

## 4 Internet and web-based content

### 4.1 Broadband take-up

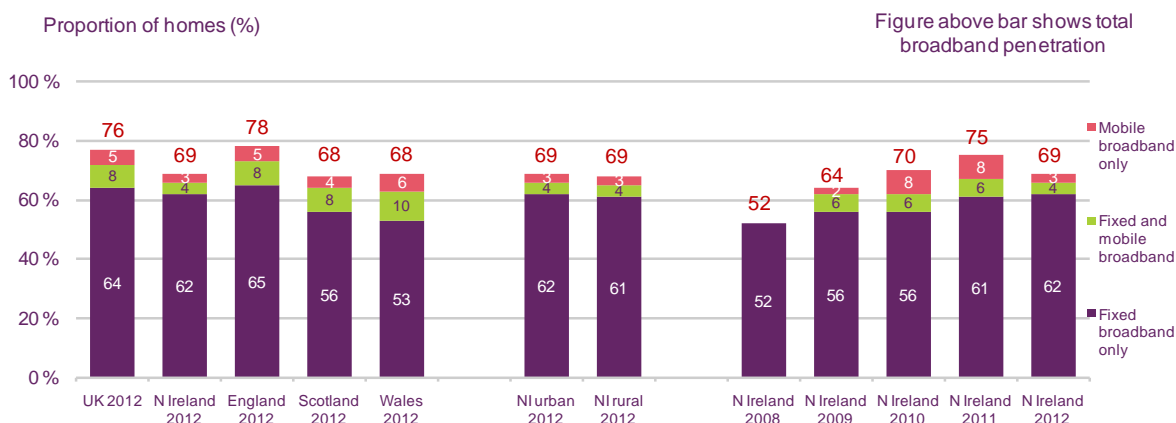
#### Fixed broadband take-up remains stable, while mobile dongle-based broadband falls

Overall take-up of broadband services (fixed-line and/or mobile) in Northern Ireland stood at 69% of households in Q1 2012. Year on year, there has been a fall in the proportion of households with mobile broadband (via a dongle or in-built connectivity in a laptop or tablet) from 13% in Q1 2011 to 7% in Q1 2012. However, the proportion of homes with fixed-line broadband has remained stable at 66%<sup>4</sup>.

At the same time, as is shown in Figure 4.3, there has been an increase in the proportion of adults using their mobile phone to access the internet. This suggests that, with the rise in smartphone ownership (see Figure 5.7), the decrease in mobile broadband ownership may be partially explained by a small proportion of consumers who are using their phone instead of other mobile platforms to access the internet.

While broadband penetration is behind the UK average (76%), it is in line with Scotland and Wales (both 68%). Take-up in Northern Ireland does not vary between urban or rural areas, with penetration at 69% in both.

**Figure 4.1 Broadband take-up at home**



Source: Ofcom research, Quarter 1 2012

Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 3772 UK, 508 Northern Ireland, 2251 England, 500 Scotland, 513 Wales, 255 Northern Ireland urban, 253 Northern Ireland rural, 629 Northern Ireland 2008, 652 Northern Ireland 2009, 761 Northern Ireland 2010, 511 Northern Ireland 2011, 508 Northern Ireland 2012)

QE9. Which of these methods does your household use to connect to the internet at home? (NB 2008 survey did not cover mobile broadband. 2008 measure shows any broadband)

