

Internet Access - Households and Individuals, 2012



Coverage: **GB**

Date: **24 August 2012**

Geographical Area: **Country**

Key points

- In 2012, 21 million households in Great Britain (80 per cent) had Internet access, compared with 19 million (77 per cent) in 2011.
- The number of households with Internet access has increased by 7.1 million (23 percentage points) since 2006, when directly comparable records began.
- In 2012, 93 per cent of households with Internet access used a fixed broadband connection, of which 30 per cent used a cable or fibre optic connection.
- Of the 5.2 million households without Internet access, the most common reason for not having a connection was that they 'did not need it' (54 per cent).
- In 2012, 67 per cent of adults in Great Britain used a computer every day.

Overview

This release looks both at how households access the Internet and adults' use of computers. It will be useful for those interested in how people connect to the Internet in their homes and help inform debate on digital and social exclusion.

This is a partial release of the Internet Access 2012 Households and Individuals statistical bulletin. It contains estimates of household Internet access and adults' use of computers, but does not contain the estimates of adults' use of the Internet that have been included in this publication in previous years. These estimates have been delayed until February 2013.

This delay is due to a data collection problem which is believed to have been caused by a question wording change. A complete Internet Access 2012 Households and Individuals publication will be made available on the ONS website in February 2013.

The results in this bulletin are derived from the Opinions and Lifestyles Survey. On 15 August 2012, ONS published the latest quarterly statistics on adults who have ever or never used the Internet as part of the Internet Access Quarterly Update Q2 2012. The quarterly estimates are derived from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and are not directly comparable with this release because they focus on individual rather than household use of the Internet.

ONS first collected statistics on household Internet access in 1998. Since then a number of changes have been made to the survey. Directly comparable results are available from 2006 onwards; therefore comparisons over time in this release are made with 2006 where possible. Furthermore, some questions are not asked every year, therefore for some estimates it is not possible to present a complete time series.

User engagement

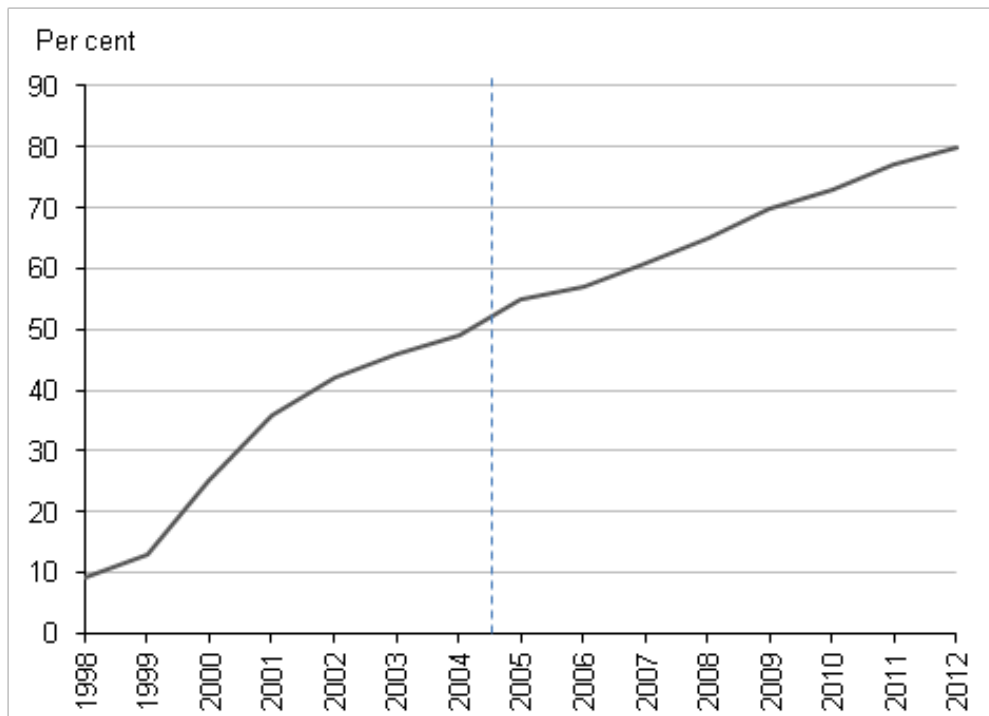
We are constantly aiming to improve this release and its associated commentary. We would welcome any feedback you might have; please contact us via email: esociety@ons.gsi.gov.uk or telephone David Matthews on +44 (0)1633 456756.

