



The Communications Market in Wales

4 Internet and web-based content

4.1 Internet and web-based content

4.1.1 Recent developments in Wales

UK Digital Champion

In June, Martha Lane Fox was appointed by the Prime Minister as the UK Digital Champion.²⁵ Her role includes encouraging as many people as possible to get online in the lifetime of this Parliament, as well advising the government on how efficiencies can best be realised through the online delivery of public services.

In July, Race Online 2012, headed by Martha Lane Fox, launched a manifesto²⁶ for a 'Networked Nation'. The manifesto noted that one fifth of the population in the UK, 10 million people, are missing out on consumer savings, access to vital information and educational success as a result of not being online.

The manifesto called for urgent action to get millions more online by the end of 2012, with key roles for government, industry and charities and the aim "to get everyone of working age online by the end of this Parliament, so that everyone who then retires will have skills to enjoy benefits of the web"²⁷.

Race Online 2012 aims to sign up 10,000 partner organisations and individual advocates to help achieve its goal of making the UK one of the first developed countries in the world to achieve near-total internet use by 2012.²⁸

Media literacy in Wales

In Wales, Ofcom's Media Literacy Network has been working to promote internet take-up and wider media literacy programmes and has supported a number of internet safety and security initiatives to drive this agenda forward.

Digital inclusion framework

The Welsh Assembly Government is in the process of consulting on its Digital Inclusion Framework²⁹, which sets out how a partnership approach across the public, private and third sectors could help tackle the barriers for the 900,000 digitally excluded in Wales. The Framework explains the considerable benefits, individually and collectively, of people going online. It also identifies the key groups of excluded people, the difficulties they face and what steps can be taken to start addressing the issues. This framework will form part of the wider Digital Wales strategy, to be unveiled later this year.

4.1.2 Broadband take-up

The growth of the internet has provided another platform over which content can be delivered to consumers. As a result of the widespread availability and take-up of broadband, the majority of households can now receive content in this way (though by no means all do). In recent years the internet has had a significant impact on how content can be consumed.

²⁵ <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/statements-and-articles/2010/06/letter-of-appointment-to-martha-lane-fox-52045>

²⁶ <http://raceonline2012.org/manifesto>

²⁷ http://raceonline2012.org/sites/default/files/resources/manifesto_for_a_networked_nation_-_press_release.pdf

²⁸ <http://raceonline2012.org/why-get-involved>

²⁹ <http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/housingcommunity/digitinclusion/?lang=en>

For example:

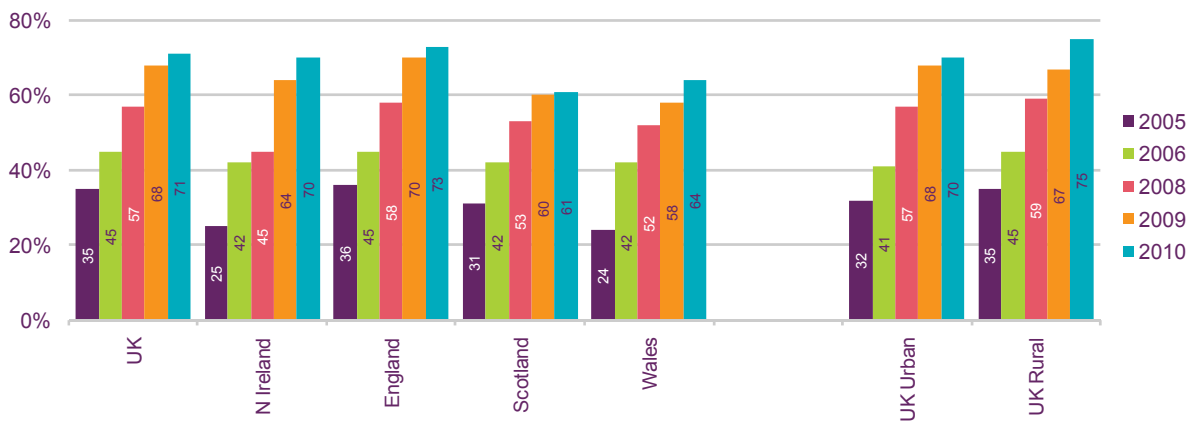
- It allows **existing services** such as some government services, banking and other information services to be delivered to citizens and consumers online; and
- it has allowed **new, specifically internet-based forms of content** to emerge (such as social networking sites, blogs and other user-generated content).