#### Over-55s in Northern Ireland are less likely to have broadband than in the UK

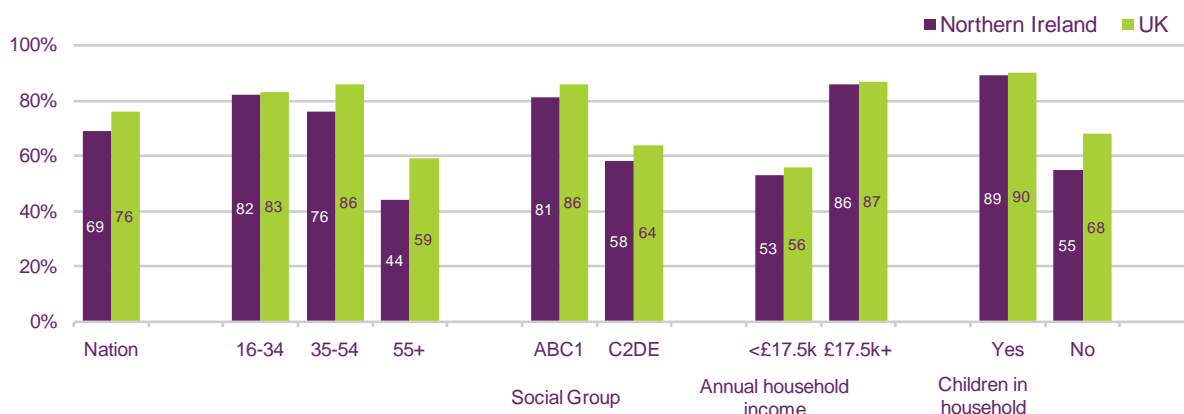
Figure 4.2 shows how, as with the rest of the UK, broadband penetration varies significantly by demographic factors. Nearly nine in ten households with children, and over eight in ten adults aged 16-34 or in the AB social group have access to broadband services at home.

<sup>4</sup> While the fall in overall broadband take-up in Northern Ireland is within the survey's error margins, there has been a significant fall in mobile broadband take-up, while fixed broadband take-up remains stable.

This compares to less than half (44%) of those aged 55+; significantly lower than the comparable figure for the UK (59%).

Take-up is also relatively low among the DE socio-economic groups (54%), and in households with incomes less than £17.5k per annum (51%).

**Figure 4.2 Broadband take-up in Northern Ireland, by demographic**



Source: Ofcom research, Quarter 1 2012

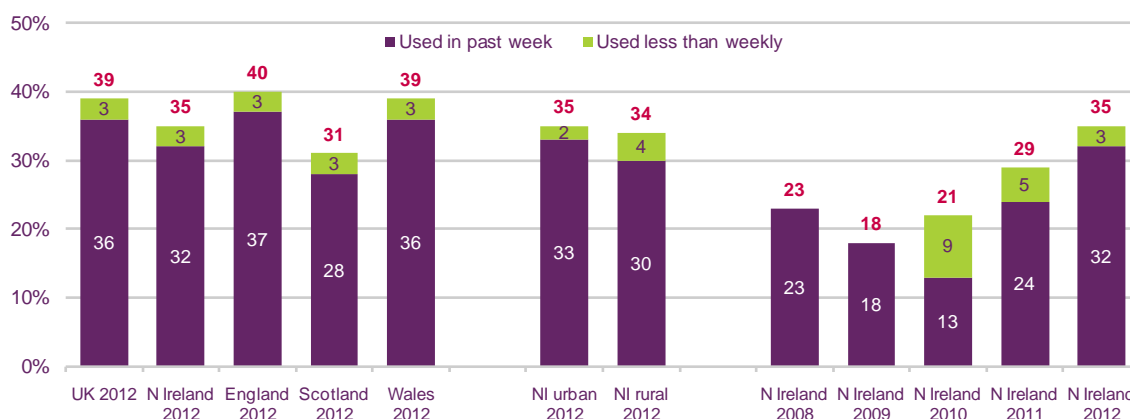
Base: All adults aged 16+ (n =508 Northern Ireland, 167 16-34s, 179 35-54s, 162 55+, 220 ABC1, 288 C2DE, 201 <£17.5k income, 139 £17.5k+, 221 children in home, 287 no children in home) QE9. Which of these methods does your household use to connect to the Internet at home?

## 4.2 Internet-enabled devices

### Over a third of adults in Northern Ireland access the internet on their mobile phone

With the increasing adoption of smartphones (up from 21% to 34% of adults in Northern Ireland) there has been an increase in the use of mobile phones to access the internet. In Q1 2012, over a third (35%) of adults in Northern Ireland said that they used a mobile phone handset to access the internet (up from 29% in Q1 2011), slightly behind the UK average of 39%.