Household Internet access

In 2012, 21 million households in Great Britain had an Internet connection. This represented 80 per cent of households, up from 77 per cent in 2011 (a 3 percentage point increase) and 57 per cent in 2006 (a 23 percentage point increase).

There were 5.2 million households in Great Britain without Internet access in 2012, compared with 10.3 million in 2006. Figure 1 clearly shows that Internet access by households has increased dramatically since ONS first began collecting these statistics in 1998.

There were changes in the survey source, periodicity and coverage over the period 1998 to 2005; consequently these estimates (from 1998 to 2005) are not directly comparable with the annual estimates from 2006 onwards.

Figure 1: Households with Internet access**Notes:**

1. Base: UK households from 1998 to 2004. Great Britain households from 2005 to 2012.

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Internet access varies depending on household composition. The majority of households with children have an Internet connection (95 per cent). This is the same figure as households made up of three or more adults (includes homes of multiple occupancies such as student accommodation).

Access to the Internet by single adult households varies considerably depending on age. Where the adult is aged 65 years or more, only 36 per cent of households have an Internet connection. In contrast, 76 per cent of households have an Internet connection where the adult is aged 16 to 64 years.

Table 1: Household Internet access by household composition, 2012

	Have Internet access		No Internet access	
	Per cent	Millions	Per cent	Millions
1 adult aged 16 to 64	76	3.7	24	1.1
1 adult aged 65+	36	1.2	64	2.2
2 adults aged 16 to 64	93	4.6	7	0.3
2 adults, 1 at least aged 65 or more	69	2.3	31	1.0
3+ adults all ages	95	2.8	5	0.1
Households with children	95	6.4	5	0.3
All households	80	21.0	20	5.2

Table notes:

1. Base: Households in Great Britain.
2. Estimates may not sum to related totals due to independently rounded components

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Type of Internet connection

The way households connect to the Internet has changed considerably in recent years. In 2006, 31 per cent of households made use of a dial-up connection over a standard telephone line. Six years on and dial-up Internet has almost entirely disappeared from the Great Britain Internet map, with just 1 per cent of households still connecting this way. Therefore, for the vast majority of households an Internet connection now means a broadband connection over a DSL (Digital Subscriber Line), cable or fibre optic line.

Table 2: Household Internet access by fixed connection

Year	Per cent	
	Fixed Broadband ³	Dial-up
2006	69	31
2007	84	16
2008	86	14
2009	90	10
2010	n/a	n/a
2011	93	2
2012	93	1

Table notes:

1. Base: Households in Great Britain with Internet access.
2. n/a 2010 estimates not available due to data quality issues.
3. Fixed broadband includes connection by a household via DSL, cable or fibre optic line.

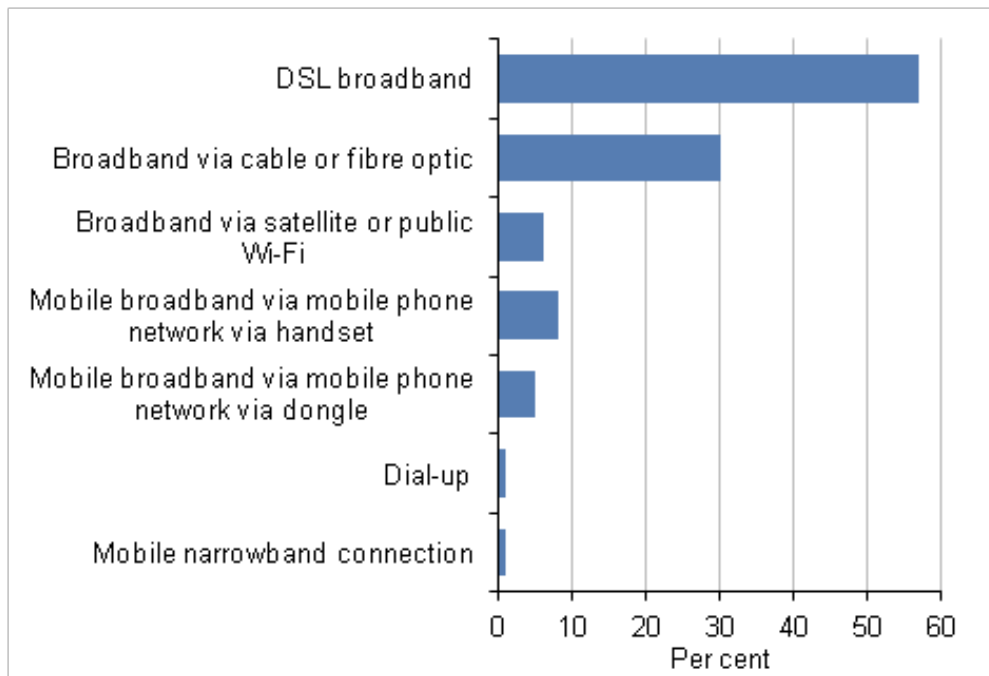
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DSL continued to be the most popular broadband connection in 2012, with 57 per cent of households with an Internet connection accessing this way. A further 30 per cent connected via cable or fibre optic. However, recent investment in infrastructure for high speed fibre optic broadband may lead to the 2012 estimate of 30 per cent increasing in the coming years as households demand faster Internet speeds.