Broadband take-up increased in Wales in 2009 to 64% of individuals

Broadband take-up in Wales has risen by six percentage points in the past year, to 64%. Along with Northern Ireland, this was the largest increase among the nations. There were significant regional variations in broadband penetration within Wales. Figure 5.13 on page 115 shows that take-up varies from 58% in South East Wales to 70% in North / Mid Wales. Within these regions there are variations in take-up and availability; even in areas with high overall take-up there will be instances of not-spots (see section 1.4).

Broadband take-up in Wales (64%) is lower than across the UK as a whole (71%). It is lower than in England (73%) and Northern Ireland (70%), but higher than in Scotland (61%).

Figure 4.1 Broadband take-up trend, Q1 2005-Q1 2010



Source: Ofcom research, Q1 2010

Base: All adults aged 15+ (n = 9013 UK, 1075 Wales, 5709 England, 1468 Scotland, 761 Northern Ireland, 7511 UK urban, 1502 UK rural)

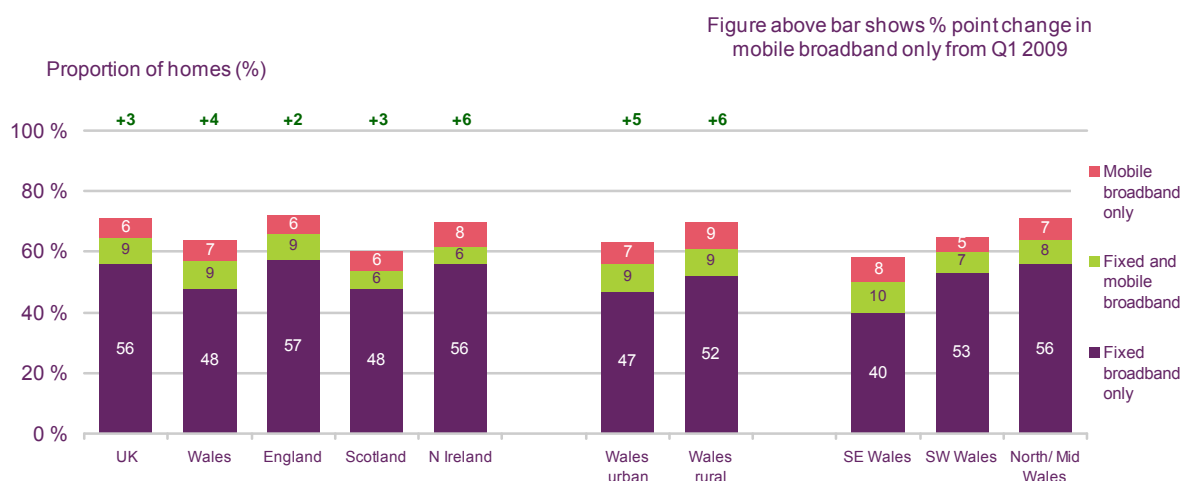
QE9. Which of these methods does your household use to connect to the internet at home?

During 2009, mobile broadband take-up in Wales rose by five percentage points (see 'Fast Facts') as consumers increasingly turned to mobile networks to access the internet (typically by using a 3G mobile USB modem, or 'dongle', plugged into a laptop PC). In Q1 2010, 16% of households in Wales claimed to access the internet via mobile broadband, marginally above the figure for the UK as a whole (15%) (Figure 4.2).

An increasing proportion (now four in ten) of mobile broadband consumers in Wales use this as their sole means of accessing the internet. However, the majority of mobile broadband users also have a fixed-line broadband connection at home. There was no significant difference between the claimed take-up of mobile broadband in rural and urban regions, despite the fact that high-speed 3G mobile networks are more typically available in urban areas.

Broadband accounts for the overwhelming majority of internet connections. Just 1% of internet users in Wales used dial-up for their home internet connection in Q1 2010.

