

Statistical bulletin

# Internet access – households and individuals, Great Britain: 2018

Internet access in Great Britain, including how many people have internet, how they access it and what they use it for.



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# 1 . Main points

- 89% of adults in Great Britain used the internet at least weekly in 2018, up from 88% in 2017 and 51% in 2006.
- 46% of adults watched videos on demand from commercial services in 2018, up from 29% in 2016.
- The proportion of adults aged 65 years and over who shop online trebled since 2008, rising from 16% to 48% in 2018.
- 26% of adults who use smartphones did not have smartphone security and a further 24% did not know if they have security installed.
- 70% of employed adults considered that they have the required computer skills for their jobs.

# 2 . Things you need to know about this release

The Internet Access Survey results are derived from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN). Estimates for 2018 in this release refer to data collected in the January, February and April 2018 modules of the OPN.

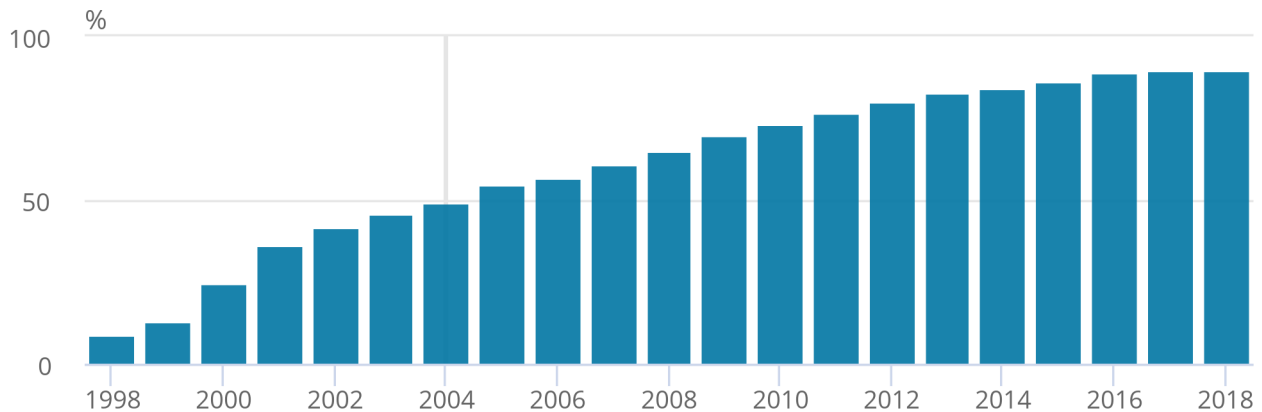
We first collected statistics on internet access in 1998. Since then, various changes have been made to the Internet Access Survey, including the publication of annual results since 2006. Where possible, we make comparisons over time; however, time series comparisons vary, as the survey questions change from year to year.

“On the go” refers to accessing the internet, away from home or work.

## 3.9 out of 10 households have internet access

Figure 1: Households with internet access in Great Britain, 1998 to 2018

Figure 1: Households with internet access in Great Britain, 1998 to 2018



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. UK estimates from 1998 to 2004. Great Britain estimates from 2005 to 2018.
2. Source: Family Expenditure Survey 1998 to 2001; Expenditure and Food Survey 2002 to 2004; Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, formerly known as the Opinions/Omnibus Survey from 2005.
3. Estimates were published on a quarterly basis from 1988 to 2004. See [Households with Access to the Internet, 1998 to 2004](#)
4. 2015 to 2018 estimates relate to January, February and April. Previous estimates relate to January to March, except 1998 which relates to April to June and 2005 which relates to May.
5. During 2005, estimates were published at irregular intervals as Topic Based Summaries. These are no longer available on the ONS website.

In 2018, of all households in Great Britain, 90% had access to the internet. This has started to level off over the last few years, rising by only 1 percentage point since 2016. However, household internet access has increased by 33 percentage points since 2006 (Figure 1).

Fixed broadband has continued to be the most popular type of household internet connection since 2015, with 98% of households with internet access having this type of connection in 2018.