Broadband over satellite or public Wi-Fi was used by 6 per cent of households. Mobile broadband, via a mobile phone handset or dongle, was used by 8 per cent and 5 per cent of households respectively.

Figure 2: Household Internet access by connection, 2012**Notes:**

1. Base: Households in Great Britain with Internet access

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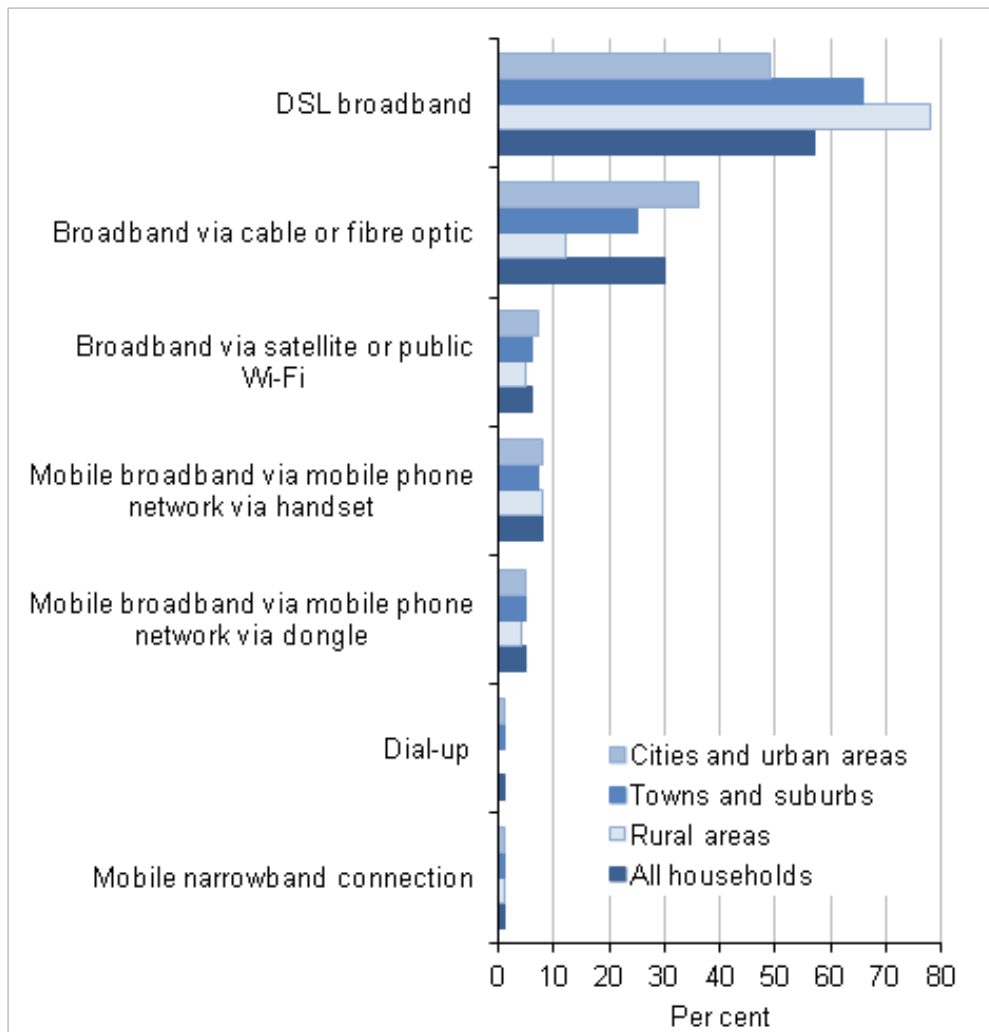
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Type of Internet connection by location

