

Section 3

Background to the report

- 3.1 Under the Communications Act 2003 ('the Act') Ofcom is required to submit a report to the Secretary of State every three years, describing the state of the electronic communications networks and services in the UK⁷. We published the first report in 2011 and the second report in 2014.
- 3.2 However, we recognised after publishing the first report that some aspects of the communications infrastructure were developing rapidly and/or were of particular interest to Government and industry stakeholders, and therefore committed to providing updates on an annual basis. These updates have mainly focused on the areas of greatest change, such as coverage and capacity of fixed and mobile networks. This year's Connected Nations Report updates the report⁸ published in December 2015.

Approach and context

- 3.3 For fixed broadband services this report considers services provided to residential consumers and to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). We use data gathered from the largest operators in each sector, as well as information already held by Ofcom. Where possible we have re-used data already provided to Ofcom, in order to minimise the burden on stakeholders. We have also gathered data from a number of other smaller network and service providers for various aspects of this report, including some providers of fibre to the premises (FTTP) networks.
- 3.4 We present a detailed description of our data sources and methodologies in Annex 1.

Improving the information available to consumers and other stakeholders

- 3.5 Alongside this report we are launching two tools to help consumers and other stakeholders find out more about fixed and mobile services in the UK:
- 3.5.1 **A new app for mobile phones and tablet PCs**, which enables consumers to find out about the fixed broadband and mobile services that are available at their address. In addition, the app will allow consumers to test the speed of their fixed and mobile connections and identify the issues most likely to be affecting their performance. A web-based tool will also be available for use on desktop and laptop computers.
- 3.5.2 **An online visualisation tool**, which presents some of the key highlights from this year's report in an intuitive and graphical way. The tool allows the user to drill down into the detail of some of the data, for example to find out more about mobile coverage in a specific area.
- 3.6 As in previous years, we will be making data available to download via our website. We recognise the value in making this data available to third parties for their own

⁷ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/24/section/1>

⁸ <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/market-data/infrastructure/connected-nations-2015/>

analysis and we continue to work as part of our broader open data initiative to explore ways in which to further improve this.

The International Communications Market Report

- 3.7 Ofcom's International Communications Market Report (ICMR) 2016⁹, published alongside this report, provides comparative international data on the communications sector. Its purpose is to benchmark the UK against 17 comparator countries in terms of the availability, take-up and use of communications services. A range of different data sources are used to inform the analysis presented in the ICMR, including consumer research commissioned by Ofcom, data already held by Ofcom and data sourced from either desk research or third party providers.
- 3.8 There are a number of metrics in the ICMR that are similar to those in this report (most notably those present in the *Telecoms and networks* chapter of the ICMR). However, data used in the ICMR differs from those used in this report on a number of counts, such as time period (data presented in the ICMR is generally end of 2015 unless otherwise stated, compared to June 2016 for the data in this report) and definitions behind metrics.
- 3.9 For example, 4G population coverage in the ICMR is defined as being from at least one operator, whereas this report typically expresses coverage from all operators. In instances where metrics differ between the ICMR and this report, the difference is explained. Further explanation behind differences is detailed in the document *Measuring the networks: the methodologies behind Ofcom's research reports*.¹⁰

Outline of this report

- 3.10 The remainder of the report is structured as follows:
- Section 4: Fixed broadband networks and services
 - Section 5: Mobile voice and data services
 - Section 6: Internet Access Services
 - Section 7: Security and resilience
 - Section 8: The continuing evolution of television
 - Annex 1: Methodology
 - Annex 2: Glossary
- 3.11 We welcome comments from consumers and stakeholders on the report. Please contact us at connectednationsreport@ofcom.org.uk.

⁹ <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/cmr/cmr16/international>

¹⁰ <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/infrastructure-research/connected-nations-2016>