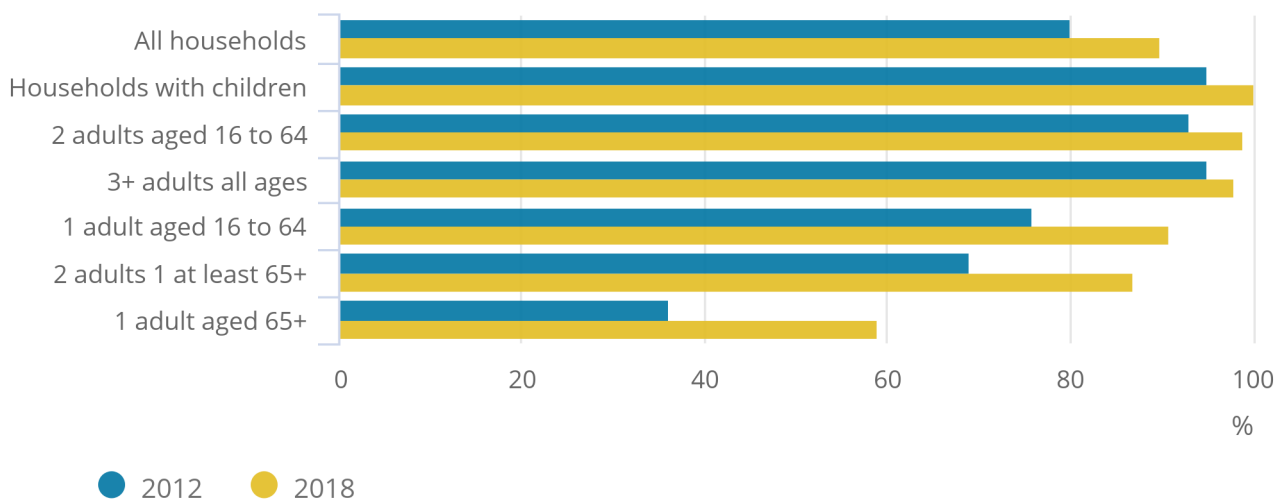
Households with one adult aged 65 years and over had the lowest proportion of internet access, at 59% in 2018. However, these households had the largest growth in internet access, up 23 percentage points since 2012, compared with growth of 10 percentage points in all households. In Figure 2, we have compared this year's results with estimates from 2012 when comparable records began for this analysis.

**Figure 2: Internet connection by household composition in Great Britain, 2012 and 2018**

Used within the last three months

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Used within the last three months



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Base: Households in Great Britain.

## 4 . Daily internet use has more than doubled since 2006

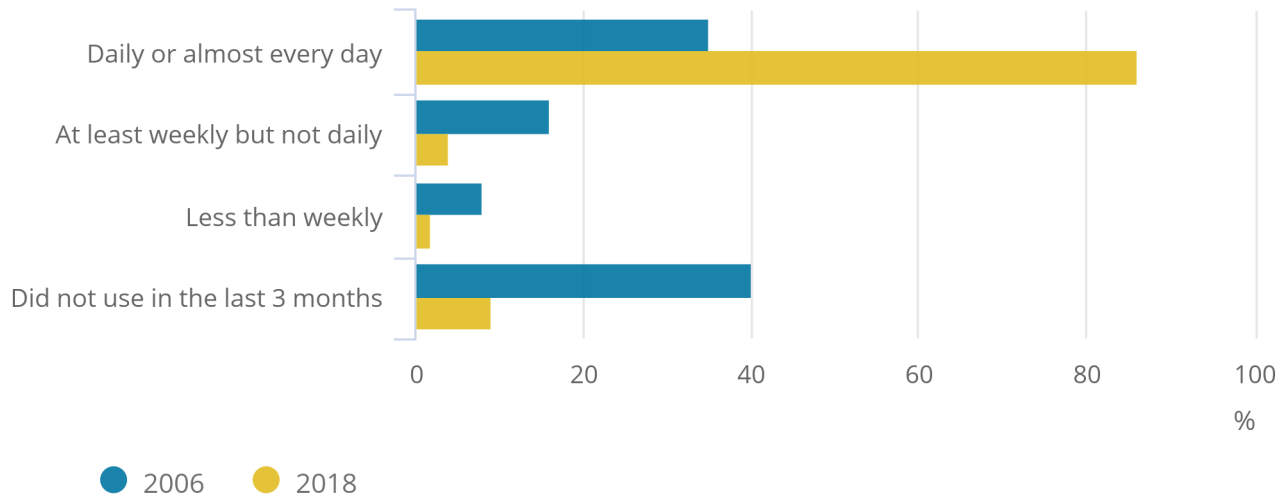
Since 2006, the percentage of adults who use the internet daily has grown from 35%, to 86% in 2018, while weekly use has declined, from 16% in 2006 to 4% in 2018. Furthermore, the proportion of those who had not used the internet in the last three months has fallen from 40% in 2006, to 9% in 2018 (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Frequency of internet use in Great Britain, 2006 and 2018**