Figure 4.2 Broadband take-up, by method of access



Source: Ofcom research, Q1 2010

Base: All adults aged 15+ (n = 9013 UK, 1075 Wales, 5709 England, 1468 Scotland, 761 Northern Ireland, 810 Wales urban, 265 Wales rural, 348 South East Wales, 360 South West Wales, 367 North/ Mid Wales)

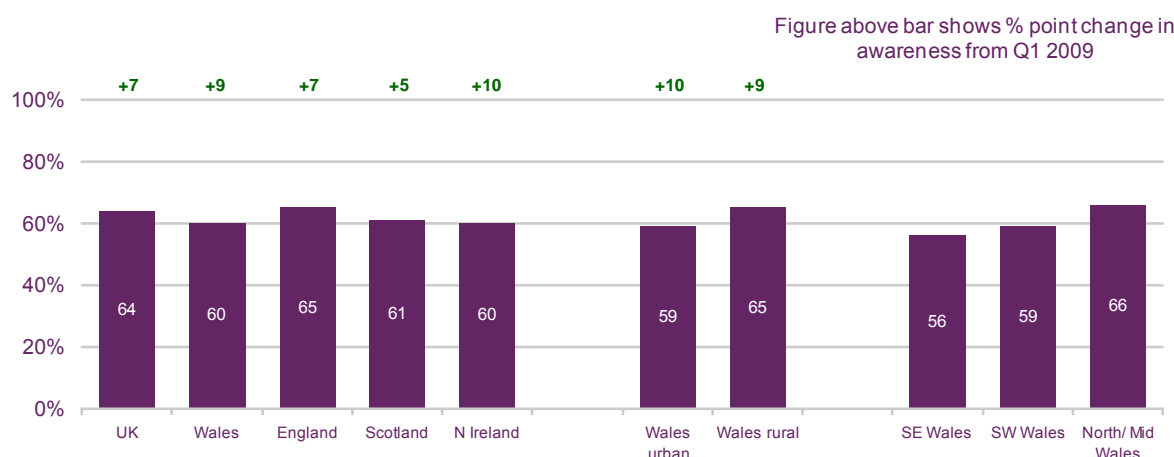
QE9. Which of these methods does your household use to connect to the internet at home?

Awareness of the availability of mobile broadband is low in Wales

Across the UK, awareness of mobile broadband was lowest in Wales and Northern Ireland – 60% of adults compared to the UK average of 64% (Figure 4.3). This is slightly surprising since mobile broadband take-up is highest in Wales. Over the year levels of awareness have increased more in Wales and Northern Ireland than in England and Scotland.

Within Wales, awareness was higher in rural areas than in urban areas, despite urban areas having wider availability of high-speed networks that can support mobile broadband.

Figure 4.3 Awareness of mobile broadband



Source: Ofcom research, Q1 2010

Base: All adults aged 15+ (n = 9013 UK, 1075 Wales, 5709 England, 1468 Scotland, 761 Northern Ireland, 810 Wales urban, 265 Wales rural, 348 South East Wales, 360 South West Wales, 367 North/ Mid Wales)

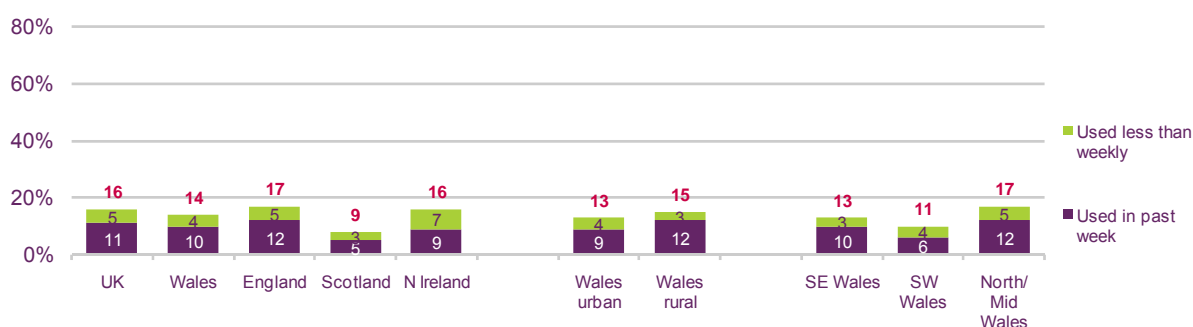
QE21. Before now, were you aware that you can access broadband services on your PC or laptop by using a mobile network?

