

5 Internet and online content

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5.1 Internet take-up

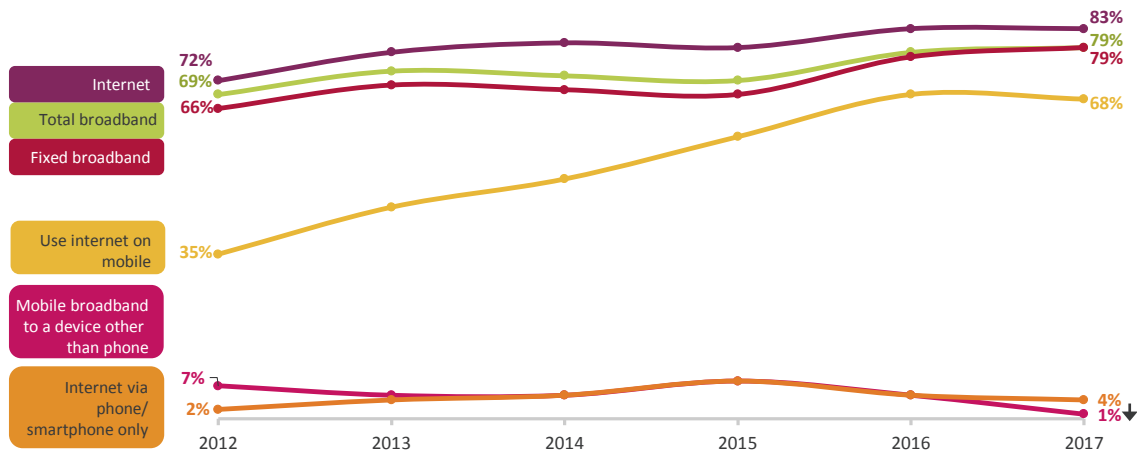
More than eight in ten households in Northern Ireland have access to the internet

In 2017, more than eight in ten (83%) households in Northern Ireland have access to the internet.¹ Internet take-up levels in Northern Ireland are statistically unchanged since 2016.

Almost eight in ten households in Northern Ireland (79%) have access to fixed broadband at home, and two-thirds (68%) of adults in Northern Ireland use the internet through a mobile phone, both figures unchanged since 2016.

The proportion of adults in Northern Ireland accessing the internet exclusively through a mobile phone or smartphone remains stable at 3%, while mobile broadband to a device other than a phone has declined among households in Northern Ireland since 2016 (from 5% to 1%).

Figure 5.1: Internet take-up, Northern Ireland: 2010-2017



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker. Data from January-February each year

Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 99% confidence level between Wales 2016 and 2017

Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 495 Wales 2017)

Note 1: 'Internet' includes access at home via any device, e.g. PC, mobile phone, tablet etc.

Note 2: 'Total broadband' includes the following at home – fixed broadband (via phone line or cable service), mobile broadband (via a USB stick or dongle, or built-in connectivity in a laptop/netbook/tablet with a SIM), tethering (via mobile phone internet connection on laptop/tablet), mobile broadband wireless router (via 3G or 4G mobile network, which can be shared between devices).

Note 3: 'Fixed broadband' includes ADSL, cable and fibre services – perhaps using a Wi-Fi router. This includes superfast broadband services.

Note 4: 'Mobile broadband' is connecting a device using a USB stick or dongle, or built-in connectivity in a laptop or netbook or tablet computer with a SIM card.

Note 5: 'Use internet on mobile' is the proportion of adults who use a mobile phone for any of the following activities: instant messaging, downloading apps or programs, email, internet access, downloading video, video streaming, visiting social networking sites.

¹ This includes internet access via broadband or mobile phone. Incidences of narrowband are too low to report but would still count as 'internet access'.

