Broadband terminology research

Fieldwork: November 2022

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making communications work **for everyone**

Contents

Slide	Description
3	Background, methodology and objectives
8	Executive summary
10	<u>Understanding of terminology</u>
17	<u>Usefulness of information</u>
22	Where information would be useful
25	Annex A: detailed technology descriptions
30	Annex B: reasons for incorrect understanding of terms
35	<u>Appendix</u>

Background, methodology and objectives

Objectives

To measure current levels of understanding of the various technologies used to deliver fixed broadband services

To understand what, if any, additional information on broadband technology consumers would find useful in ads and at point of sale, specifically to:

- Test whether clearer information on the delivery method for broadband services may be useful to consumers once broadband terms are explained.
- Establish, when consumers are deciding which broadband provider and product to purchase, the relative degree of usefulness of having descriptions of the underlying technology and its capabilities included in marketing materials and at point of sale vs. other factors considered.
- Test what this information would be and at what point in the purchase journey it would be useful.

Methodology

Of commissioned **BVA BDRC** to conduct research into consumer understanding of broadband terminology.

Pilot:

Qualitative cognition testing among 10 broadband decision makers to assess comprehension of the service descriptions.

Main phase:

n=1155 online* interviews among broadband decision makers with quotas set on gender, age, SEG, nation, broad English region, full fibre availability and broadband supplier.

Respondents in the devolved nations and with full fibre availability were oversampled to ensure robust bases for analysis.

The final data was weighted to be nationally representative on gender, age, SEG, nation, broad English region and full fibre availability.

Topics included:

Understanding of terms pre and post explanation

Relative and absolute usefulness of information

Where in purchase journey information would be useful

Detailed questionnaire coverage and structure

Screening, demographics, usage and attitudes

- Services used
- · Broadband decision-maker
- Gender, age, SEG, region/nation, children in household
- Broadband provider
- Type of broadband service used
- Services bundled with broadband
- Length of current broadband contract
- Considering a new broadband deal
- Engagement with current broadband provider
- Attitudes to broadband and technology generally

Understanding of terms pre and post explanation

- Extent to which terms related to broadband technology are understood prior to any explanation
- Explanation/description of the terms Copper broadband,
 Cable broadband, Fibre-to-thecabinet (FTTC), Fibre-to-thepremises (FTTP)¹
- Post explanation whether understanding matches what they thought previously
- Ways in which understanding did not match

Relative and absolute usefulness of information

- Maximum Difference Scaling (MaxDiff) exercise to establish the relative usefulness of terms describing the technology used to deliver the service vs. other types of information in the course of deciding on a broadband service
- Absolute usefulness of terms describing the technology used to deliver the service vs. other types of information in the course of deciding on a broadband service

Where in purchase journey information would be useful

- Where in the purchase journey brief and detailed descriptions of the delivery technology would be useful
- Where in the purchase journey they would be most useful

¹Annex: detailed technology descriptions

Sample

Fieldwork: 7th – 14th November 2022

	Proportion of weighted sample	Interviews achieved (n=1155)	
	Gender		
Male	49%	541	
Female	51%	612	
	Segment		
ABC1	53%	678	
C2DE	47%	477	
	Age Group		
16-34	30%	309	
35-64	49%	598	
65-74	12%	178	
75+	9%	70	
Fibre in Area			
Full fibre available	35%	433	
Full fibre not available	60%	660	

Region/Nation	Proportion of weighted sample	Total interviews achieved (n=1155)		
English Region				
North	24%	208		
Midlands	26%	251		
South	35%	342		
Nation				
England	85%	801		
Scotland	9%	121		
Wales	4%	129		
Northern Ireland	2%	104		

Excellence

Executive summary

Executive summary

Ofcom commissioned independent research agency BVA BDRC to conduct quantitative research into consumer understanding of broadband terminology. Online interviews were used to capture the views of 1,155 broadband decision makers. The key findings are:

- Consumers were asked their understanding of terms describing various broadband technologies. Of the terms relating to fibre, fibre and full fibre have the highest claimed understanding.
 - The relatively lower levels for the specific types of services containing fibre (FTTP¹, FTTC², part fibre) suggest the high claimed understanding of the general term fibre may be a superficial one for some.
- Among all respondents, after being provided with detailed explanations, half claimed they had correctly understood FTTC
 and nearly six-in-ten claimed they had correctly understood FTTP.
- Among those who had some misunderstanding of each core phrase, most areas of confusion could be split into two themes
 relating to either the delivery method, or the service received by the consumer, e.g. download speed.
- When asked how useful different information would be when deciding on a fixed broadband service, nearly all would find each type of information asked about at least somewhat useful, including the description of the delivery technology, however the proportions stating very useful are the lowest for the descriptions of the delivery technology.
- When forced to choose between types of information, monthly cost, reliability and download speed are the most useful types of information (relative to other types of information) on average when deciding on a fixed broadband service. The information describing the technology is seen as considerably less useful.
- When asked where, in the process of deciding on a fixed broadband service, brief and detailed descriptions of the technology used to deliver the broadband service would be useful, the most mentioned are 'on a provider's website' and 'at the point of purchase'.

agility

1. Understanding of terminology

First, respondents were asked to indicate on a five-point scale the extent to which they understood what each of these phrases relating to different types of broadband technology mean.

ADSL Copper broadband

Fibre

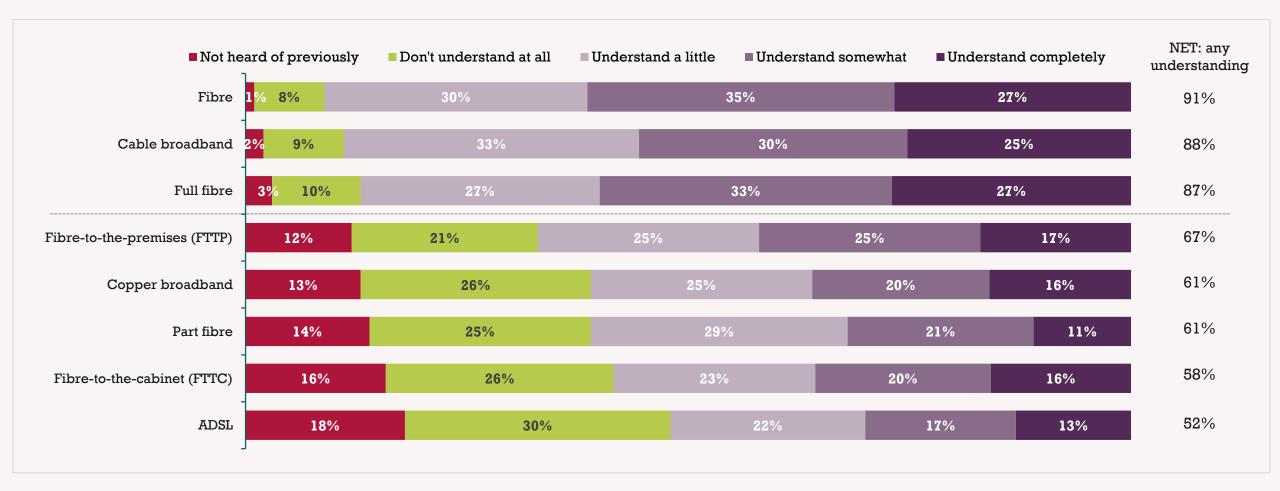
Part fibre

Fibre-to-the-cabinet (FTTC)

Fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP)

Of the eight phrases tested, the more 'general' terms fibre, full fibre and cable broadband had the highest degree of claimed understanding prior to any explanation

The relatively lower levels of understanding of the specific types of fibre service (FTTP, FTTC, part fibre) suggest the high claimed understanding of the general term fibre may be a superficial one for some



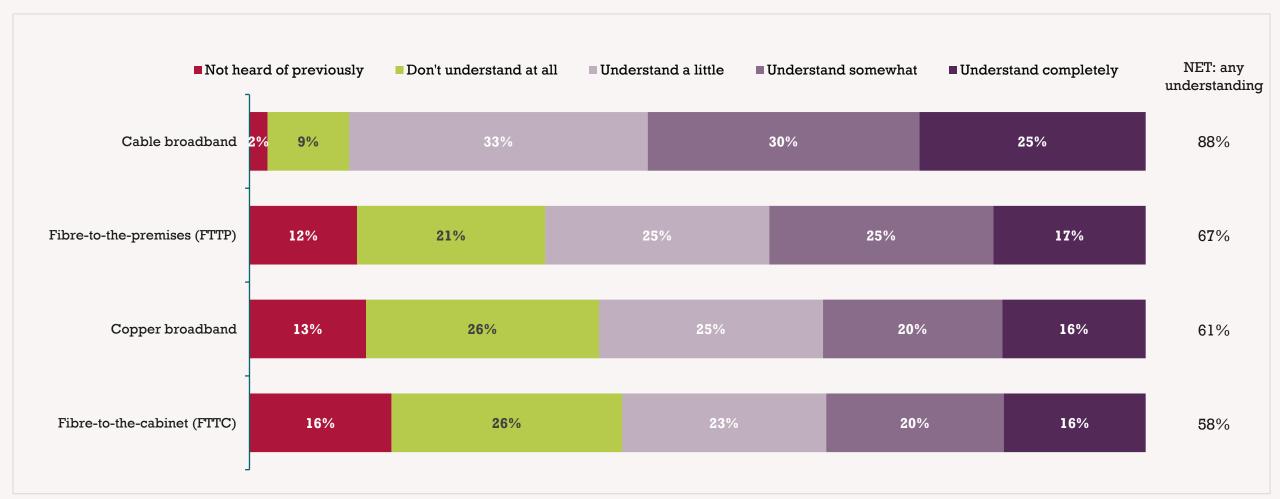
Source: Broadband Terminology Research 2022

QE1. How well do you think you understand what each of these phrases means, i.e. do you know what it would indicate about the service's attributes and characteristics?

Base: All respondents (1,155)

Of the <u>core</u> phrases being tested, *cable broadband* has significantly higher claimed understanding

Other technologies are at a similar level to each other, with FTTP slightly better understood than copper broadband or FTTC



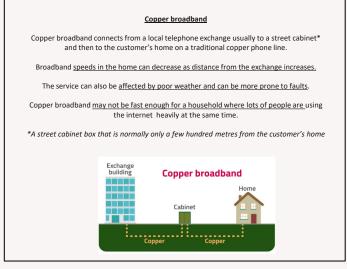
Source: Broadband Terminology Research 2022

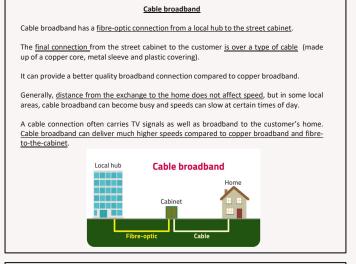
QE1. How well do you think you understand what each of these phrases means, i.e. do you know what it would indicate about the service's attributes and characteristics?

Base: All respondents (1,155)

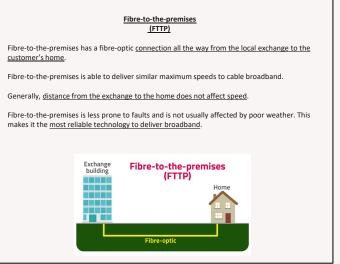
Respondents were then presented with detailed descriptions of the four