Using a mobile phone handset to access the internet is most popular in North / Mid Wales

The proportion of adults who claim to have accessed the internet using a mobile phone was slightly lower in Wales (14%) than in the rest of the UK (16%) in Q1 2010, and fell by four percentage points between Q1 2009 and Q1 2010.

There were variations in use across Wales; in North / Mid Wales 17% of people claimed to use their mobiles to access the internet, compared to 11% in the South West.

Figure 4.4 Proportion of adults who have used a mobile phone to access the internet



Source: Ofcom research, Q1 2010

Base: All adults aged 15+ (n = 9013 UK, 1075 Wales, 5709 England, 1468 Scotland, 761 Northern Ireland, 810 Wales urban, 265 Wales rural, 348 South East Wales, 360 South West Wales, 367 North/ Mid Wales)

QD28A-B. Which, if any, of the following activities, other than making and receiving calls, do you use your mobile for?/ And, which of these activities have you used your mobile for in the last week?

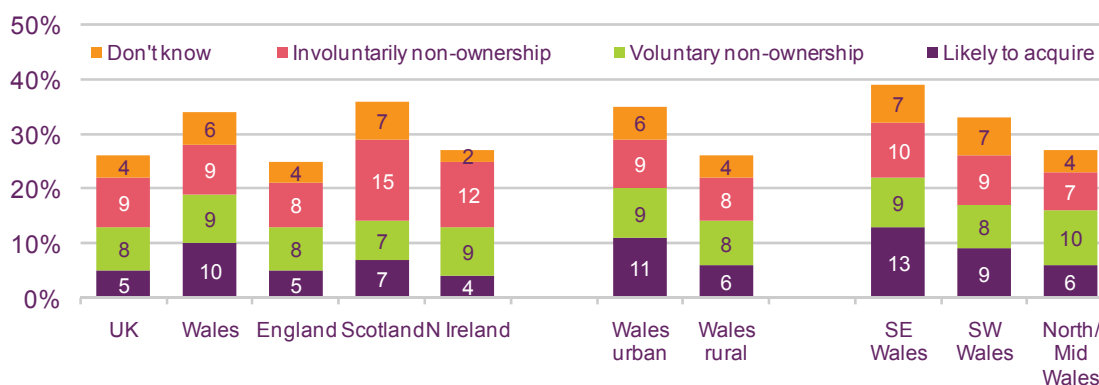
Non-ownership of broadband

There are many reasons for not having the internet, and these fall into two broad categories: voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary non-ownership is when potential consumers do without services because they perceive they do not need them, or because they are satisfied with alternative services. Involuntary non-ownership is when potential consumers do without services, but not through choice; this is mainly due to affordability. In the following analysis, in which consumers gave multiple responses which fell into both categories, these have been reported as 'involuntary'.

Less than one in ten (9%) adults in Wales said that they did not have internet access at home for involuntary reasons. This was similar to the UK average and lower than in Scotland (15%) and Northern Ireland (12%). England was the nation least likely to state involuntary reasons for non-ownership (8%).

Wales had the highest proportion of adults who said that they were likely to get access to the internet (10%). This was twice the UK average of 5%. Adults in urban areas (11%) were more likely to say that they intended to get access than those in rural areas (6%).

Figure 4.5 Non-ownership of internet services



QE24. How likely is it that your household will get a internet access at home in the next 12 months?/

QE25. Why are you unlikely to get internet access at home in the next 12 months?

