

5 Internet and online content

5.1 Internet take-up

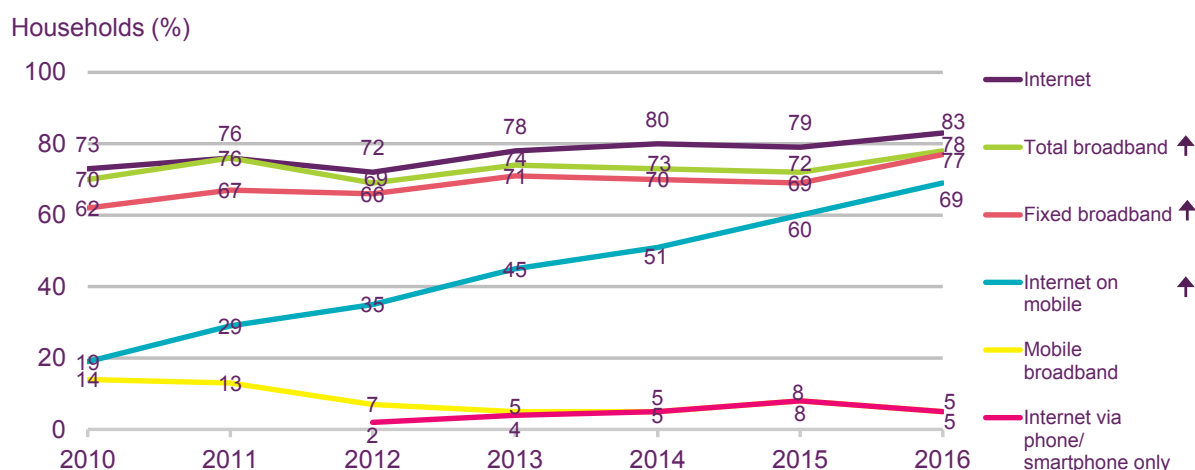
Internet access through a mobile phone and through fixed broadband has grown in Northern Ireland

Between 2015 and 2016, fixed broadband take-up increased, from 69% to 77% of households. Seven in ten adults (69%) had online access through a mobile phone, up by 9pp since 2015.

More than eight in ten households in Northern Ireland (83%) now have access to the internet,¹² which is consistent with take-up in 2015 (79%).

The proportion of adults in Northern Ireland accessing the internet exclusively through a mobile phone or smartphone remained stable at 5%.

Figure 5.1 Internet take-up, Northern Ireland: 2010-2016



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker. Data from Q1 of each year 2010-2013, then Wave 1 2014-2015
 Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 761 Northern Ireland 2010, 511 Northern Ireland 2011, 508 Northern Ireland 2012, 507 Northern Ireland 2013, 499 Northern Ireland 2014, 504 Northern Ireland 2015, 507 Northern Ireland 2016)

Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland 2015 and 2016.

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

Note 2: 'Total broadband' includes the following methods to connect to the internet 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), and 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 would include 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.

¹²This includes internet access via broadband or mobile phone. Incidences of narrowband are too low to report but would still count as 'internet access'

Note 5: '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.

5.2 Internet-enabled devices

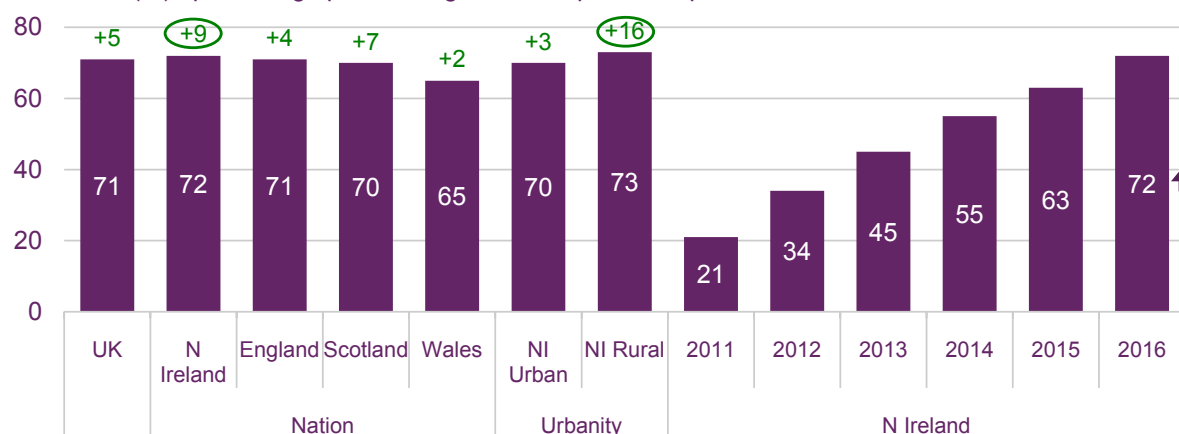
More than seven in ten adults in Northern Ireland owned a smartphone in 2016

Smartphone ownership in Northern Ireland grew by 9pp between 2015 and 2016, with 72% of adults owning one in 2016.