technologies



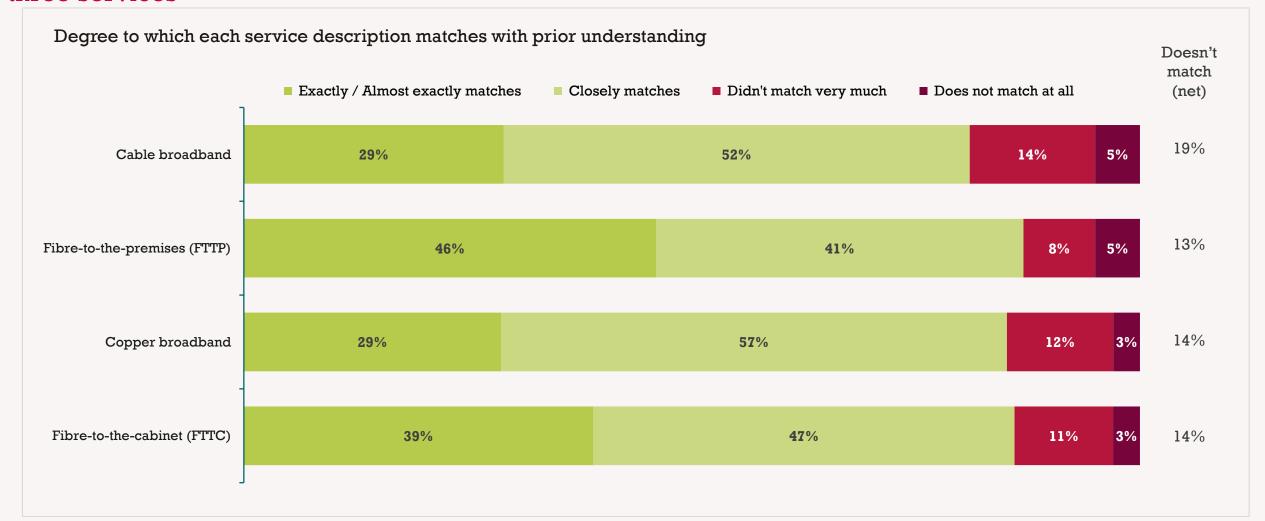


Fibre-to-the-cabinet [FITC] Fibre-to-the-cabinet has a fibre-optic connection (made up of a bundle of thin glass 'fibre' threads) from the local telephone exchange to the street cabinet. The final connection from the street cabinet to the customer is usually over a copper wire telephone line. This means that broadband speeds may decrease the further the customer's home is from the street cabinet. Fibre-to-the-cabinet is able to be faster than copper broadband, but slower than a full fibre connection. Fibre-to-the-cabinet (FITC) Home Cabinet Cabinet Copper

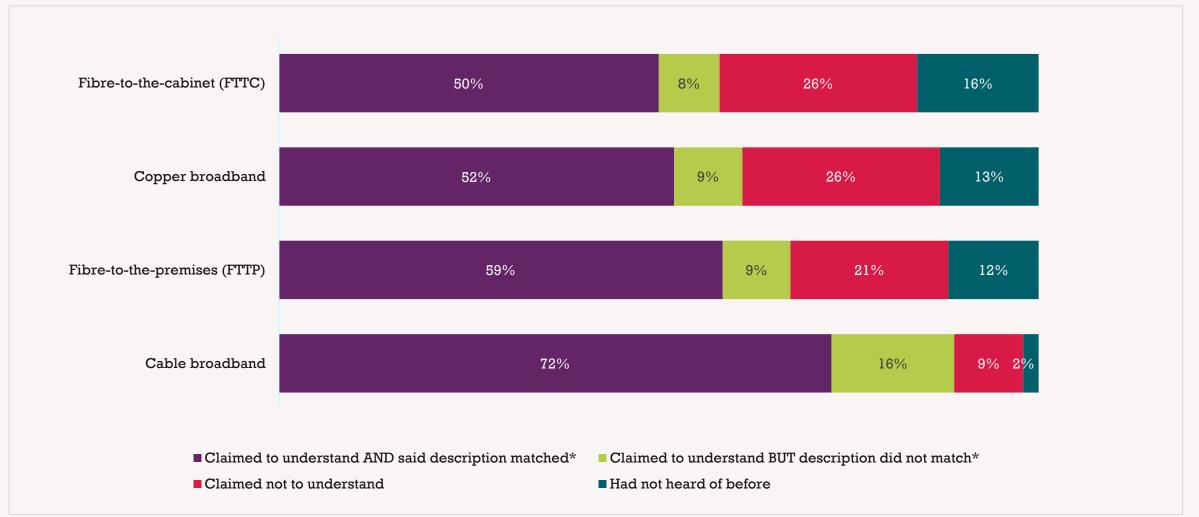


Source: Broadband Terminology Research 2022 OF1.

Among respondents who had claimed to understand at least a little each term, a significantly lower proportion found the description of *cable broadband* matched their understanding compared to the other three services



Among all respondents, half claimed they correctly understood *FTTC* and nearly six-in-ten claimed they correctly understood *FTTP*



Source: Broadband Terminology Research 2022

QE1. How well do you think you understand what each of these phrases means, i.e. do you know what it would indicate about the service's attributes and characteristics? / QG1. Please use the following scale to say how closely this matches with what you thought it meant before reading this description?

Base: All respondents (1,155)

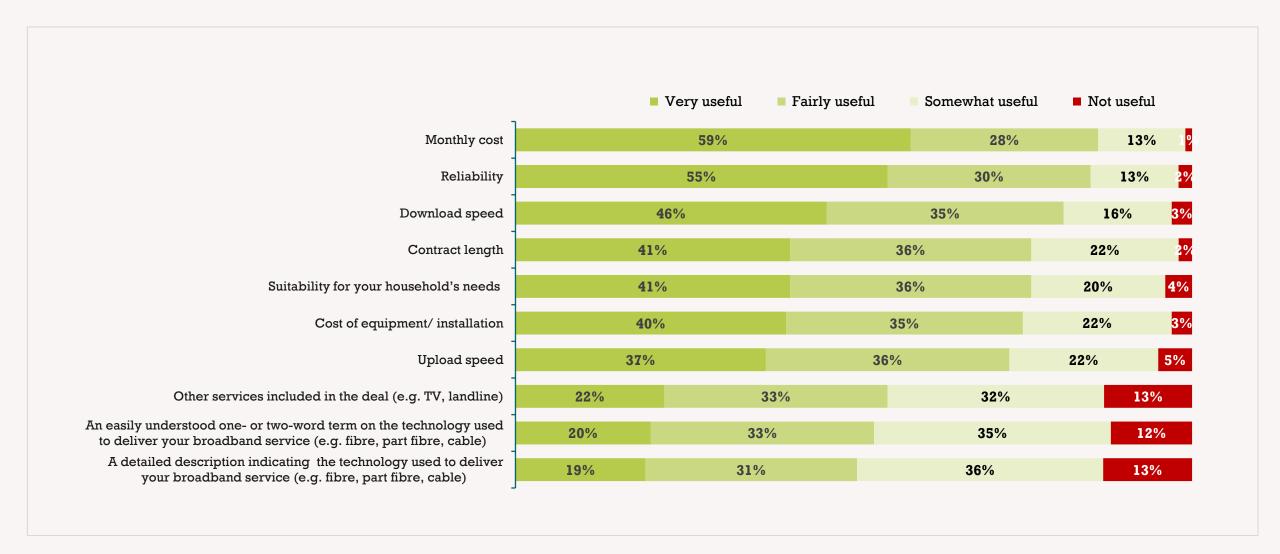
*Shows % who claimed to understand (QE1) and subsequently said it closely matched their understanding (QG1) OR claimed to understand (QE1) but did not match their understanding (QG1) among all respondents.