Used within the last 3 months

**Figure 3: Frequency of internet use in Great Britain, 2006 and 2018**

Used within the last 3 months



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Base: Adults (aged 16 years and over) in Great Britain.
2. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to independently rounded components.

## 5 . Mobile phones or smartphones still most popular devices used to access the internet

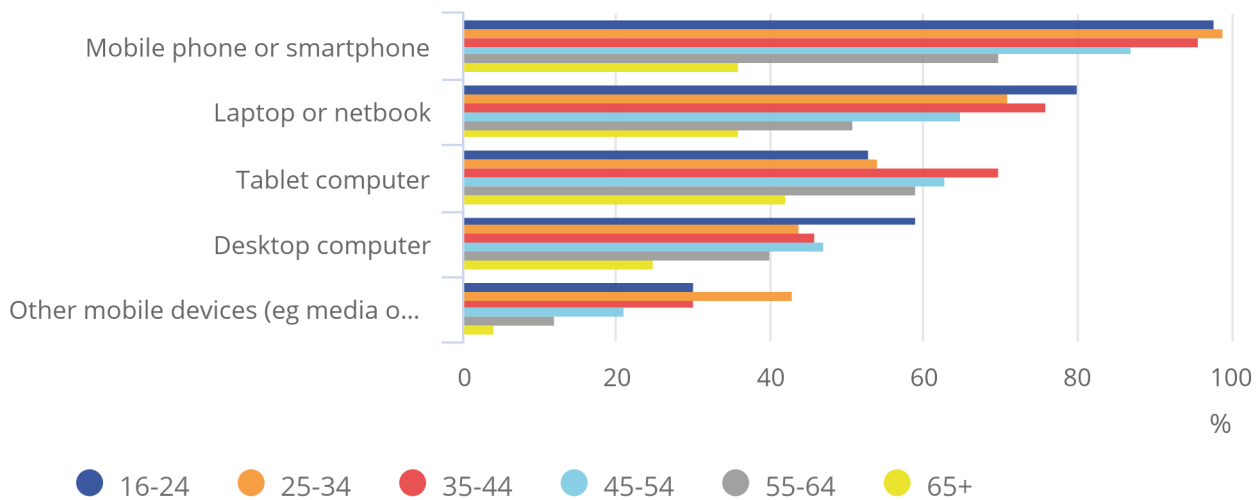
In 2018, among all adults, 78% used mobile phones or smartphones to access the internet. These were the most popular devices across most age groups, apart from those aged 65 years and over, who reported a tablet computer as the most popular device used to access the internet, at 42% (Figure 4). However, when accessing the internet “on the go”, 28% of adults aged 65 years and over reported using a mobile phone or smartphone, compared with 20% who used a tablet in the same age group (Figure 5).

**Figure 4: Devices used to access the internet, by age group, in Great Britain, 2018**

Within the last three months

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Within the last three months



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Base: Adults (aged 16 years and over) in Great Britain.

