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Coverage United Kingdom (household access)
Great Britain (individual access)
Theme Social and Welfare

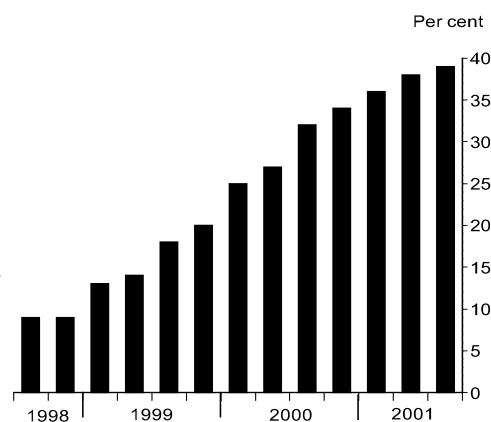
Internet access

Household and Individuals

Over the period July to September 2001 an estimated 9.7 million households in the UK could access the Internet from home, according to the Expenditure and Food Survey (EFS).

That amounts to almost four in 10 (39 per cent) of all UK households.

Proportion of households with home access to the Internet, UK



Over half (53 per cent) of adults in Great Britain have accessed the Internet at some time according to figures from the October 2001 National Statistics Omnibus Survey. This is equivalent to 24 million adults in Britain having accessed the Internet. In the month prior to the survey 43 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
1998			
July - September	2.3	9	..
October - December	2.2	9	..
1999			
January - March	3.2	13	..
April - June	3.5	14	..
July - September	4.5	18	..
October - December	5.1	20	..
2000			
January - March	6.5	25	..
April - June	6.9	26	27
July - September	7.8	30	32
October - December	8.6	33	34
2001			
January - March	9.2	34	36*
April - June	9.5 **	35	38
July - September	9.7	36	39

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

* this figure has been revised from the one published in the Internet Access First Release in September 2001 due to end year processing.
** this figure has been corrected from the one published in the Internet Access First Release in September 2001.

.. data not available for these quarters

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Households with home access to the Internet

Over the third quarter of 2001 an estimated 9.7 million households in the UK could access the Internet from home. That amounts to 39 per cent of all households and is over four times the number three years earlier.

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 July to September 2001 quarter only a small percentage of households (three 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 Family Expenditure Survey (FES)/Expenditure and Food Survey (EFS) over a twelve month period. Using a full year sample for this analysis means that while 39 per cent of households had home access in the third quarter of 2001, the average for the twelve months October 2000 to September 2001 was 37 per cent.



Differences between the countries and regions of the UK

Levels of access vary greatly between different parts of the UK. In October 2000 to September 2001 the proportion of households with access was lowest in Northern Ireland and the North East of England (26 per cent), followed by Wales (27 per cent). Proportions were highest in London and the South East of England (45 per cent).

Home access to the Internet by Government Office Region and UK country, October 2000 to September 2001



Households with home access to the Internet by Government Office Region & UK country: October 2000 to September 2001

	Oct 2000 to Sep 2001
<i>Per cent</i>	
North East	26
North West	36
Yorkshire and the Humber	31
East Midlands	40
West Midlands	35
East	41
London	45
South East	45
South West	38
England	39
Wales	27
Scotland	30
Northern Ireland	26
United Kingdom	37

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

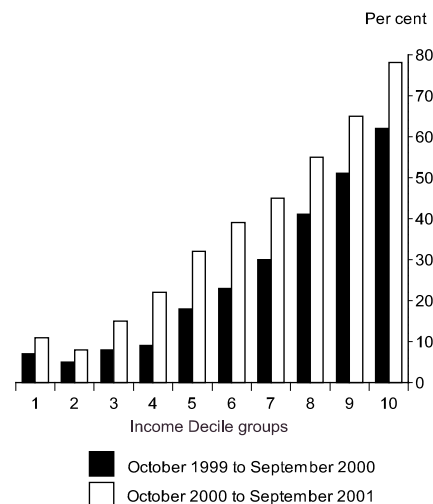


Differences between income groups

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 October 2000 to September 2001 levels of household access were lowest in the first three income groups (11, 8 and 15 per cent respectively). From the third decile group onwards the levels increased rapidly with income, from 15 per cent to 78 per cent for households within the highest income decile group.