2. Usefulness of information

Nearly all would find each type of information at least somewhat useful

however the proportions stating 'very useful' are lowest for the descriptions of the delivery technology. The top three types of information are cost, reliability, and download speed



Source: Broadband Terminology Research 2022

QH2. Please use the following scale to say **how** useful information about each item would be when deciding on a broadband service Base: All respondents (1,155)

Maximum Difference Scaling - 'MaxDiff'

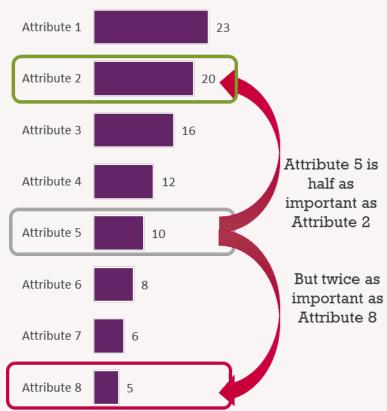
Explanation of MaxDiff approach to assessing stated importance

The importance of information when deciding on a fixed broadband service is derived using a stated importance methodology called Maximum Difference scaling, or MaxDiff for short.

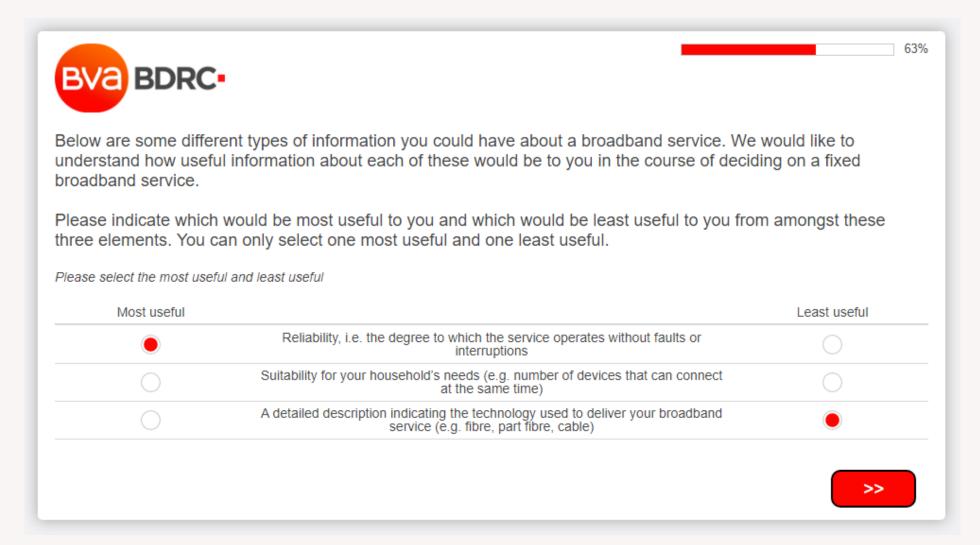
MaxDiff is a trade-off methodology in which respondents are presented with small groups of the attributes of interest and asked to indicate which is **most** and **least** important.

Across many iterations spanning all respondents, the analysis is used to generate utility scores showing the relative importance of each statement.

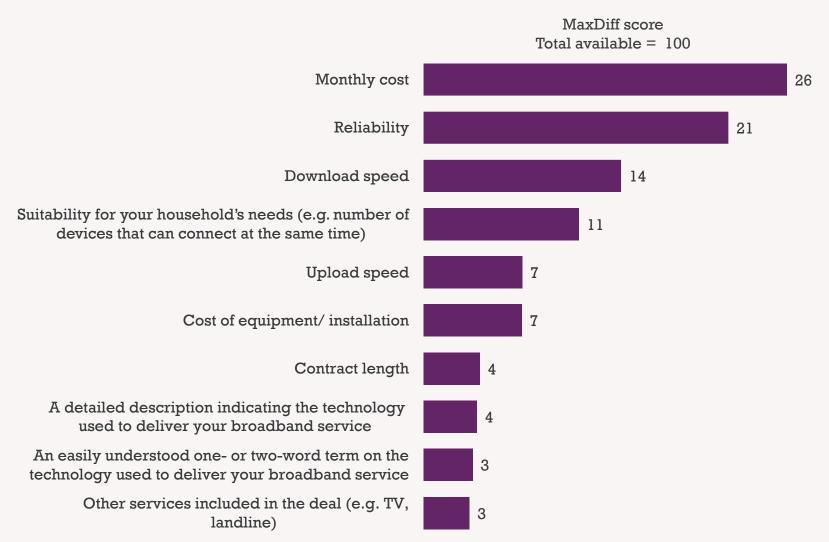
These scores sum to 100 across all attributes. An attribute with a utility score of 10, for example, is half as important as one with a utility score of 20 and twice as important as another with a utility score of 5.



Example of a MaxDiff question shown to the respondent



The information describing the technology is less useful relative to other types of information on average when deciding on a fixed broadband service

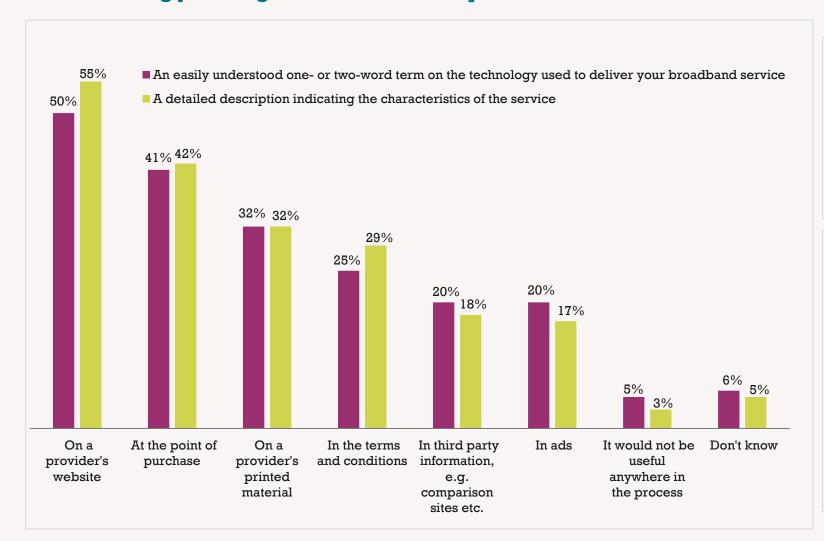


Source: Broadband Terminology Research 2022

QH1. Please indicate which information would be most/least useful to you in the course of deciding on a fixed broadband service. Base: All respondents (1,155)

3. Where information would be useful

The most mentioned places for both **brief** and **detailed** descriptions of the delivery technology being useful are on a provider's website and at the point of purchase