Source: Ofcom research, Q1 2010

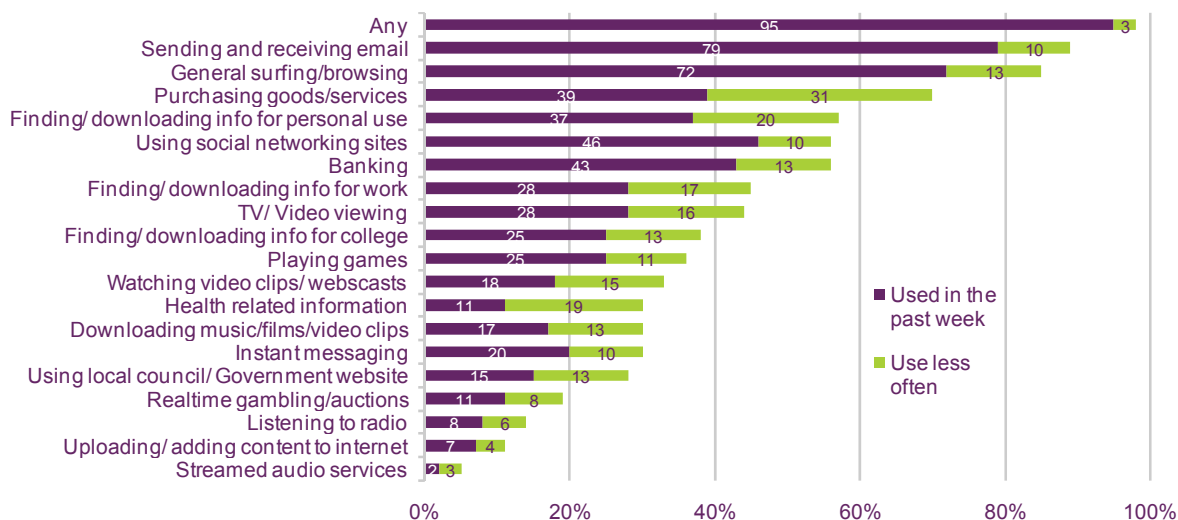
Base: All adults aged 15+ (n = 9013 UK, 1075 Wales, 5709 England, 1468 Scotland, 761 Northern Ireland, 810 Wales urban, 265 Wales rural, 348 South East Wales, 360 South West Wales, 367 North/ Mid Wales)

4.1.3 Use of the internet to access services

Broadband users in Wales are most likely to use the internet to send emails and surf the web

The internet enables users to undertake a wide range of activities online. Our consumer research asked about a number of these and found that the most common online activities among broadband owners in Wales were: sending and receiving email (89%); general surfing/browsing (85%); purchasing goods/services (70%); and finding/downloading information for personal use (57%).

Figure 4.6 Use of online applications among broadband users in Wales



Source: Ofcom research, Q1 2010

Base: Adults aged 15+ with a broadband connection at home (n= 669 Wales)

QE5. Which, if any, of these do you or members of your household use the internet for whilst at home?

Increasingly, people with a broadband connection are going online to access and engage in traditional 'offline' services and activities. Accessing services and content in this way has the

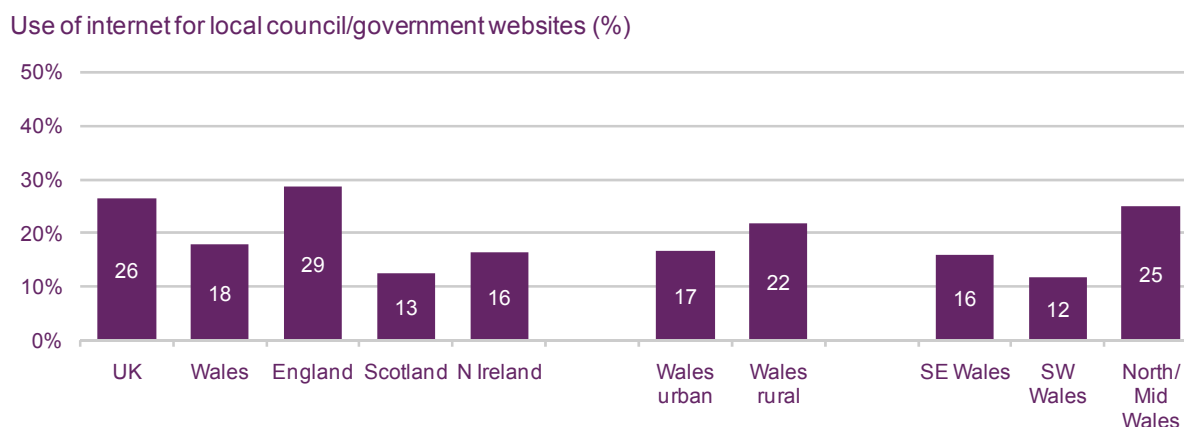
potential to bring real benefits in terms of time, functionality and cost to citizens and consumers. For the first time in this report we are presenting some of the findings of our consumer research into three of these topics: accessing government services, online banking, and accessing information on health-related issues.