Due to the size of the survey sample it is not possible to provide accurate estimates of household Internet access by location, however, comparisons between the aggregate groups of rural areas, towns and suburbs, and cities and urban areas are possible.

The 2012 estimates show that geography has a significant effect on how households connect to the Internet. DSL broadband was the dominant type of connection in all communities. In rural areas nearly eight in ten households (78 per cent) connected to the Internet using a DSL broadband connection and 12 per cent via cable or fibre optic broadband.

However, for households in cities and urban areas, DSL broadband was less dominant with only 49 per cent connecting this way and 36 per cent connecting via cable or fibre optic broadband. This suggests, unsurprisingly, that fibre optic technology is being rolled out to urban communities earlier than rural areas as it can reach more people for the initial investment.

Figure 3: Household Internet connection by location, 2012**Notes:**

1. Base: Households in Great Britain with Internet access.
2. Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents can give more than one answer.
3. Cities and urban areas are defined as densely populated areas. Towns and suburbs are defined as intermediate population density areas. Rural areas are defined as thinly populated areas.

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Reasons for no household Internet access

Of the 5.2 million households without Internet access, the majority said that they didn't have a connection because they 'did not need it', at 54 per cent. This is compared with 34 per cent in 2006. While this may suggest that many households without the Internet are actively choosing not to subscribe, there are still a large minority who state that barriers prevent them from connecting to the Internet.

Approximately, one in five households (22 per cent) indicated that they did not have the Internet due to a lack of computer skills. Further barriers included equipment costs and access costs being high at 15 per cent and 14 per cent of households without Internet access respectively.

Table 3: Reasons for households not having Internet access

	Per cent				
	2006	2008	2010	2011	2012
Have access to the Internet elsewhere	10	9	8	8	8
Don't need Internet (not useful, not interesting, etc)	34	33	39	50	54
Equipment costs too high	21	15	18	19	15
Access costs too high (telephone, broadband subscription)	16	11	15	13	14
Lack of skills	n/a	14	21	21	22
Privacy or security concerns	8	3	4	5	4
Broadband Internet is not available in our area	n/a	n/a	n/a	-	-
Physical or sensorial disability	3	1	2	3	3
Lack of knowledge or confidence to use the Internet	34	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Concern about harmful material etc	4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Other	13	18	13	18	15

Table notes:

1. Base: Households in Great Britain without Internet access.
2. Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents can give more than one answer.
3. These questions were not asked in 2007 or 2009.
4. n/a Response option not collected this year.

5. - Data too small to display.

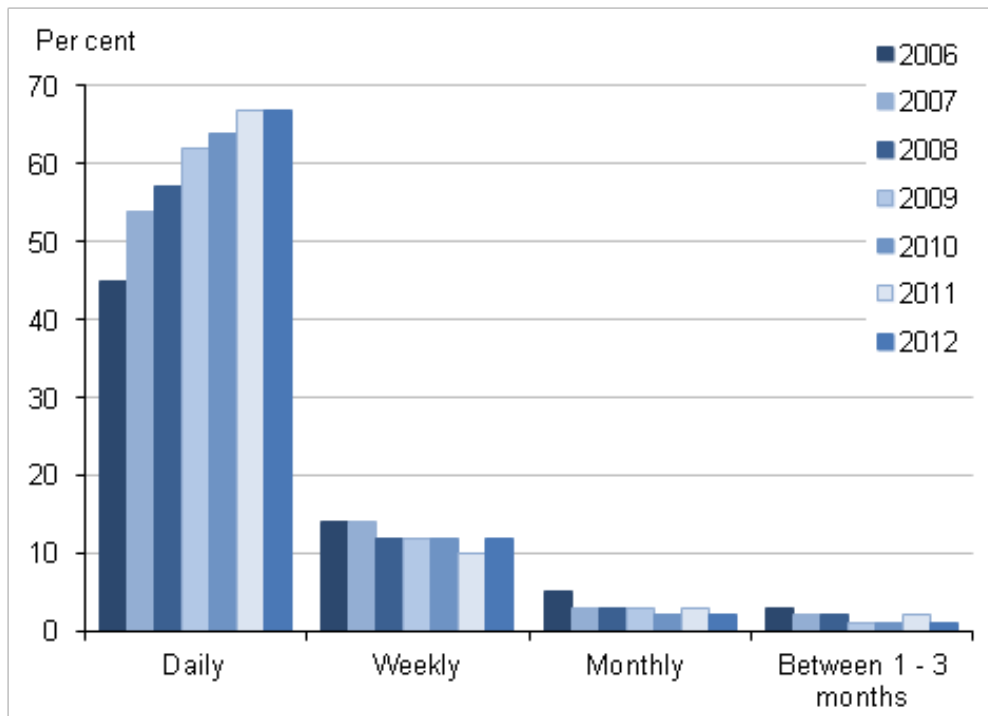
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Adults' use of computers

