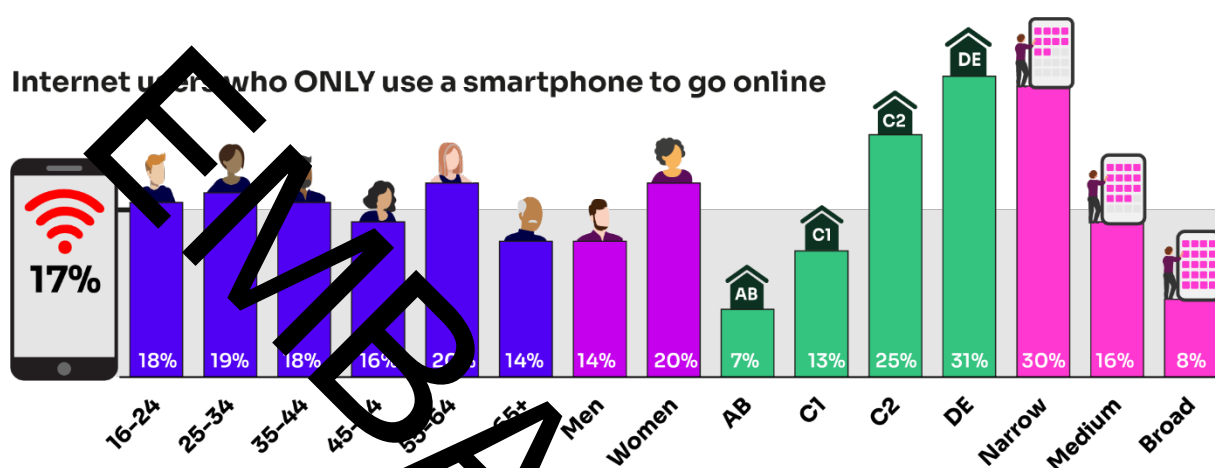


Smartphone-only internet users

Almost a fifth of internet users only use a smartphone to go online, and some feel disadvantaged by this

Among all adult internet users, 17% go online exclusively via a smartphone and no other device. Those in this category are more likely to be women (20%), narrow internet users (30%) and in a C2 (25%) or DE household (31%).



The reasons for only accessing the internet using a smartphone vary; for some this is a personal preference, while others may face barriers to using other devices such as affordability or a lack of confidence.

It is important that we consider device use within the context of digital exclusion, as some users feel that relying on *only* a smartphone to access the internet can limit their online experience. Almost three in ten (29%) smartphone-only internet users say they have felt disadvantaged by this. While smartphones allow internet users to complete a range of activities on the go, factors such as the smaller screen size, limited functionality or data allowance restrictions can mean they are seen as less suitable for completing certain tasks. For example, 68% of all smartphone users think that completing forms and working on documents is more difficult on a smartphone than on a laptop or desktop (53% for smartphone-only users) and 52% say that comparing products or services online is more difficult to do on a smartphone (35% for smartphone-only users). Although in both cases this is lower for smartphone-only internet users, these factors help to explain why some may feel disadvantaged. These are broadly comparable with 2021 figures, suggesting that these problems are not going away.

Issues around affordability may also contribute to the feeling of being disadvantaged. According to our Technology Tracker, 4% of adults have mobile-only access to the internet at home, which may mean they have a less reliable connection and feel more constrained by mobile data limits.¹⁸ Three in ten smartphone users say that when they go online using a smartphone, they tend to complete tasks as quickly as possible to avoid using up too much data, and the same proportion of smartphone-only internet users agree. This latter group are likely to feel this most acutely, and for them it could lead to rushing or abandoning online tasks and activities.

¹⁸ Ofcom Technology Tracker 2023