One in five people in Wales use the internet to access government services online

Almost all local, regional and central government departments, agencies, executives and bodies have an online presence. And as well as providing information to consumers, some services such as driving licence renewal are increasingly being delivered over the internet. Looking at the number of people claiming to access government websites is one way of assessing engagement with these services in the nations and regions.

Ofcom research shows that across the UK, 26% of adults claimed to visit a government or local council website in Q1 2010. In Wales the figure stood at 18%, below the UK average but higher than the figures for Northern Ireland (16%) and Scotland (13%). Within Wales, people in rural areas (22%) were slightly more likely to visit these sites than those in urban areas (17%). Use of these sites was most popular in North and Mid Wales, where over a third (34%) of people claimed to have used them.

Figure 4.7 Use of the internet to access local council and government websites



QE5A-B. Which, if any, of these do you or members of your household use the internet for whilst at home?

Source: Ofcom research, Q1 2010

Base: Adults aged 15+ (n= 9013 UK, 5709 England, 1468 Scotland, 1075 Wales, 761 Northern Ireland)

More than a third of people in Wales use the internet to do their banking

Online banking allows people to manage their money from the comfort of their own homes, and among other things allows them to receive up-to-date balances, pay bills online, open new accounts and transfer money.

Our research shows that across the UK, four in ten (43%) of people used the internet for banking in the first quarter of 2010. Use of online banking was highest in England (45%), followed by Wales and Northern Ireland (both 36%) and Scotland (29%). In Wales, use of banking sites varied from 32% in South West Wales to 41% in North and Mid Wales. Our research found little difference in take-up between people in urban areas (36%) and rural areas (37%).

These data suggest that a number of internet users are not using online banking regularly. This is likely to be for a number of reasons including concerns about security, and the fact that under-18s are less likely to have a bank account.

Figure 4.8 Use of the internet to access online banking sites



QE5A-B. Which, if any, of these do you or members of your household use the internet for whilst at home?

Source: Ofcom research, Q1 2010

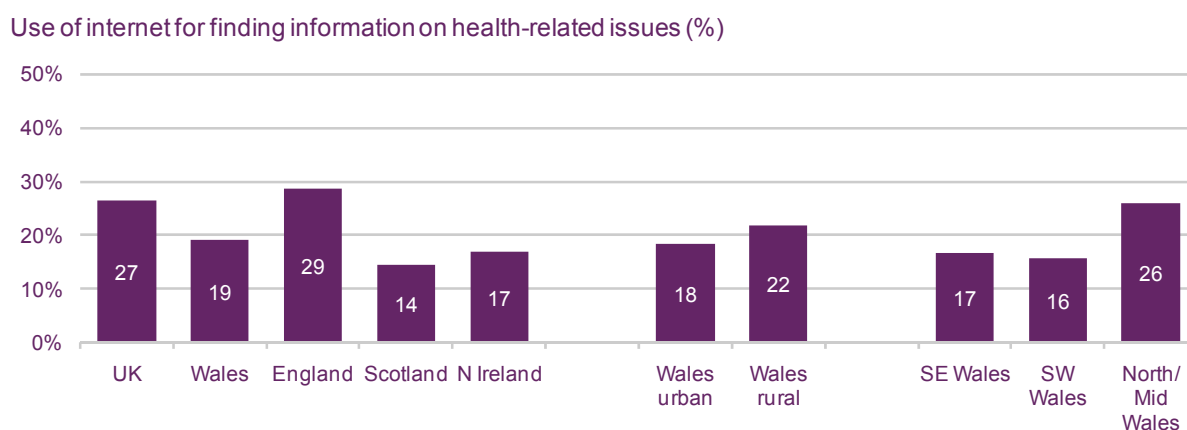
Base: Adults aged 15+ (n= 9013 UK, 5709 England, 1468 Scotland, 1075 Wales, 761 Northern Ireland)

Nearly 20% of people in Wales use the internet to find health-related information

The internet has also had an impact on how people can find out more about a wide range of health issues. It allows those organisations (whether the NHS, private health providers or otherwise) that offer information and support a way to reach their target audience easily and cheaply; it also opens up to individuals a vast array of information on almost any health issue. This brings both advantages and disadvantages. For instance, people with concerns about swine flu could access advice through portals like *Direct.gov* and *NHS Choices*, which may have played a part in keeping infectious individuals away from surgeries. But the sheer amount of available information on the internet has also raised concerns about inaccuracies and incorrect self-diagnoses.