For the first time this release contains estimates of adults' use of computers to complement the Internet Access estimates. In 2012, 67 per cent of adults in Great Britain used a computer every day, up from 45 per cent in 2006 (a 22 percentage point increase). A further 12 per cent used computers weekly in 2012, down 2 percentage points from the 2006 estimate of 14 per cent.

Figure 4: Frequency of computer use



Notes:

1. Base: Adults (aged 16+) in Great Britain

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A majority of adults in all age groups apart from the oldest (those aged 65 years and over), used a computer every day. While 82 per cent of adults aged 16 to 24, and 63 per cent of those aged 55 to 64 used a computer every day, only 29 per cent of those aged 65 and over did so. This trend may be explained by working age. For example, adults aged 65 and over are less likely to be employed than those in younger age groups and are therefore less likely to use computers for work on a daily basis.

Table 4: Adults who used a computer in the last three months, by frequency of use and age group, 2006 and 2012

	Per cent							
	Daily		Weekly		Monthly		Between 1 - 3 months	
	2006	2012	2006	2012	2006	2012	2006	2012
16-24	63	82	15	12	7	2	3	-
25-44	62	83	16	10	4	2	2	1
45-54	56	71	13	14	5	2	3	1
55-64	36	63	17	13	5	2	3	2
65 +	9	29	8	11	3	4	3	3
All	45	67	14	12	5	2	3	1

Table notes:

1. Base: Adults (aged 16+) in Great Britain.
2. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to independently rounded components.

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Background notes**1. Key issues specific to this bulletin**

This statistical bulletin presents information about households with access to the Internet and adults' use of computers. This is a partial release of the 2012 Internet Access Households and Individuals estimates, because it does not contain the estimates of adults' use of the Internet that have been included in this publication in previous years. These estimates have been delayed until February 2013. This delay is due to a data collection problem which is believed to have been caused by a question wording change. A complete Internet Access 2012 Households and Individuals publication will be made available on the ONS website in February 2013.

The source of the information contained within this statistical bulletin, is the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, formerly known as the Opinions Survey. The Opinions and Lifestyle Survey is a multi-purpose survey developed by the ONS 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 their own survey. The Opinions Survey is carried out each month on a random sample of about 1,800 adults, aged 16 and over, living in private households throughout Great Britain. After accounting for refusals and where no contact can be made, approximately 1,100 interviews are conducted each month. Further information about the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey is available on the ONS website. For general information on the survey, contact telephone +44 (0)1633 455810, email: opinions@ons.gov.uk.

Responses were collected in January, February and March 2012. The annual release of these estimates began in 2006. Internet Access results were originally published from 1998 onwards. Between 1998 and 2006, the results were published more frequently, but were based on smaller sample sizes. There were also various changes made to the survey in this earlier period of collecting Internet Access data, such as the survey vehicle used to collect the data. Throughout this statistical bulletin, time series comparisons are predominantly made with 2006, when the annual Internet Access estimates were first published, which are considered to be directly comparable. Some historical Internet Access estimates published before 2006 are available on the ONS website. However, comparing estimates in this release with those from prior to 2006 should be made with caution due to the changes to the survey.