BRIEF DESCRIPTION

People currently looking/planning to look higher than those not currently looking/planning to mention on printed material (35% vs. 28%), in T&Cs (30% vs. 21%) and in 3rd party information (24% vs. 17%)

People who understand different options in the broadband market higher than those who do not understand different options for on provider's website (53% vs. 40%) and on printed material (35% vs. 22%)

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

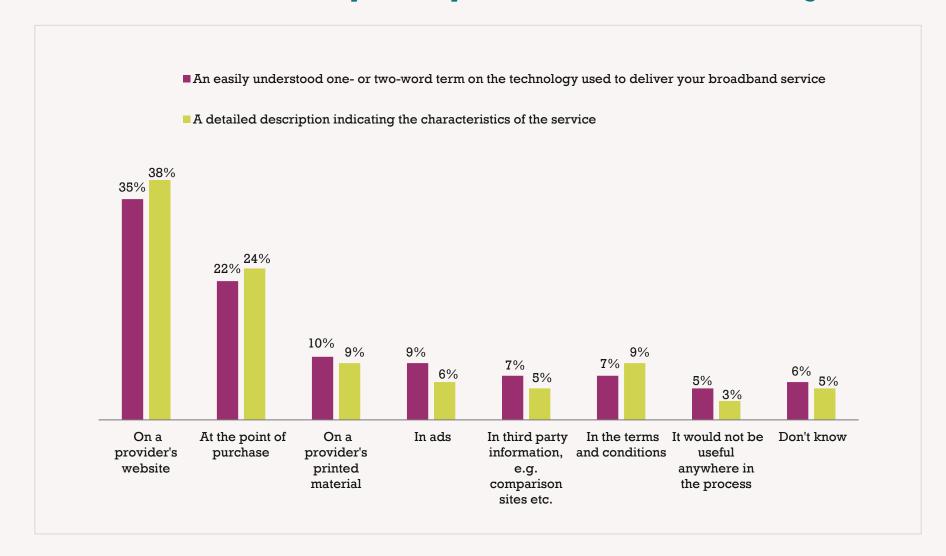
People currently looking/planning to look higher than those not currently looking/planning to mention at point of purchase (47% vs. 39%), on printed material (36% vs. 29%), in T&Cs (35% vs. 23%), in 3rd party information (22% vs. 15%) and in ads (20% vs. 14%)

People who understand different options in the broadband market higher than those who do not understand different options for on provider's website (59% vs. 43%), at point of purchase (44% vs. 31%) and in T&Cs (32% vs. 15%)

People who do not understand different options in the market are more likely than those who do understand different options in the broadband market to say detailed descriptions would not be useful anywhere in the process (10% vs. 2%)

Source: Broadband Terminology Research 2022

The **most useful** stage follows a similar pattern, with on a provider's website nearly twice as high as the next most mentioned, and at the point of purchase at least twice as high as all others



Annex A: detailed technology descriptions

Copper broadband description (detail)

Copper broadband

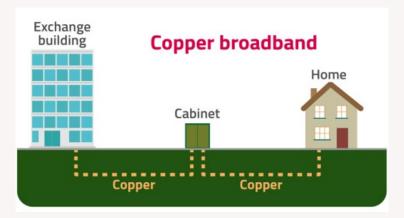
Copper broadband connects from a local telephone exchange usually to a street cabinet* and then to the customer's home on a traditional copper phone line.

Broadband speeds in the home can decrease as distance from the exchange increases.

The service can also be <u>affected</u> by poor weather and can be more prone to faults.

Copper broadband <u>may not be fast enough for a household where lots of people are</u> using the internet heavily at the same time.

*A street cabinet box that is normally only a few hundred metres from the customer's home



Cable broadband description (detail)

Cable broadband

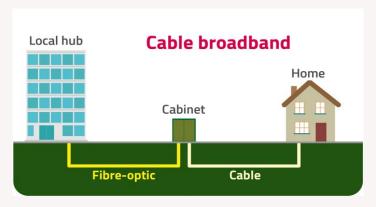
Cable broadband has a fibre-optic connection from a local hub to the street cabinet.

The <u>final connection</u> from the street cabinet to the customer <u>is over a type</u> of cable (made up of a copper core, metal sleeve and plastic covering).

It can provide a better quality broadband connection compared to copper broadband.

Generally, distance from the exchange to the home does not affect speed, but in some local areas, cable broadband can become busy and speeds can slow at certain times of day.

A cable connection often carries TV signals as well as broadband to the customer's home. Cable broadband can deliver much higher speeds compared to copper broadband and fibre-to-thecabinet.



Fibre-to-the-cabinet (FTTC) description (detail)

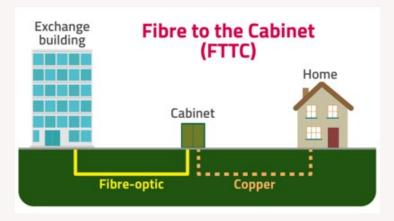
Fibre-to-the-cabinet (FTTC)

Fibre-to-the-cabinet has a fibre-optic connection (made up of a bundle of thin glass 'fibre' threads) from the local telephone exchange to the street cabinet.

The <u>final connection</u> from the street cabinet to the customer is usually over a copper wire telephone line.

This means that broadband speeds may decrease the further the customer's home is from the street cabinet.

Fibre-to-the-cabinet is able to be faster than copper broadband, but slower than a full fibre connection.



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Fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP) description (detail)

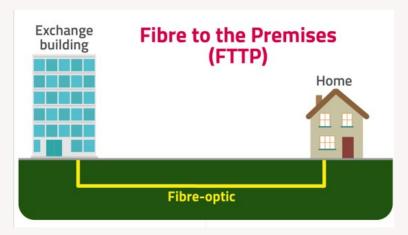
Fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP)

Fibre-to-the-premises has a fibre-optic connection all the way from the local exchange to the customer's home.

Fibre-to-the-premises is able to deliver similar maximum speeds to cable broadband.

Generally, distance from the exchange to the home does not affect speed.

Fibre-to-the-premises is less prone to faults and is not usually affected by poor weather. This makes it the most reliable technology to deliver broadband.