This growth was mainly driven by the increase in take-up by adults in rural areas, up by 16pp since 2015 (to 73%). In 2016 it reached a level comparable with that in urban areas.

Figure 5.2 Take-up of smartphones in Northern Ireland

Adults 16+ (%) / percentage point change in take-up of smartphones since H1 2015



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016

Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 3737 UK, 507 Northern Ireland, 2239 England, 502 Scotland, 489 Wales, 262 Northern Ireland urban, 245 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)

Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2016, between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2016 and between Northern Ireland 2015 and 2016. Circles around the +/- figures above the chart indicate any significant difference between 2015 and 2016 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 web sites and generally surf the internet. Popular brands of smartphone include BlackBerry, iPhone and Android phones such as the Samsung Galaxy.

Sixty per cent of households in Northern Ireland owned a tablet in 2016

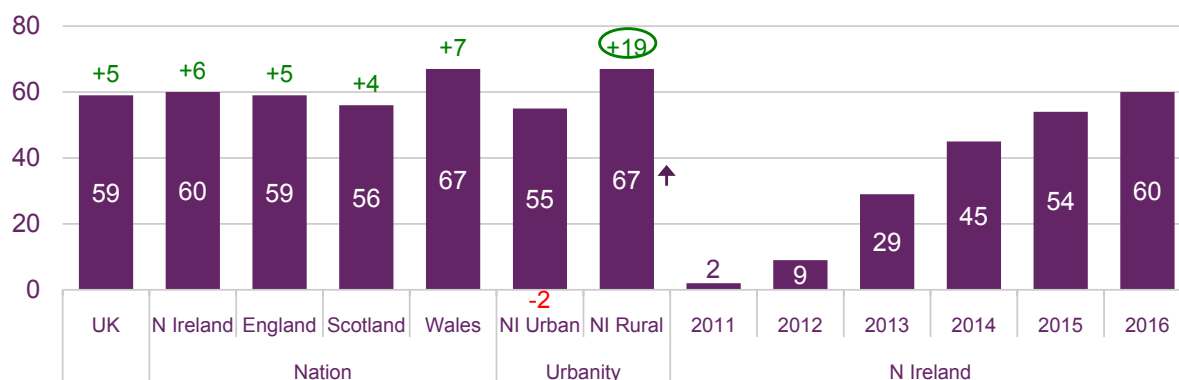
Tablet ownership in Northern Ireland stood at 60% of households in 2016. This is in line with take-up for the UK overall.

Since 2015 there has been a significant increase in tablet ownership among rural households in Northern Ireland (67% from 48%). Households in rural Northern Ireland are now more likely than urban households to own a tablet (67% vs. 55%).

The growth in take-up of tablets in rural areas could be due to a variety of factors. For example, in 2015, take-up of tablets in urban areas grew significantly by 17pp, while there was no increase in rural areas. Therefore the growth seen in 2016 may be indicative of rural areas catching up with take-up in urban areas. Another reason might be that both broadband access and smartphone ownership increased in rural Northern Ireland in 2016. The higher levels of access to broadband in these rural areas may have contributed to the growth in tablet ownership.

Figure 5.3 Take-up of tablet computers in Northern Ireland

Households (%) / percentage point change in take-up of tablet computers since H1 2015



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016

Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 3737 UK, 507 Northern Ireland, 2239 England, 502 Scotland, 489 Wales, 262 Northern Ireland urban, 245 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)

Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2016, between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2016 and between Northern Ireland 2015 and 2016. Circles around the +/- figures above the chart indicate any significant difference between 2015 and 2016 for Northern Ireland, urban and rural.