The estimates in the 2012 survey relate to Great Britain. For the period 2006 to 2010, this bulletin was published on a UK basis. Northern Ireland has not been sampled since the 2008 survey, but was included in the survey estimation process for the 2009 and 2010 results, which meant UK estimates were also produced for 2009 and 2010. Northern Ireland was not included in the estimation process for 2011; therefore the coverage of the survey was changed in 2011 from UK to Great Britain. All estimates in this bulletin have been reworked to be on a Great Britain basis, except for the historical estimates of household Internet access (Figure 1) collected prior to 2006.

The methodology used for producing the Internet Access estimates is explained in the Opinions Survey Quality report. As in previous years, the Isles of Scilly and the Scottish Highlands (North of the Caledonian Canal) and Islands were not sampled but are included in the estimation.

The definition of location used in Figure 3 (reference Table 4), Household Internet Access by location, is based on the Eurostat classification 'Degree of Urbanisation'. The definition of this classification is available on the Eurostat website.

- Rural areas are defined as thinly populated areas.
- Towns and suburbs are defined as intermediate population density areas.
- Cities and urban areas are defined as densely populated areas.

2. Common pitfalls in interpreting series

The statistics presented in this release should not be confused with the quarterly estimates of adults who have ever or never used the Internet. These are published in an Internet Access Quarterly Update statistical bulletin. These quarterly estimates are derived from the Labour Force Survey which has a much larger sample than the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey.

References to 2012 in this release relate to data collected in interviews between January and March 2012.

3. Revisions

There are no revisions to estimates previously published.

4. Users and uses of the data

[Eurostat](#) is the principal user of the statistics. The UK provides statistics to Eurostat measuring households' and individuals' use of the Internet and other forms of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in accordance with the ICT Regulation. The Internet Access estimates are used to provide information that is consistent with other European Union (EU) member states, as part of progress towards measuring EU benchmarking indicators. These EU indicators compare the development and use of ICT in the EU member states, and help to provide a better understanding of the adoption of ICT and the Internet by households and individuals at an EU level.

ICT is considered as critical for improving the competitiveness of European industry and, more generally, to meet the demands of society and the economy. Broadband is considered to be important when measuring access to, and use of, the Internet. Broadband offers users the possibility to rapidly transfer large volumes of data and keep access lines open. The take-up of broadband is a key ICT policy-making indicator. Widespread access to the Internet via broadband is regarded as essential for the development of advanced services on the Internet, such as e-business, e-government or e-learning. Since 2005, the EU policy framework for ICT has been the i2010 initiative called '[A European information society for growth and employment](#)' which seeks to boost efficiency throughout the EU economy by means of the wider use of ICT. Having undergone a mid-term review, an updated [i2010](#) strategy was presented in April 2008, addressing key challenges for the period 2008-2010.

Within the UK there is also wide interest in the statistics from researchers, public bodies, charities and academics.

Some of the data that are usually included in this release, relating to how adults use the Internet, are not yet available. These will be published in February 2013. Therefore, users may be unable to use this release for their normal purposes, until the remaining data are published in February 2013.

Estimates relating to adults' use of computers have been included in this release for the first time, to complement the estimates relating to Internet Access.

Do you make use of our estimates of annual Internet Access and use of computers? If yes, we would like to hear from you (esociety@ons.gsi.gov.uk) and understand how you make use of these statistics. This may enable us, in the future, to better meet your needs as a user.

5. Coherence

The results published in this annual bulletin focus on households with Internet access and adults' use of computers. The results complement the estimates contained in the Internet Access Quarterly Update, which was last published on 15 August 2012. The Internet Access Quarterly Update focuses on adults who have ever or never used the Internet, whereas this annual bulletin contains a range of information about household Internet access.

ONS's annual survey of [ICT and e-commerce activity of business](#) provides information on business e-commerce and ICT activity of UK businesses. The 2011 survey results are due to be published in November 2012.

6. Sampling variability

The Opinions and Lifestyle Survey is carried out by interviewing a nationally representative sample of households in Great Britain. About 1,800 households are sampled each month and estimates are subject to sampling variability, as are those from all sample surveys.