Twenty-seven per cent of adults in the UK claimed to use the internet to find information relating to health issues. This figure ranged from 14% in Scotland to 27% in England. In Wales the figure was 19%. In North and Mid Wales more than a quarter (26%) of people used the internet to find health-related information, a significantly higher proportion than people in South East (17%) and South West (16%) Wales.

Figure 4.9 Use of the internet to find information on health-related issues



QE5A-B. Which, if any, of these do you or members of your household use the internet for whilst at home?

Source: Ofcom research, Q1 2010

Base: Adults aged 15+ (n= 9013 UK, 5709 England, 1468 Scotland, 1075 Wales, 761 Northern Ireland)

4.1.4 Social networking

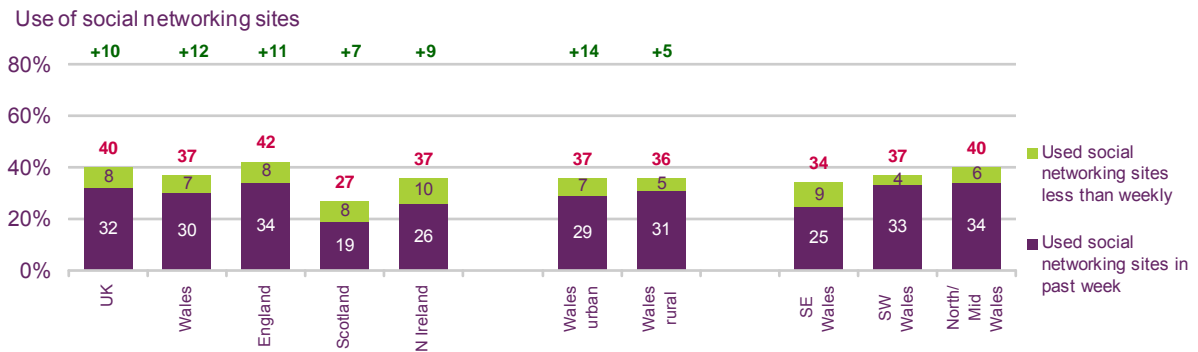
Wales leads the rise in use of social networking sites

Social networking sites (SNS) are websites such as Facebook and MySpace on which users can create their own profiles using text, graphics and photos, join groups of people with common interests and send messages to other site members.

SNS use in Wales, at 37% of individuals, has risen by 12 percentage points over the past year. Its popularity rose faster in Wales than anywhere else in the UK, but as an online activity it is still less popular in Wales when compared to the UK average (30%). Patterns in use of social networking sites correlate to household broadband penetration levels, with use higher in North/ Mid Wales than the South East. The increase in use of SNS sites was most marked in urban areas, where there was a 14 percentage point increase from Q1 2009, bringing it into line with the figures for use of these sites in rural areas.

Our UK report shows that Facebook is the most popular SNS by some distance, and is likely to be responsible for much of the growth found in our research. All major SNS have now been optimised for mobile phones too, and it is likely that this will be an area of future growth, particularly as smartphones become more widespread.

Figure 4.10 Proportion of adults in a household that has used social networking sites



Source: Ofcom research, Q1 2010

Base: All adults aged 15+ (n = 9013 UK, 1075 Wales, 5709 England, 1468 Scotland, 761 Northern Ireland, 810 Wales urban, 265 Wales rural, 348 South East Wales, 360 South West Wales, 367 North/Mid Wales)

QE5A-B. Which, if any, of these do you or members of your household use the internet for whilst at home?/ And, which, if any, of these activities have you or members of your household used the internet for in the last week?