5.2 Internet-enabled devices

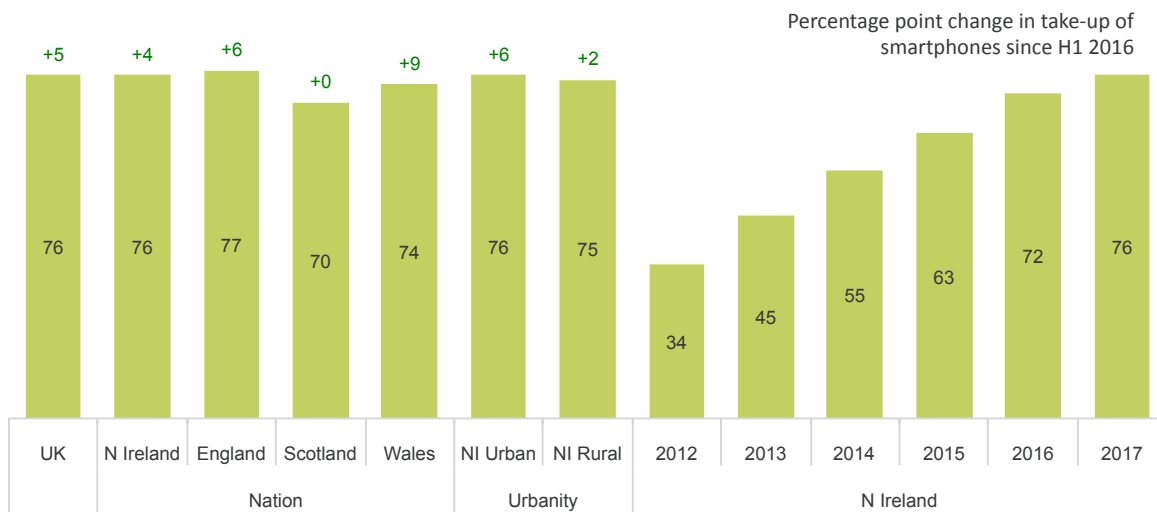
Three-quarters of adults in Northern Ireland personally use a smartphone

In 2017, three-quarters (76%) of adults in Northern Ireland personally use a smartphone, in line with the UK overall (76%) and not significantly changed since 2016.

However, the proportion of adults using a smartphone has more than doubled over the past five years.

Smartphone ownership does not vary significantly by urban or rural location in Northern Ireland.

Figure 5.2: Take-up of smartphones in Northern Ireland



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, Half 1 2017

Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 493 Northern Ireland 2017)

Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2017, between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2017 and at the 99% confidence level between Northern Ireland 2016 and 2017. Circles around the +/- figures above the chart indicate any significant difference at the 99% confidence level between 2016 and 2017 for Northern Ireland, urban and rural.

QD24B: Do you personally use a smartphone? A smartphone is a phone on which you can easily access emails, download files and applications, as well as view websites and generally surf the internet. Popular brands of smartphone include BlackBerry, iPhone and Android phones such as the Samsung Galaxy.

Six in ten households in Northern Ireland own a tablet, in line with the UK average

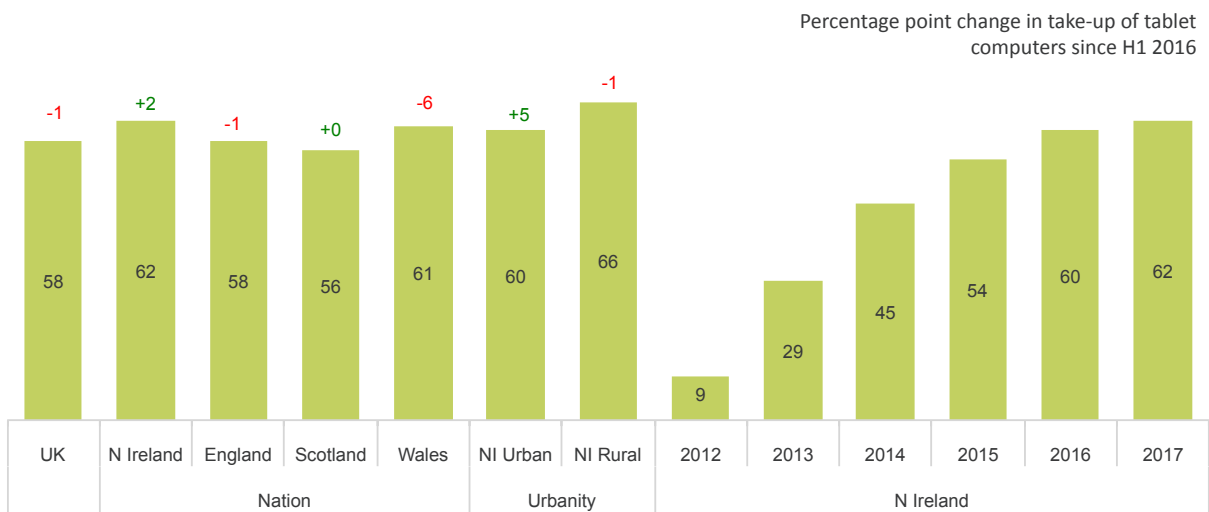
Six in ten (62%) households in Northern Ireland own a tablet computer in 2017, in line with the UK average (58%). This figure is unchanged since 2016.