Annex B: reasons for incorrect understanding of terms

Reasons for incorrect understanding of the term cable broadband

Most reasons given fall into two themes: the delivery method, or understanding of the service received

(coded open responses)	%	Delivery/ construction/ technology	Service received by consumer
I didn't realise fibre was involved/ that it was part fibre	16%	Y	
Other misconception about how system links/ connects to home	13%	Y	
I didn't realise about the different wires/ cables/ I thought it was cable all the way/ only cable	12%	Y	
I was unaware a street cabinet/ box was involved	11%	Y	
I thought cable broadband was same as fibre/ full fibre/ did not realise copper was involved	9%	Y	
I thought it was the same as copper broadband/ that it was copper cable	8%	Y	
I thought it was direct/ I thought it came directly from the provider/hub	8%	Y	
I thought it was quick/ more efficient etc.	6%		Y
I thought it was old/ slow/ unreliable etc.	5%		Y
I thought that cable can be connected directly to devices/ without router	4%	Y	Y
I thought it was to do with satellite/cable and satellite	3%	Y	
I thought it was underground	3%	Y	
I thought it might be to do with cable TV	3%	Y	Y
I didn't realise that demand could decrease performance/ speed	2%		Y
Other	13%	Y	Y

Source: Broadband Terminology Research 2022



Reasons for incorrect understanding of the term fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP)

Most reasons given fall into two themes: the delivery method, or understanding of the service received

(coded open responses)	%	Delivery/ construction/ technology	Service received by consumer
That there was no cabinet/ I thought it would have to connect to a cabinet/ box before the home	19%	Y	
That it was direct/ that it was straight to the home/ surprised to see it going straight to the customer's residence	19%	Y	
Did not know it came from local exchange	7%	Y	
Did not know it was possible/ could exist	6%	Y	
I thought wires would be above ground/ over-head	6%	Y	
I thought it would be just fibre replacing copper between cabinet and home	6%	Y	
Just knew it was superior/ I knew fibre was better	6%	Y	
I knew it was straight to the home/ I thought fibre to the premises was self-explanatory	5%	Y	
I thought it involved phone lines	4%	Y	
Did not realise about speed/unaffected by distance/ more reliable etc.	4%		Y
Just didn't understand what abbreviation FTTP stood for	2%	Y	
Other	42%	Y	Y

Respect

Reasons for incorrect understanding of the term fibre-to-the-cabinet (FTTC)

Most reasons given fall into two themes: the delivery method, or understanding of the service received

(coded open responses)	%	Delivery/ construction/ technology	Service received by consumer
I didn't understand the term cabinet/ the cabinet system/ that there was a cabinet in the street	36%	Y	
I didn't know it was part copper/only fibre up to the cabinet/ that cables from cabinet differ/ I thought it was all fibre	22%	Y	
I thought it was fast / didn't realise it could be slower etc.	7%		Y
I didn't know it connected from the telephone exchange	6%	Y	
I thought it was direct/ I didn't think there was anything in between	5%	Y	
I didn't know it used thin glass threads/ that fibre meant thin glass threads	4%	Y	
I didn't know it used telephone lines	4%	Y	
I didn't know it could be affected by distance/ from the cabinet	2%		Y
Other	20%	Y	Y



Reasons for incorrect understanding of the term copper broadband

Most reasons given fall into two themes: the delivery method, or understanding of the service received

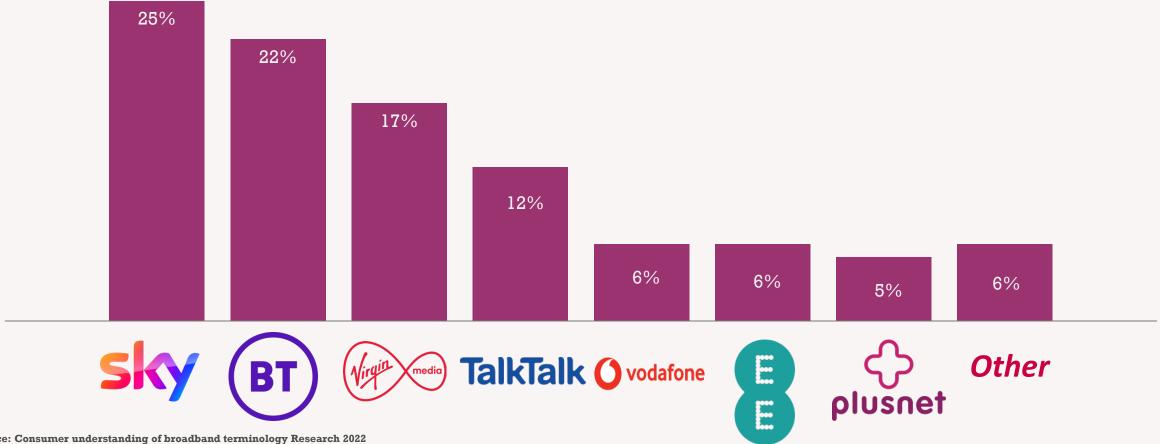
(coded open responses)	%	Delivery/ construction/ technology	Service received by consumer
I was unaware of the street cabinet/ box was involved	14%	Y	
I just knew it involved copper wires/ cabling	13%	Y	
I didn't realise it could be slower/ I thought it was faster than fibre etc.	9%		Y
I didn't know it connected from the telephone exchange	8%	Y	
I just knew that it was old/inferior technology e.g. slower, less durable, from the 90s etc.	8%	Y	Y
I didn't know it could be affected by distance	7%		Y
Other misconception about how system links/ connects to home	6%	Y	
I didn't realise it could be affected by the weather	6%		Y
I thought it was direct/ I thought it came directly from the provider	6%	Y	
I didn't know actual copper material was used	6%	Y	
I thought it meant the price/ deal/ level of broadband offered (not the material)	6%	-	-
I thought it was new/innovative/superior technology	5%	Y	-
I didn't know copper broadband was ADSL	5%	Y	
I thought it meant a connection in the house up to the TV/ I thought it was fibre changing to copper in the home	4%	Y	
I didn't realise that it was underground/ I thought the lines were above houses	3%	Y	
I didn't realise it was shared with other buildings/ neighbours	2%	Y	
I didn't realise it might be affected by multiple household users/other items in the home	2%		Y
I didn't realise it could be prone to faults/ I thought it was reliable	2%		Y
Other	16%	Y	Y

