Statistical bulletin

Internet users, UK: 2018

Internet use in the UK annual estimates by age, sex, disability and geographical location.

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1 . Main points

- In 2018, 90% of adults in the UK were recent internet users, up from 89% in 2017.

- 8.4% of adults had never used the internet in 2018, down from 9.2% in 2017.

- Virtually all adults aged 16 to 34 years were recent internet users (99%) in 2018, compared with 44% of adults aged 75 years and over.

- 20% of disabled adults had never used the internet in 2018, down from 22% in 2017.

- Northern Ireland is catching up with the other UK regions in recent internet use, reaching 86% in 2018; however, it remained the region with the lowest recent use.

2 . Things you need to know about this release

In this release when we refer to a year, each year represents the period Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) only.

The estimates are derived from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and are not seasonally adjusted.

Recent and lapsed internet users

Estimates published as part of this statistical bulletin focus on recent and lapsed internet users and those who have never used the internet. Recent internet users are adults who have used the internet within the last three months. Lapsed internet users are adults who used the internet more than three months ago.

Comparisons with Internet access – households and individuals

Comparisons made between estimates in this release and the annual Internet access – households and individuals publication should be undertaken with caution. The Internet access – households and individuals: 2017 statistical bulletin provides more information on the range of activities carried out using the internet but the estimates are derived from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, which has a much smaller sample size than the LFS from which Internet users estimates are derived.

Adults with a disability

Estimates of adults with a disability, as defined by the Equality Act 2010, are presented from 2014. The term "disabled" is used to refer to those who self-assess that they have a disability in line with the Equality Act. These should not be compared directly with the estimates for 2011 to 2013, which are defined by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005.

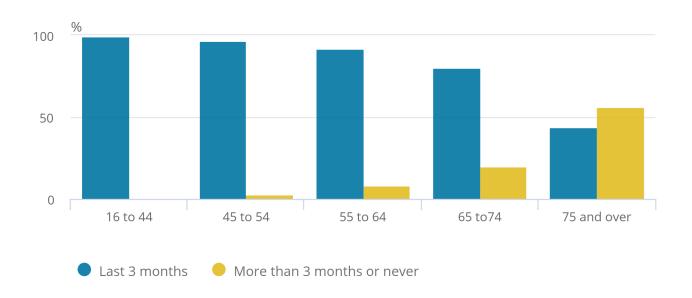# 3 . Generation gap narrowing in recent internet use

In 2018, almost all adults aged 16 to 34 years (99%) were recent internet users.

Since the survey began in 2011, adults aged 75 years and over have consistently been the lowest users of the internet. In 2011, 20% of adults aged 75 years and over were recent internet users, rising to 44% in 2018. However, recent internet use in the 65 to 74 age group increased from 52% in 2011 to 80% in 2018, closing the gap on younger age groups.

Recent internet use by retired adults has increased by almost 25 percentage points since 2011, to 64% in 2018. Recent internet use by adults who were economically inactive, increased by 18 percentage points over this period to 88%.

Figure 1: Internet users by age group, 2018, UK

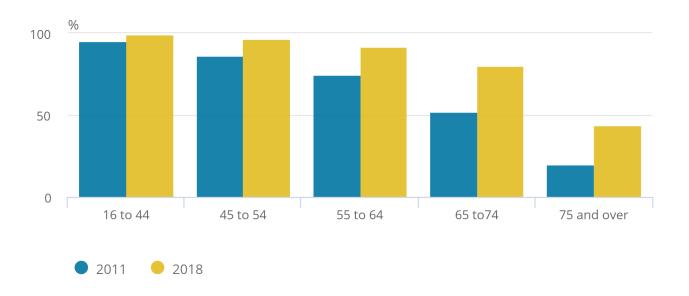Figure 1: Internet users by age group, 2018, UK

Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. 2018 refers to Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2018 only.

Figure 2: Recent internet use by age group, 2011 and 2018, UK

Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Recent internet users are adults who have used the internet within the last three months.

2. 2011 refers to Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2011 only.

3. 2018 refers to Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2018 only.

4 . Men are more likely to use the internet than women

The proportion of men who had recently used the internet in 2018 was higher than women, at 91% and 89% respectively. In 2011, the proportion of men who recently used the internet was 82%, compared with women at 77%.
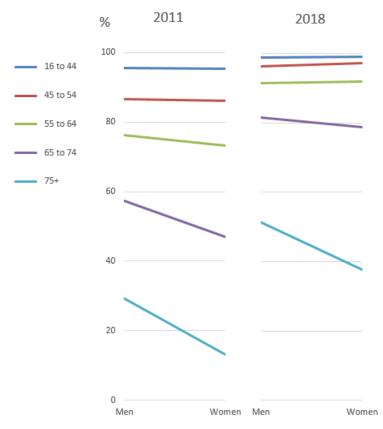
The difference in recent internet use between men and women was larger in the oldest age groups. Of those adults aged 65 to 74 years, 82% of men and 79% of women were recent internet users. Furthermore, 51% of men aged 75 years and over were recent internet users, compared with 38% of women in this age group.