The confidence interval tables, below, show estimated 95 per cent confidence intervals for selected estimates relating to Internet Access and computer use. The estimates come from survey data and so have a degree of statistical error associated with them. Confidence intervals are an indication of the reliability of the estimate; the smaller the interval, the more reliable the estimate is likely to be. With regards to '95 per cent confidence intervals', we mean that if we repeated our survey 100 times, 95 per cent of the time (95 times out of 100), the true population value would fall within the range of these confidence intervals.

Confidence Interval Table 1: Household Internet use by household type, 2012

Per cent

	Lower limit	Survey estimate	Upper limit
All households	78	80	82
1 adult aged 16 to 64	72	76	80
1 adult aged 65+	31	36	41
2 adults aged 16 to 64	91	93	95
2 adults, 1 at least aged 65 or more	64	69	74
3+ adults all ages	92	95	98
Households with children	93	95	97

Table notes:

1. Base: Households in Great Britain.

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Confidence Interval Table 2: Household Internet connection, 2012

Per cent

	Lower limit	Survey estimate	Upper limit
DSL broadband	55	57	59
Broadband via cable or fibre optic etc	28	30	32
Broadband via satellite or public Wi-Fi	5	6	7
Dial up access over a normal telephone line or ISDN	1	1	1

Table notes:

1. Base: Households in Great Britain with Internet access

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Confidence Interval Table 3: Reasons for no Internet access, 2012

Per cent

	Lower limit	Survey estimate	Upper limit
Have access to the Internet elsewhere	6	8	10
Don't need Internet (not useful, not interesting, etc)	49	54	59
Equipment costs too high	12	15	18
Access costs too high (telephone, broadband subscription)	11	14	17
Lack of skills	18	22	26
Privacy or security concerns	2	4	6
Broadband Internet is not available in our area	0	0	0
Physical or sensorial disability	1	3	5
Other	12	15	18

Table notes:

1. Base: Households in Great Britain without Internet access

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Confidence Interval Table 4: When adults last used a computer, 2012

Per cent

	Lower limit	Survey estimate	Upper limit
Within the last 3 months	80	82	84
Between 3 months and a year ago	1	2	3
More than 1 year ago	2	3	4
Never used one	13	14	15

Table notes:

1. Base: Adults (aged 16+) in Great Britain

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The larger the sample that is used for a particular estimate, the narrower the confidence interval will be. Estimates at Great Britain level (e.g. Great Britain households with Internet Access) will have a larger sample than estimates of sub-groups of the population (e.g. reasons for not having Internet access, broken down by number of adults and children in the household). Therefore the quality of estimate of the whole population should be higher than that for sub-groups.

The voluntary nature of the survey means that people who do not wish to take part in the survey can refuse to do so. The sample is designed to ensure that the results of the survey represent the population. The risk of the survey not being representative is likely to increase with every refusal or non-contact with a sampled household (survey non-response). One measure of the quality of survey results is therefore the response rate.

The response rate for 2012 was 60 per cent, the rate of refusals was 30 per cent and 9 per cent of the sample could not be contacted.

7. Calibration

Weights are used in the analysis of the Opinions Survey data, for both households and for individuals. Each respondent to the survey is assigned a weight which is the number of adults or households that this person represents. These weights are derived by calibration, using population estimates for age group by sex and region. The weights are used to improve the accuracy of results by compensating for different response rates for different groups and by reducing the random variation in estimates. For the household analysis, the weights are influenced by the characteristics of all the members of the household.

As the responses are weighted to population estimates, weighted totals of individuals by age group, sex and region from the survey are guaranteed to match the fixed population totals. However, there are no fixed population totals for the numbers of households, and therefore, estimates relating to households are survey estimates, which are subject to sample variation as are the other survey estimates.

8. Rounding

Percentages in the data tables may not sum to 100 or agree with related totals, due to independently rounded components.

9. International comparison

A comparable survey is run in all EU countries of the European Union (EU) and also in some non-EU countries. The measurement of household Internet access and adults' use of the Internet is under continuing review and development. The Statistical Office of the European Commission (Eurostat) plays a leading role in this and each year Eurostat leads a process whereby the data requirements for the Internet Access survey in all EU countries are reviewed and updated. Comparative data for EU countries can be found on the Eurostat [website](#).

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12. Special events

ONS has recently published commentary, analysis and policy on 'Special Events' which may affect statistical outputs. For full details go to the [Special Events](#) page on the ONS website.

Publication policy

13. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available by visiting www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html or from the Media Relations Office email: media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk

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