Tablet ownership does not vary significantly by urban or rural location in Northern Ireland.

As with the UK overall, take-up of multiple tablets in Northern

Ireland is increasing. In 2017, around half (51%) of households with a tablet said they had at least two or more tablets, an increase from 44% in 2016.

Figure 5.3: Take-up of tablet computers in Northern Ireland



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, Half 1 2017

Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 3743 UK, 493 Northern Ireland, 2245 England, 510 Scotland, 495 Wales, 251 Northern Ireland urban, 242 Northern Ireland rural, 511 Northern Ireland 2011, 508 Northern Ireland 2012, 507 Northern Ireland 2013, 499 Northern Ireland 2014, 504 Northern Ireland 2015, 507 Northern Ireland 2016, 493 Northern Ireland 2017)

Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2017, between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2017 and at the 99% confidence level between Northern Ireland 2016 and 2017. Circles around the +/- figures above the chart indicate any significant difference at the 99% confidence level between 2016 and 2017 for Northern Ireland, urban and rural.

QE1: Does your household have a PC, laptop, netbook or tablet computer?

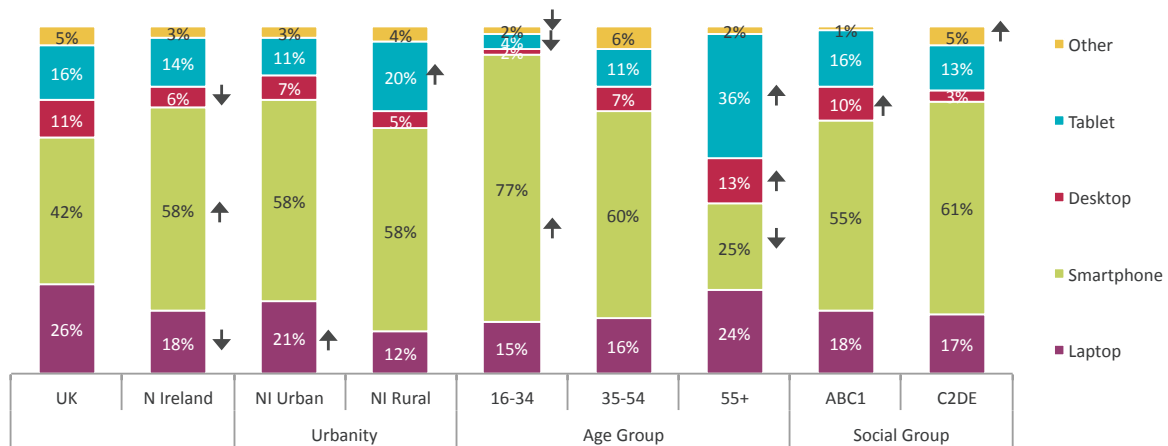
A majority of internet users in Northern Ireland say a smartphone is their most important device for going online

Nearly six in ten (58%) internet users¹ in Northern Ireland said that their smartphone was their most important device for going online, at home or elsewhere,

more than among all UK internet users (42%). With the exception of internet users aged 55 and over, all demographic groups considered the smartphone to be their most

important device for internet access; it was cited by 77% of 16-34s compared to 25% of over-55s.