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

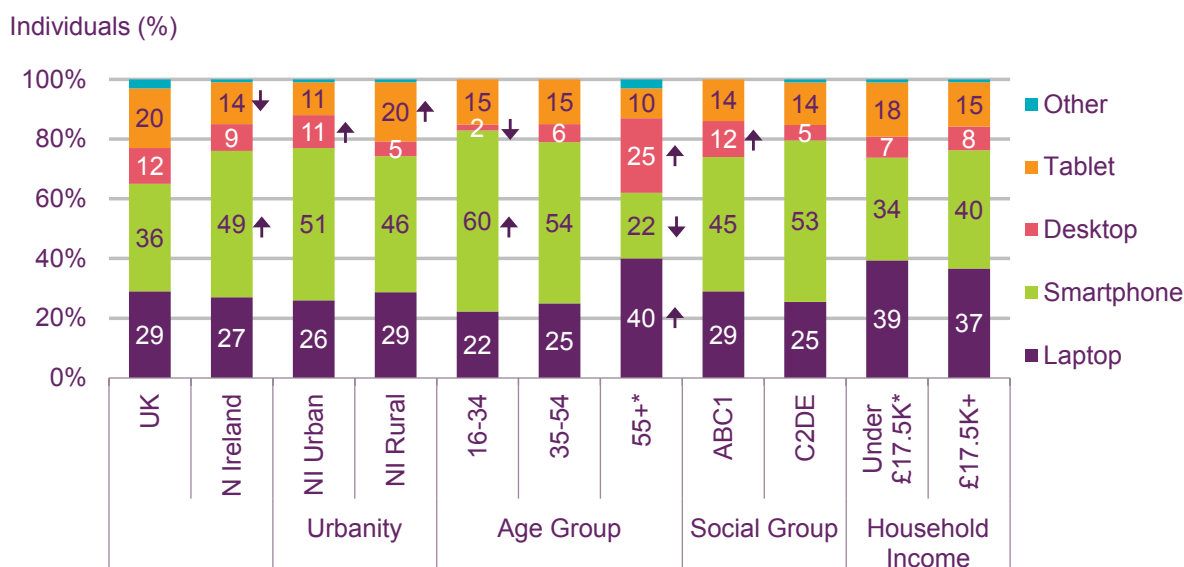
Smartphones are the most important device for going online for internet users in Northern Ireland

With the exception of internet users aged 55 and over and internet users¹³ in under £17.5k households,¹⁴ the smartphone was considered the most important device for internet access, across all demographics. Six in ten internet users aged 16-34 considered the smartphone their most important device for internet access, compared to 22% of internet users aged 55 and over. The smartphone was also seen as the most important device by internet users in both rural and urban areas, as well as those in ABC1 and C2DE households.

¹³ Internet users are defined as those who ever go online either at home or elsewhere.

¹⁴ This refers to annual household income

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



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016

Base: Internet users aged 16+ (n = 3100 UK, 395 Northern Ireland, 204 Northern Ireland urban, 191 Northern Ireland rural, 163 16-34, 157 35-54, 75* 55+, 195 ABC1, 200 C2DE, 72* under £17.5K, 80 £17.5K+).

Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and the UK in 2016, between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2016, by age compared to all internet users in Northern Ireland in 2016, between socio-economic groups in Northern Ireland in 2016 and between household income groups in Northern Ireland in 2016.

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'. * Caution: low base.