**Figure 4.3 Use of mobile phone to access the internet**



Source: Ofcom research, Quarter 1 2012

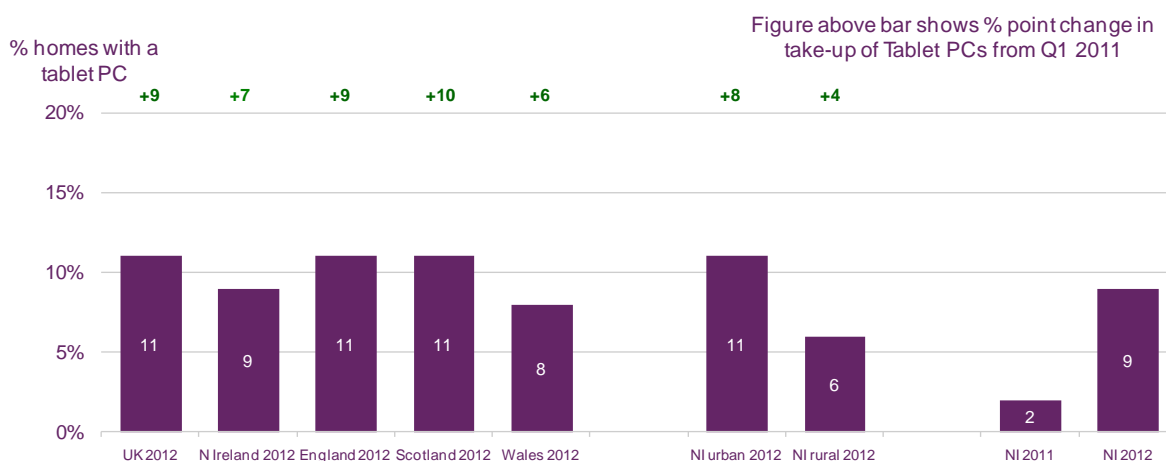
Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 3772 UK, 508 Northern Ireland, 2251 England, 500 Scotland, 513 Wales, 255 Northern Ireland urban, 253 Northern Ireland rural, 629 Northern Ireland 2008, 652 Northern Ireland 2009, 761 Northern Ireland 2010, 511 Northern Ireland 2011, 508 Northern Ireland 2012)

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? (NB 2008 and 2009 surveys did not cover use in past week – 2008 and 2009 measures show any use)

**Just under one in ten adults in Northern Ireland have purchased a tablet computer**

Figure 4.4 shows that tablet computer ownership has increased rapidly across the UK in the past year. In Quarter 1 2012, 9% of adults in Northern Ireland claimed to have a tablet PC, such as an iPad or Samsung Galaxy Tab, an annual increase of seven percentage points. Those most likely to have purchased a tablet PC are aged 35-54, from AB social groups/ higher income homes and living in an urban area.

**Figure 4.4 Take-up of tablet PCs**



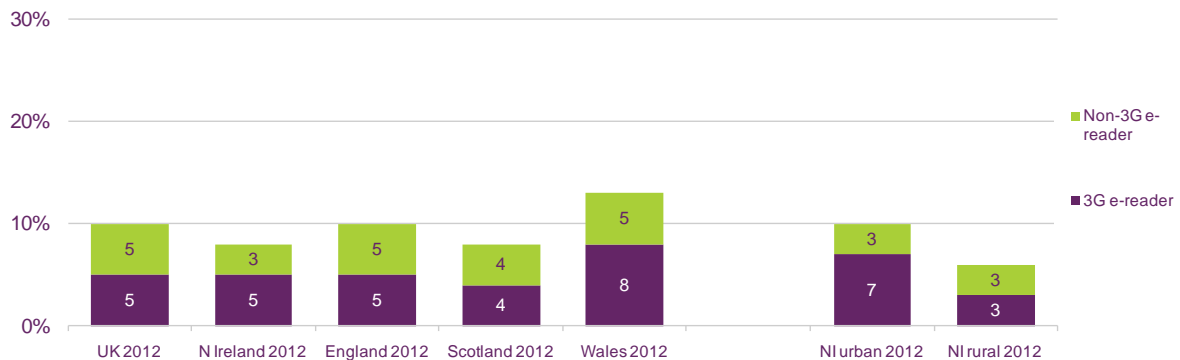
Source: Ofcom research, Quarter 1 2012

Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 3772 UK, 508 Northern Ireland, 2251 England, 500 Scotland, 513 Wales, 255 Northern Ireland urban, 253 Northern Ireland rural, 511 Northern Ireland 2011, 508 Northern Ireland 2012)