Source: Broadband Terminology Research 2022

Respect

Appendix

Current fixed broadband provider



Source: Consumer understanding of broadband terminology Research 2022

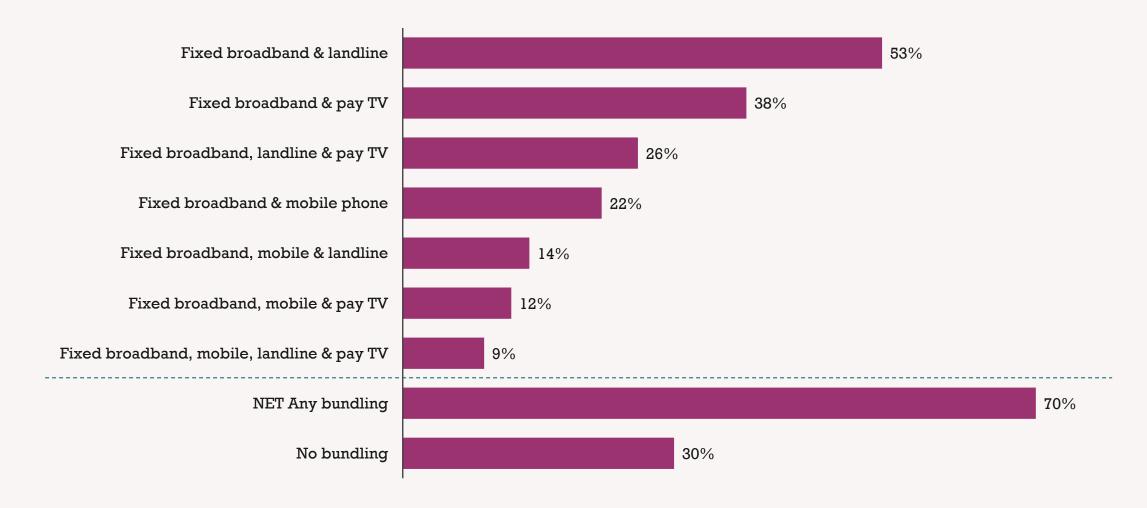
QC1. Which provider does your household currently use for its fixed broadband service? Please say which company you pay for this service. Base: All with fixed broadband (1,123)

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Services bundled with fixed broadband



Source: Consumer understanding of broadband terminology Research 2022

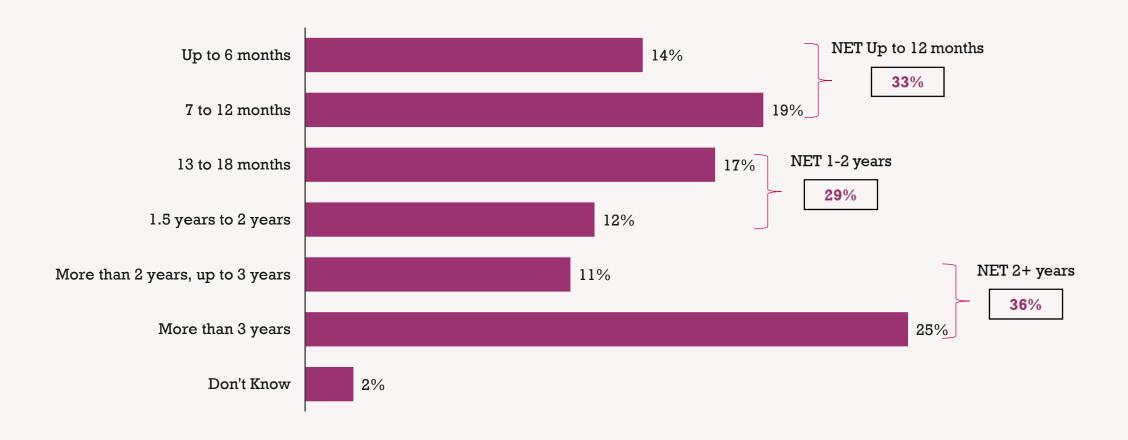
QC2. Do you take any other services bundled in a package from the same provider as your fixed broadband service?

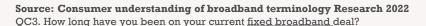
Base: All with fixed broadband (1,123)



Respect

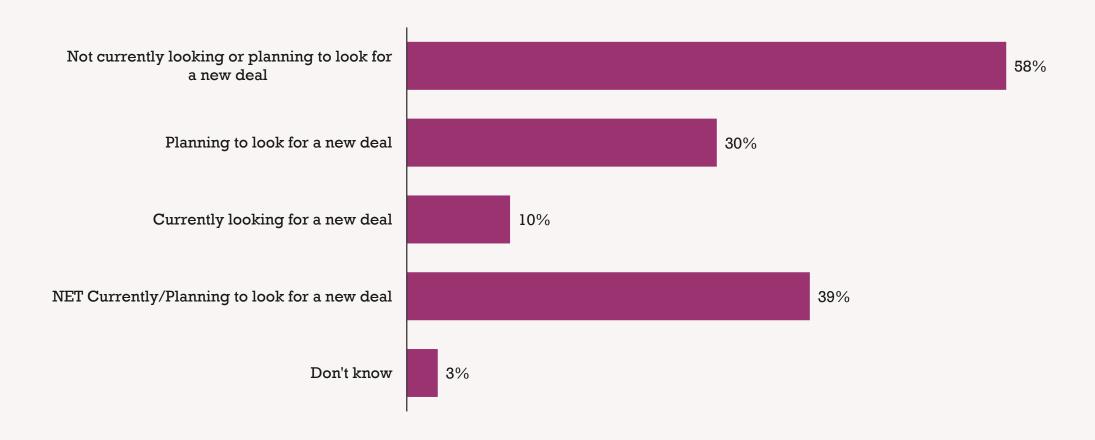
Length of time on current fixed broadband deal





Base: All with fixed broadband (1,123)