The pattern of access over the period from October 2000 to September 2001 is broadly the same as in October 1999 to September 2000, with access to the Internet increasing for all income groups. The figures in the table below show the percentage point change between October 1999 to September 2000 and October 2000 to September 2001. The proportional increases - not shown in the table - represent the difference in growth rates of each decile group. Over this period the lowest five decile groups generally saw greater proportional increases than the highest five decile groups. While the fourth decile group more than doubled to 22 per cent, the highest income group increased by just over a quarter to 78 per cent.

Home access to the Internet by gross income decile group, October 1999 to September 2000 and October 2000 to September 2001



Households with home access to the Internet, UK by gross income decile group: October 1999 to September 2000 and October 2000 to September 2001

	Oct 1999 to Sep 2000	Oct 2000 to Sep 2001	Change in percentage
<i>Per cent</i>			
Lowest ten per cent	7	11	4
Second decile group	5	8	3
Third decile group	8	15	7
Fourth decile group	9	22	13
Fifth decile group	18	32	14
Sixth decile group	23	39	16
Seventh decile group	30	45	15
Eighth decile group	41	55	14
Ninth decile group	51	65	14
Highest decile group	62	78	16
All households	26	37	11

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

Individual Access to the Internet

Fifty-three per cent of adults in Britain have accessed the Internet at some time according to figures from the October 2001 National Statistics Omnibus Survey. This is equivalent to 24 million adults in Britain having accessed the Internet. This is a rise of eight percentage points from the figure a year ago and a small rise since the January, April and July 2001 Omnibus Surveys. Just over 80 per cent of individuals who had accessed the Internet did so in the month prior to the survey (43 per cent of the adult population).

As found in previous quarters, men were more likely to have used the Internet than women but the gap between them has closed considerably over the year. While the proportion of men accessing the Internet has increased marginally to 55 per cent, the proportion of women accessing the Internet has increased by 12 percentage points from 39 per cent to 51 per cent since October 2000.

The proportion of adults who had used the Internet decreases steadily with age from 87 per cent of those aged 16 to 24 years to 11 per cent of those aged 65 and over.

Over the year, Internet access has risen for all age groups although there was little change for people aged 65 and over.

Adults who have used the Internet by their characteristics

Characteristics	October 2000	October 2001
<i>Per cent</i>		
All Adults	45	53
Age in years		
16 to 24	82	87
25 to 44	60	69
45 to 54	50	58
55 to 64	28	37
65 and over	10	11
Gender		
Male	52	55
Female	39	51

Source - National Statistics Omnibus Survey

Proportion of adults who have accessed the Internet at some time by gender and age, October 2000 and October 2001



Uptake of Internet access

The Internet is continuing to attract new users, with nine per cent of those who have ever accessed the Internet, doing so for the first time within the last three months.

Within the last three years more women than men reported logging onto the Internet for the first time. Forty-two per cent of men who had accessed the Internet reported having first logged on over three years ago, compared with only 33 per cent of women who had been users for more than three years.

How individuals access the Internet

The focus of the National Statistics Omnibus Survey is to collect information on individuals' personal use of the Internet. Seven 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 of accessing the Internet. Ninety-eight per cent of individuals who used the Internet for personal use had done so using a computer. By October 2001 six per cent of adults who had ever used the Internet had done so using a phone with the same proportion having used Digital Television.

Where people use the Internet

While individuals continue to access the Internet for personal use from a wide range of locations, the respondent's own home continues to be the most popular location (78 per cent) followed by their workplace (34 per cent) or another person's home (32 per cent).

Locations adults have used to access the Internet (for personal use)

Place used to access the Internet	October 2000	October 2001
<i>Per cent</i>		
Respondent's own home	72	78
Another person's home	34	32
Respondent's workplace	38	34
A school, college, university or other educational institution	24	26
A public library	7	10
An Internet cafe or shop	9	10
A community or voluntary organisation	1	1
A government office	1	1
A post office	1	0
Somewhere else	2	3