## Eight per cent of adults in Northern Ireland have an e-reader

As shown in Figure 4.5, 8% of adults in Northern Ireland have an e-reader that they can use to read books, magazines and other text downloaded from the internet, in line with the UK average (10%). Half of those with an e-reader have a built-in 3G connection, which allows them to download books using a mobile network. Those aged between 35 and 54 and in the AB social groups are most likely to own an e-reader.

**Figure 4.5 Personal use of e-readers**



Source: Ofcom research, Quarter 1 2012

Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 3772 UK, 508 Northern Ireland, 2251 England, 500 Scotland, 513 Wales, 255 Northern Ireland urban, 253 Northern Ireland rural)

QB1. Which of the following do you, or does anyone in your household, have in your home at the moment?/ QB2. And do you personally use.../ QB6. Does your household's e-reader have built-in 3G access to a mobile network?

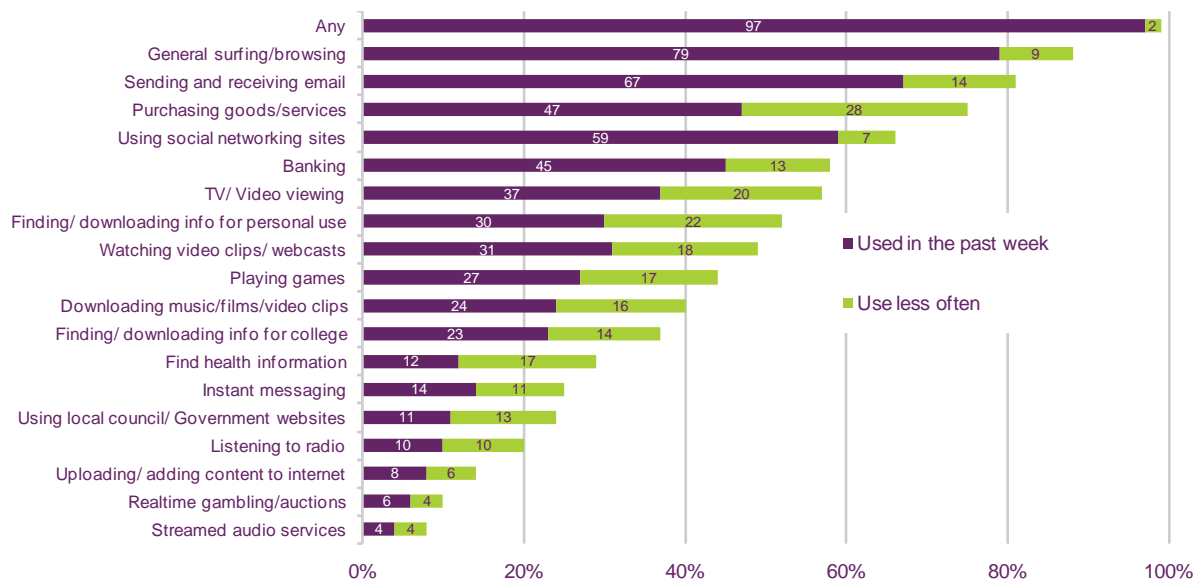
## 4.3 Internet use

### Emailing, shopping and social networking among the most popular uses of the internet

Figure 4.6 shows that over six in ten broadband users in Northern Ireland are using the internet for emailing (80%), purchasing goods or services (72%) and social networking (66%). In total, half (49%) of all adults in Northern Ireland use social networking sites (either on a PC or mobile phone), including Facebook and Twitter; marginally behind the UK average (52% of adults).

Fifty-six per cent of those with broadband at home use their connection to view TV or video clips, while the same proportion engage in internet banking (up by five percentage points since 2011).

**Figure 4.6 Use of online applications among broadband users in Northern Ireland**



Source: Ofcom research, Quarter 1 2012

Base: Adults aged 16+ with a broadband connection at home (n= 348 Northern Ireland 2012)

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