The slope chart in Figure 3 demonstrates the differences in recent internet use between men and women for each age group. For comparison purposes, this has been shown for 2011 and 2018.

Women aged 65 to 74 years showed the highest percentage point increase in recent internet use when compared with other age groups, rising from 47% in 2011 to 79% in 2018.

Overall, there was still a higher proportion of women who had never used the internet at 9.7% compared with men at 7.1%.

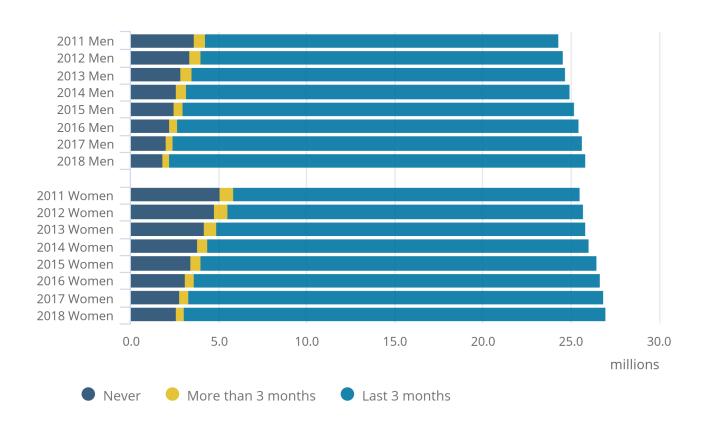**Figure 3: Recent internet use by age group and sex, 2011 and 2018, UK**

Notes:

1. Recent internet users are adults who have used the internet within the last three months.

2. 2011 refers to Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2011 only.

3. 2018 refers to Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2018 only.

Figure 4: Internet use and non-use by sex, 2011 to 2018, UK

Figure 4: Internet use and non-use by sex, 2011 to 2018, UK

Never   **More than 3 months**   **Last 3 months**

Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Each year refers to data for the period Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) only.

5 . Older adults are less likely to use the internet

In 2018, 8.4% of adults had never used the internet. Of the 4.5 million adults who had never used the internet in 2018, more than half (2.6 million) were aged 75 years and over.

Since 2011, the percentage of adults aged 65 years and over who had never used the internet has declined by 27 percentage points. This compares with a decline of 5.6 percentage points in adults aged 16 to 64 years.

Lapsed internet use by adults aged 75 years and over rose from 3.9% in 2011 to 7.3% in 2017, before falling to 5.7% in 2018. While there has been an increase in recent internet use in adults aged 75 years and over, they remain the age group with the highest proportion of lapsed internet users.

6 . Recent internet use by disabled adults increases across all ages

In 2018, there was little difference in recent internet use for disabled and non-disabled adults in the 16 to 24 age group; 98% of disabled adults and 99% of non-disabled adults in this age group were recent internet users.

There was a larger difference in recent internet use for adults aged 75 years and over; 39% of disabled adults in this age group were recent internet users, compared with 49% of non-disabled adults.

Since 2014, the number of disabled adults who had used the internet recently increased by 11.7 percentage points to just over 9.5 million in 2018.

Overall, the proportion of recent internet users was lower for adults who were disabled compared with those who were not.

Of the 0.85 million adults who had last used the internet over three months ago, 0.45 million were disabled.

7 . Northern Ireland shows the largest increase in recent internet use
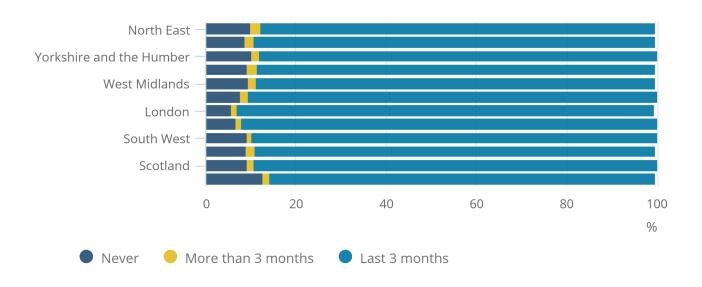
In 2018, London remained the region with the highest proportion of recent internet users (93%) compared with other regions of the UK.

Northern Ireland had the largest increase in recent internet use since 2011, a rise of 17 percentage points, although this region still had the lowest proportion of recent internet users (86%) when compared with other regions.

In both Scotland and Wales, 89% of adults were recent internet users.

Figure 5: Internet use and non-use by region, 2018, UK

Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. 2018 refers to Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2018 only.

8 . Quality and methodology

The Labour Force Survey Quality and Methodology Information report contains important information on:

- the strengths and limitations of the data and how it compares with related data

- uses and users of the data

- how the output was created

- the quality of the output including the accuracy of the data