
Ofcom Home Broadband Performance

Notification of proposed cessation of research project

Overview

Ofcom's [UK Home Broadband Performance reports](#) look at the average performance of UK residential fixed broadband services and compares the performance of some of the UK's most popular residential internet service provider (ISP) packages.

The research was initiated to provide consumers with accurate information regarding the real-world connection speeds that different broadband services provided and has since been expanded to include information on a wider range of metrics that help determine the user-experience delivered. It therefore helps consumers make better-informed home broadband purchasing decisions and provides an incentive for ISPs to improve the quality of the services they provide.

Changes in the rules around the use of connection speeds in the advertising of broadband services, and the implementation and revision of Ofcom's [Voluntary Residential Code of Practice on Broadband Speeds](#) mean that consumers now have access to accurate speed information prior to, and during, the purchase process.

The research shows continued improvement in the average broadband connection speeds and, as consumers have migrated to superfast and ultrafast services, connection speed is no longer a limiting factor for most users. Similarly, even the worst performance that we see in the other metrics that the research covers are unlikely to negatively impact the user-experience in most use cases.

We are proposing to stop publishing UK Home Broadband Performance reports, meaning that the report covering March 2023 measurements, which is due for publication later this year, will be the final report.

What we are proposing – in brief

We are proposing to:

- Conclude Ofcom's UK Home Broadband Performance research project in Q4 2023, after the publication of the report based on measurements taken in March 2023.

More information about our proposal is available below. If you would like any more details, or if the conclusion of the Home Broadband Performance reports will cause any problems for your organisation, please email MID@ofcom.org.uk by 13 July 2023.

Background

Ofcom has been publishing research into residential fixed broadband performance since 2009. The research was originally initiated as there was a disjoint between actual and advertised download speeds; however, changes in broadband advertising guidelines and Ofcom's Voluntary Residential Code of Practice on Broadband Speeds mean that this is no longer the case.

The research is based on data collected from a panel of volunteers who connect a hardware monitoring unit to their broadband router. Since 2022 Ofcom has also requested 'embedded' test

data from some ISPs and, together, used these to measure the performance of some of the UK's most popular fixed broadband packages and assess how they vary by technology, package, location, and time of day.

Examination of the Home Broadband Performance data over time shows continued improvement in the average broadband connections speeds (due to people upgrading to faster services, rather than material improvements in the performance of individual lines/packages) and a decrease in the proportion that do not receive a decent broadband service.

As consumers have migrated to superfast and ultrafast services, connection speed is no longer a limiting factor for most users, and even the worst performance that we see in the other metrics the research covers are unlikely to negatively impact the user-experience for most use cases. This includes network slowdown data, where average download speeds during busy times are typically over 90% of those experienced in quieter periods.

It is therefore Ofcom's view that stopping the publication of the UK Home Broadband Performance reports will not hinder its ability to effectively monitor changes in the communications market.

There are also limitations to the Home Broadband Performance research which cannot be addressed without major investment. For example i) the cost of a hardware-based measurement solution limits the size of the panel the research is based on, meaning it is not possible to analyse geographic performance differences other than at a comparatively high level; ii) the requirement for a sufficient panel size to obtain robust results makes it both costly and difficult to recruit for services with lower take-up (including many full fibre services); and iii) the research only considers performance to the customer's router (and not over Wi-Fi) meaning it does not capture the full user experience.

The addition of 'embedded' test data collected from some broadband providers does allow for a larger panel size, however, it covers only a small subset of ISPs and metrics and presents data comparability issues. Ofcom remains interested in the performance of UK broadband connections and we are currently considering how more granular information, including ISP embedded data, could be used to provide more localised information on broadband performance to consumers.

Ofcom's Connected Nations research will continue to report on progress in the availability of broadband services in the UK, including the roll-out of gigabit-capable and full-fibre networks.

Proposed change

Ofcom is proposing to conclude publication of the UK Home Broadband Performance reports after the publication of the Home Broadband Performance report based on March 2023 measurements, later in 2023.

We would like your views

If you would like any further information or if you would like to highlight any concerns for Ofcom's consideration regarding the Home Broadband Performance reports, please email MID@ofcom.org.uk by 13 July 2023.