Figure 5.4: Most important device for accessing the internet in Northern Ireland



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, Half 1 2017

Base: Internet users aged 16+ (n = Base: Internet users aged 16+ (n = 3221 UK, 411 Northern Ireland, 211 Northern Ireland urban, 200 Northern Ireland rural, 149 16-34, 152 35-54, 110 55+, 203 ABC1, 206 C2DE).

Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2017 and between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2017, by age compared to all internet users in Scotland in 2017 and between socio-economic groups in Scotland in 2017.

QE40: Which is the most important device you use to connect to the internet, at home or elsewhere? 'Other' responses include: 'netbook', 'e-reader', 'TV set', 'games console', 'other portable/handheld device', 'smartwatch', 'other device', 'none' and 'don't know'.

¹Internet users are defined as those who ever go online, either at home or elsewhere.

5.3 Internet use

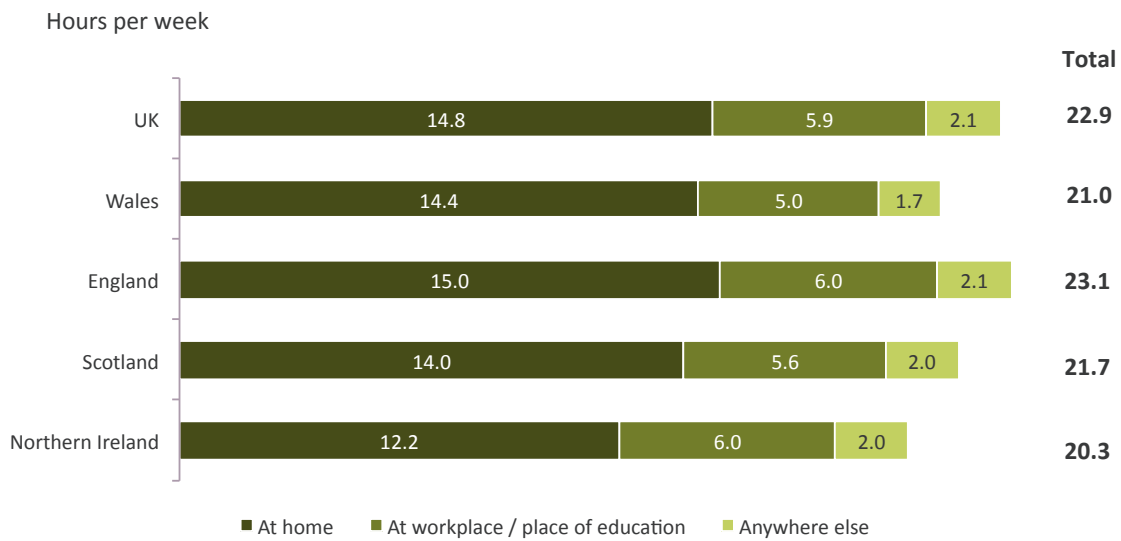
Internet users in Northern Ireland spent an average of 20 hours online per week in 2016

According to research conducted for Ofcom’s *Adults’ Media Use and Attitudes Report 2016*,¹ internet

users in Northern Ireland claimed to spend an average of 20.3 hours online per week in 2016. This was

lower than in any of the other UK nations. More than half of this time online was at home (12.2 hours).

Figure 5.5 : Claimed time spent on the internet in a typical week



Source: Ofcom Media Literacy Tracker 2016

Base: All adults aged 16+ who go online at home or elsewhere (1553 UK, 999 England, 176 Scotland, 189 Wales, 189 Northern Ireland).