Source - National Statistics Omnibus Survey

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

Frequency of access

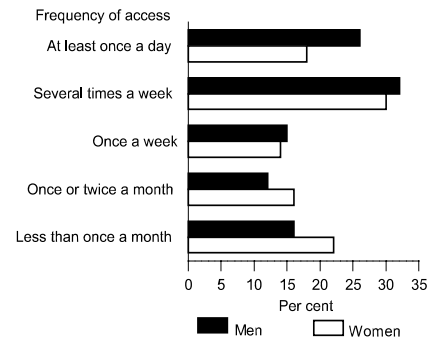
Respondents were also asked how frequently they used the Internet. Men still use the Internet more than women: 58 per cent of men who accessed the Internet for private use did so more than once a week (26 per cent at least once a day), while 48 per cent of women who had accessed the Internet for private use, did so more than once a week (18 per cent at least once a day). Conversely 22 per cent of women who accessed the Internet for personal use did so less than once a month; the equivalent figure for men was 16 per cent.

Respondents were also asked when they had last accessed the Internet. Sixty-eight per cent reported accessing the Internet within the last seven days and a further 11 per cent within the last month; just four per cent had last accessed the Internet over a year ago.

What people do on the Internet

Among those who had accessed the Internet nearly three-quarters of adults used the Internet to find information about goods or services (74 per cent) or used e-mail (73 per cent), while over half used it for general browsing (56 per cent).

Frequency of access (adults who have used Internet for personal use), October 2001



Adults who have accessed the Internet by purpose of Internet use (personal use only)

Activities	October 2000	October 2001
<i>Per cent</i>		
Finding information about goods / services	66	74
Using e-mail	73	73
General browsing or surfing	64	56
Finding information related to education	34	33
Buying or ordering tickets / goods / services	33	36
Personal banking/financial/investment activities	22	26
Looking for work	20	21
Downloading software, including games	21	19
Using chat rooms or sites	18	15
Playing or downloading music	17	16
Using or accessing government / official services	18	16
Other things	5	2

Source - National Statistics Omnibus Survey

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

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 (31 per cent), books or magazines (27 per cent), tickets for events (23 per cent) and music or CDs (19 per cent). A further 23 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 in the last three months, 48 per cent reported spending £100 or less in the three months prior to interview, while 15 per cent spent over £500.

Amount spent by respondents who had purchased goods or services on the Internet in the 3 months prior to interview (*personal use only*)

October 2001

Per cent

Total value of goods bought on the Internet
(in 3 months prior to interview)

£100 or less	48
£101 to £200	19
£201 to £500	16
Over £500	15
Don't know	1

Source - National Statistics Omnibus Survey

People's main reason for not purchasing over the internet was that they had no need (28 per cent) and they preferred to shop in person (25 per cent). Although a quarter of people had security concerns only four per cent of people who had used the Internet for private use had stated that they had actually experienced any security problems.

People who do not use the Internet

Those adults who had never accessed the Internet (47 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 per cent of those who had not used the Internet stated that they were not interested in using it, 24 per cent had no means of access to the Internet, 19 per cent felt they had no need to access the Internet while a further 18 per cent did not feel that they had the confidence or the skills required to use the Internet.

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

Reasons	October 2000	October 2001
<i>Per cent</i>		
Lack of interest	32	40
No need	22	19
Lack of confidence / skills	21	18
No computer or access	16	24
Cannot afford it	8	7
Feels too old	8	7
No time	5	5
Do not want to use	4	12
Have not got round to it yet	3	6
Poor opinion of the Internet	2	2
Health problems make it difficult	1	2
Other reasons	3	2

Source - National Statistics Omnibus Survey

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

The proportion of all adults who consider it very unlikely they will access the Internet in the next year has stayed fairly constant: between 34 and 37 per cent over the period July 2000 to October 2001. Since October 2000 this core group make up an increasing proportion of those who have never accessed the Internet. In October 2000 66 per cent of those who had never accessed the Internet stated that they were very unlikely to access the Internet in the next year compared with 72 per cent in October 2001.

¹ 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 July to September 2001 quarter. The National Statistics Omnibus Survey is the source for individuals' access to the Internet. These data were last collected in October 2001 (See note 4).
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 July to September 2001 was 37 to 41 per cent (the survey estimate was 39 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 for 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 further details on the National Statistics Omnibus Survey, contact Amanda Wilmott on 020-7533 5310.)

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. 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 are 51 per cent to 55 per cent (the survey estimate was 53 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.
7. 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 2001.