Whether thinking about a new fixed broadband deal



Source: Consumer understanding of broadband terminology Research 2022

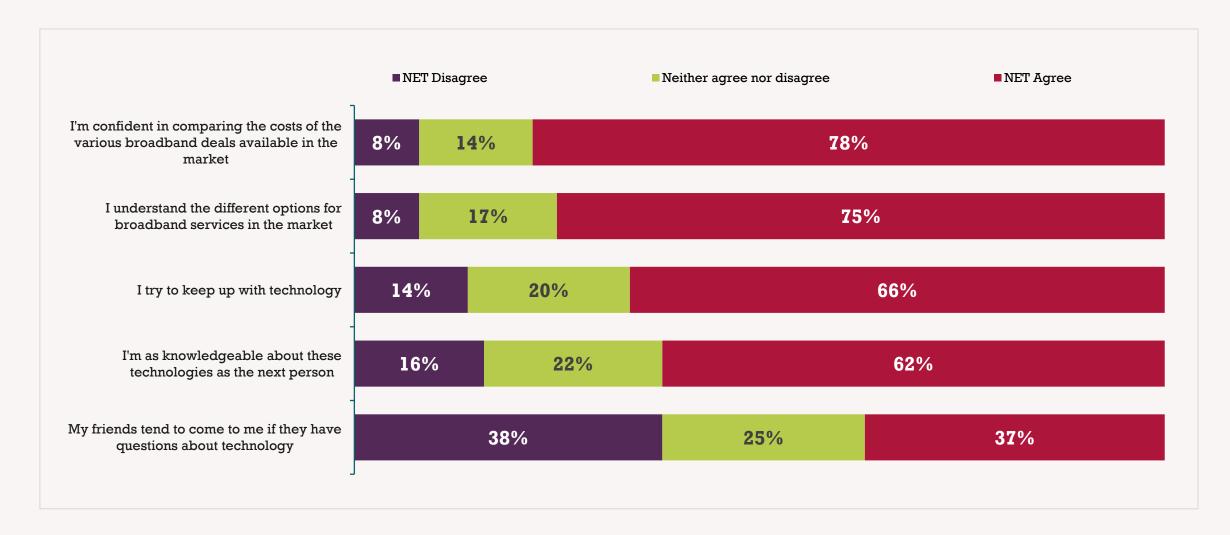
QC4. Which one of these best describes your current thinking about your fixed broadband service? Are you...

Base: All with fixed broadband (1,123)



Respect

Three in four agree they are confident comparing the costs of the broadband deals available and understand the different options for broadband services in the market



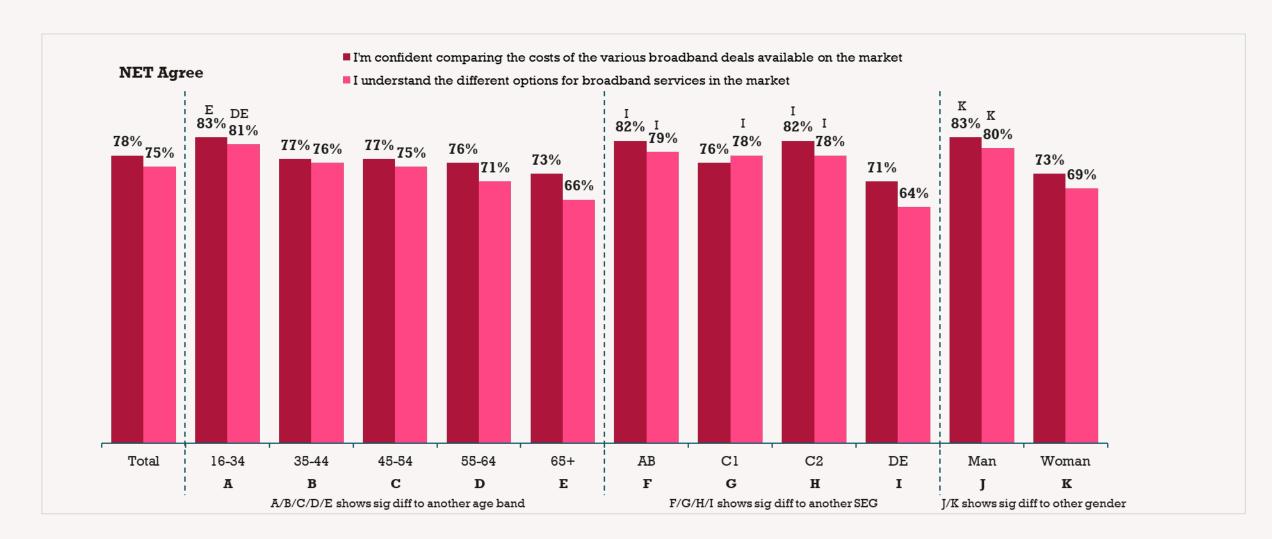
Source: Consumer understanding of broadband terminology Research 2022

QD2. Please look at the different statements people have made about technology services such as mobile phones, landline phones, broadband or TV services. For each statement please indicate how much you agree or disagree...

Base: All respondents (1,155)



Women, the oldest age groups, and those in socioeconomic band DE all have lower proportions claiming to understand options or be confident comparing costs in the broadband market



Source: Consumer understanding of broadband terminology Research 2022

QD2. Please look at the different statements people have made about technology services such as mobile phones, landline phones, broadband or TV services.

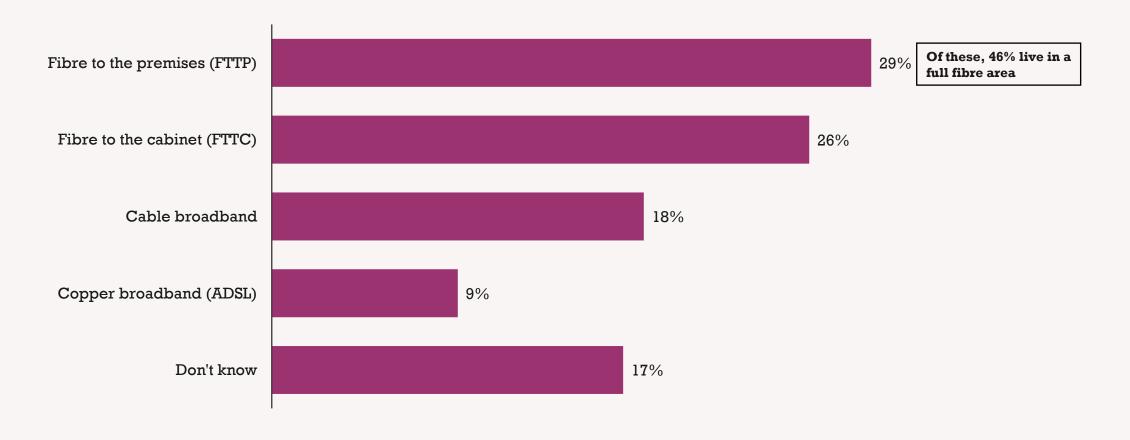
For each statement please indicate how much you agree or disagree...

Base: All respondents (1,155), 16-34 (309), 35-44 (233), 45-54 (173), 55-64 (192), 65+ (248), AB (345), C1 (333), C2 (207), DE (270), Man (541), Woman (612)





Nearly three in ten believe they have an FTTP service, however of these only 46% live in a full fibre area, suggesting for a proportion there may still be confusion about the service they have and/or what the terms mean



Source: Consumer understanding of broadband terminology Research 2022 QK1. Which of these <u>fixed broadband</u> services does your household have?

Base: All with fixed broadband (1,123)

The <u>questionnaire</u> is available on the Ofcom website.