IN5A-C – How many hours in a typical week would you say you use the internet at home/ at your workplace or place of education/ anywhere else? (Unprompted responses, single coded)

¹Available online at https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/102755/adults-media-use-attitudes-2017.pdf

General surfing / browsing and sending / receiving email remain the most popular activities among internet users in Northern Ireland in 2017

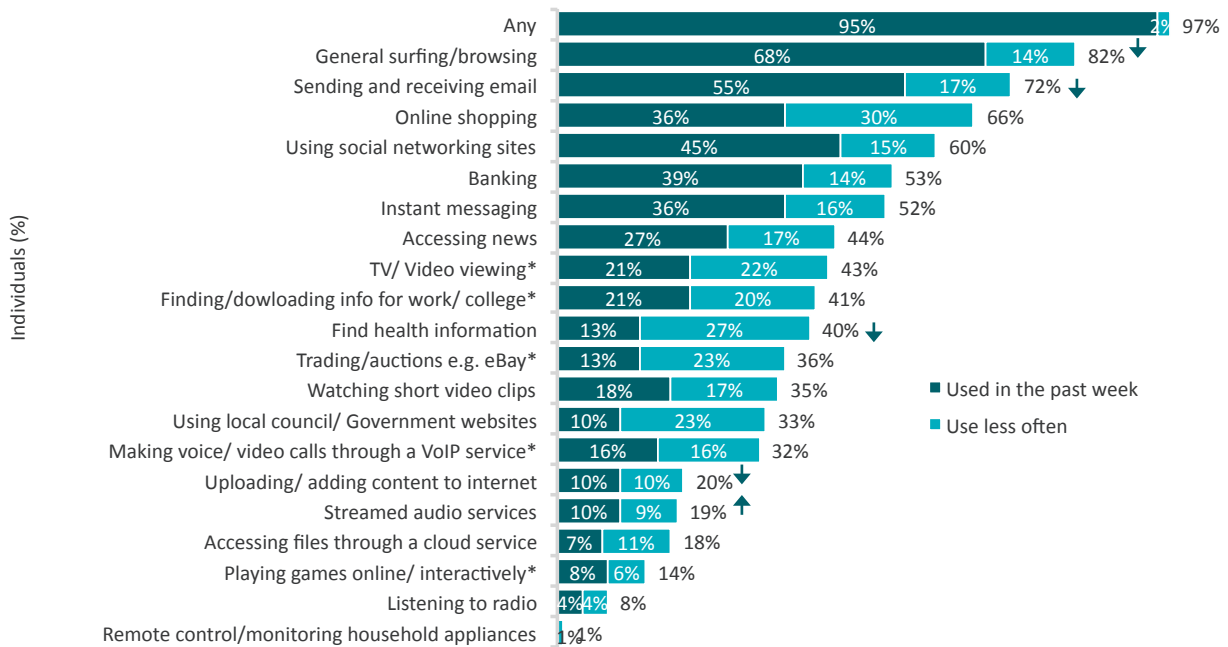
The most popular internet activities among adults in Northern Ireland in 2017 were general surfing/ browsing (82%) and sending/ receiving email (72%). These were also reported as having been done the most in the past week¹. Online shopping was the next most popular activity (66%), followed by social networking (60%).

Around half of internet users in Northern Ireland went online for banking (53%) or instant messaging (52%).

Where it was possible to make comparisons², four internet activities were less likely to be carried out online in 2017 compared to 2016: general surfing/ browsing:

sending / receiving email; finding health information; and uploading / adding content to the internet. One activity was more likely to be carried out online in 2017 than in 2016: using streaming audio services (such as Spotify or Deezer).

Figure 5.6: Activities carried out online by internet users in Northern Ireland



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, Half 1 2017

Base: Adults aged 16+ who use the internet at home or elsewhere (n= 411 Northern Ireland 2017)

Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant difference at the 99% confidence level in the total incidence of use between Scotland 2016 and 2017. *Codes marked with an asterisk have not been tested as they are not directly comparable.

QE5A: Which, if any, of these do you use the internet for?

¹The past week' was that at the time of respondents' interviews

²Activities marked with an asterisk in Figure 5.6 are not directly comparable