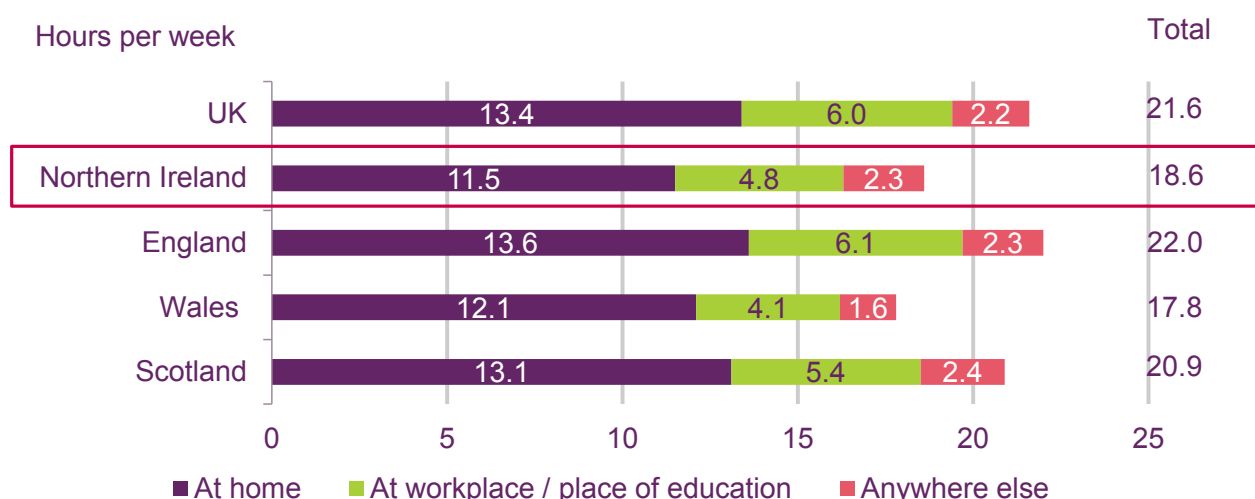
5.3 Internet use

Internet users in Northern Ireland spent 18.6 hours a week on the internet in 2015

According to research conducted for Ofcom's *Adult Media Literacy Report*¹⁵, internet users in Northern Ireland claimed to spend 18.6 hours on the internet per week in 2015. This was statistically unchanged since 2014. As elsewhere in the UK, internet users in Northern Ireland say they spend the majority of their time online at home, followed by their workplace or place of education.

¹⁵ Available from online at http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/media-literacy/media-lit-10years/2015_Adults_media_use_and_attitudes_report.pdf

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

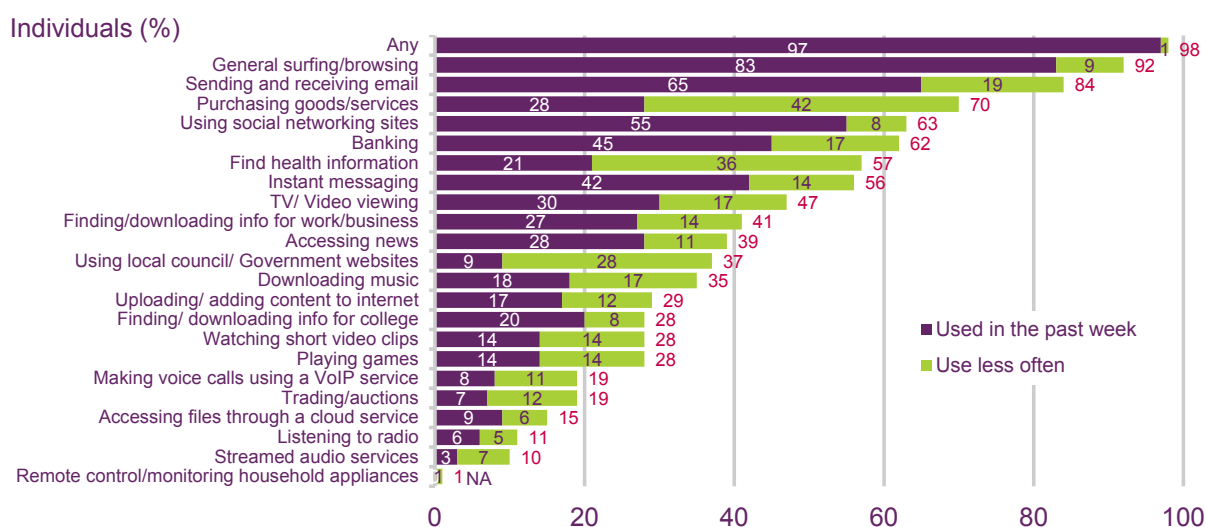


Source: Ofcom research, fieldwork carried out by Saville Rossiter-Base in October to November 2015
 Base: All adults aged 16+ who use go online at home or elsewhere (1548 UK, 957 England, 168 Scotland, 163 Wales, 170 Northern Ireland). Question: IN6A-C – How many hours in a typical week would you say you use the internet at home/ at your work place or place of education/ anywhere else? (Unprompted responses, single coded)

General browsing was the most popular internet activity carried out by internet users in Northern Ireland in 2016

The most popular internet activities undertaken by internet users in Northern Ireland in 2016 were general surfing/browsing (92%) and sending/receiving email (84%). Purchasing goods/services was undertaken by 70% of adults, and around six in ten used the internet for social networking and banking (63% and 62% respectively).

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



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016
 Base: Adults aged 16+ who use the internet at home or elsewhere (n= 395 Northern Ireland 2016)
 QE5A: Which, if any, of these do you use the internet for?