men                 | 57         |
| Women               | 54         |

Source - National Statistics Omnibus Survey

### How individuals access the Internet

The focus of the National Statistics Omnibus Survey is to collect information on individuals' personal use of the Internet. Five per cent of those adults who had accessed the Internet had done so exclusively for work and are therefore excluded from the subsequent figures presented here.

Individuals can now use a range of technologies to access the Internet. Computers continue to dominate as the preferred method for accessing the Internet. Ninety-nine per cent of individuals who used the Internet for personal use had done so using a computer. By April 2002 around 8 per cent of adults who had ever used the Internet had done so using a mobile phone. As in previous quarters around 5 per cent reported using Digital Television.

### **What people do on the Internet**

Among those who had accessed the Internet for private use just over three-quarters of adults used the Internet to find information about goods or services or used e-mail (76 per cent respectively), while nearly two-thirds used it for general browsing (61 per cent). Thirty-eight per cent of adults who had used the Internet ordered tickets, goods or services or searched for information related to education.

### **Internet Purchases**

Respondents who had already stated that they used the Internet for private use and who bought or ordered tickets, goods and services or used the Internet for personal banking, financial and investment activities were asked what goods they had bought on the Internet in the three months prior to interview. The most popular purchases were flights and holiday accommodation (35 per cent), books or magazines (24 per cent), tickets for events (23 per cent) and music or CDs (20 per cent). Apart from flights and holiday accommodation most Internet purchase categories have shown a decrease from the February 2002 Omnibus Survey figures. A possible reason for this is that the February Survey included the Christmas shopping period. A further 21 per cent of respondents who had previously bought goods on the Internet had not bought anything in the three months prior to interview. Of those who had purchased goods or services<sup>1</sup> in the last three months, 38 per cent reported spending £100 or less in the three months prior to interview, while 21 per cent spent over £500.

Respondent's main reasons for never having purchased over the Internet was that they had security concerns or that they preferred to shop in person (25 per cent). Although a quarter of adults stated that they had security concerns only four per cent of adults who had used the Internet for private use stated that they had actually experienced any security problems.

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<sup>1</sup> excluding financial investments

### People who do not use the Internet

Those adults who had never accessed the Internet (45 per cent) were asked why they had not used it. A wide range of reasons was given and respondents could give more than one answer if they wished. Forty-four per cent of those who had not used the Internet stated that they were not interested in using it, 25 per cent had no means of access to the Internet, 23 per cent felt they had no need to access the Internet while a further 20 per cent did not feel that they had the confidence or the skills required to use the Internet.

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

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| Reasons                           | April 2002 |
|-----------------------------------|------------|
| <i>Per cent</i>                   |            |
| Lack of interest                  | 44         |
| No computer or access             | 25         |
| No need                           | 23         |
| Lack of confidence / skills       | 20         |
| Do not want to use                | 11         |
| Feels too old                     | 8          |
| Cannot afford it                  | 7          |
| No time                           | 7          |
| Have not got round to it yet      | 6          |
| Poor opinion of the Internet      | 1          |
| Health problems make it difficult | 1          |
| Other reasons                     | 2          |

Source - National Statistics Omnibus Survey

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

Over half (56 per cent) of all individuals who have yet to access the Internet reflected a general lack of interest in accessing the Internet<sup>1</sup> when reporting their main or only reason (not shown in the table above) for not accessing the Internet.

In April 2002 72 per cent of adults who had never accessed the Internet stated that they were very unlikely to access the Internet in the next year. This core group represents nearly a third (32 per cent) of all adults.

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<sup>1</sup> no interest in the Internet, no need to use the Internet and do not want to use the Internet

## 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, one for households and the other for individuals. The Family Expenditure Survey (April 1998 to March 2001) and from April 2001 onwards, the Expenditure and Food Survey is the source for households. The most recently available information from this survey covers the January to March 2002 quarter and the 2001-2002 financial year. The National Statistics Omnibus Survey is the source for individuals' access to the Internet. These data were last collected in April 2002 (See notes 4 and 5).
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. The 95 per cent confidence intervals for the estimate of the proportion of households with home internet access in the quarter January to March 2002 were 40 per cent to 44 per cent (the survey estimate was 42 per cent).
3. A question on whether the household had access to the Internet has been included in the Family Expenditure Survey/Expenditure and Food Survey since April 1998. Up to March 2000 the question was asked only of households who had already said they had a home computer. New methods of accessing the Internet (such as digital television) were just beginning to be taken up then, so the levels of Internet access in the first quarter of 2000 may be slightly understated. From April 2000 all households have been asked about home access to the Internet and, if they have it, the means of access.
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 Amanda Wilmot on 020-7533 5321.)

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 2002. 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 2002 were 53 per cent to 57 per cent (the survey estimate was 55 per cent).
6. 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.
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