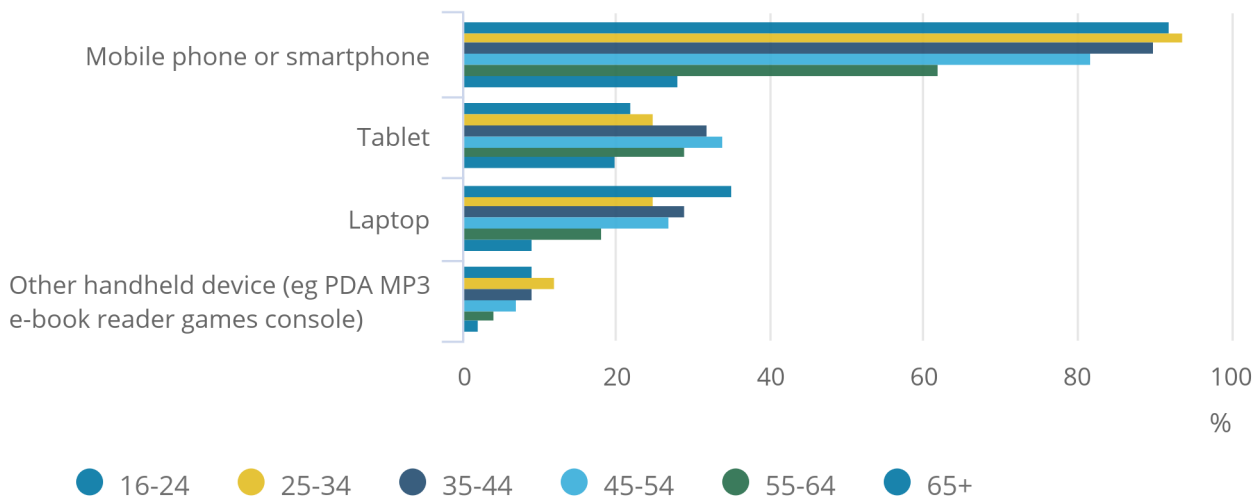
## 6 . Nearly 8 out of 10 adults access the internet "on the go"

In 2018, among all adults, 77% had used the internet "on the go" using a mobile phone, smartphone, laptop, tablet or handheld device. Almost all adults aged 25 to 34 years (97%) had accessed the internet "on the go", compared with only 39% of those aged 65 years and over.

In 2018, the most common type of device used to access the internet "on the go" was a mobile phone or smartphone at 72%. This has risen by 19 percentage points since 2013, from 53%. Other mobile devices used to access the internet "on the go" were far less popular, with only 27% of adults using a tablet, closely followed by a laptop at 23%. Other handheld devices (for example, personal digital assistant (PDA), MP3, e-book reader or games console) were used to access the internet by only 7% of adults, falling by half since 2017.

**Figure 5: Devices used to access the internet "on the go"<sup>1</sup>, by age group, in Great Britain, 2018**

Figure 5: Devices used to access the internet "on the go"<sup>1</sup>, by age group, in Great Britain, 2018



Source: Office for National Statistics

**Notes:**

1. Base: Adults (aged 16 years and over) in Great Britain.
2. "On the go" refers to accessing the internet away from home or work.

## 7. Email remains the most common internet activity

In 2018, the most popular internet activity was sending or receiving emails, with 84% of adults carrying out this activity. Finding information about goods or services was the second most popular activity at 77%, up from 71% in 2017.

There has been a large growth in the proportion of adults who watched videos online. Since 2016, the proportion of adults who watched videos on demand from commercial services (for example, Netflix) has risen by 17 percentage points, from 29% to 46%. Similarly, the proportion of adults who watched videos on YouTube or similar increased by 15 percentage points, from 47% in 2016 to 62% in 2018.

There were some differences in the activities that men and women carried out over the internet, with a higher percentage of women using it for social networking (69%), compared with men (60%). Furthermore, 59% of women looked for health-related information online, compared with 50% of men. However, the proportion of men who watched videos on YouTube or similar was 13 percentage points higher than women, at 69% and 56% respectively. Men also played or downloaded games more than women, with 36% of men and 26% of women carrying out this activity in 2018.

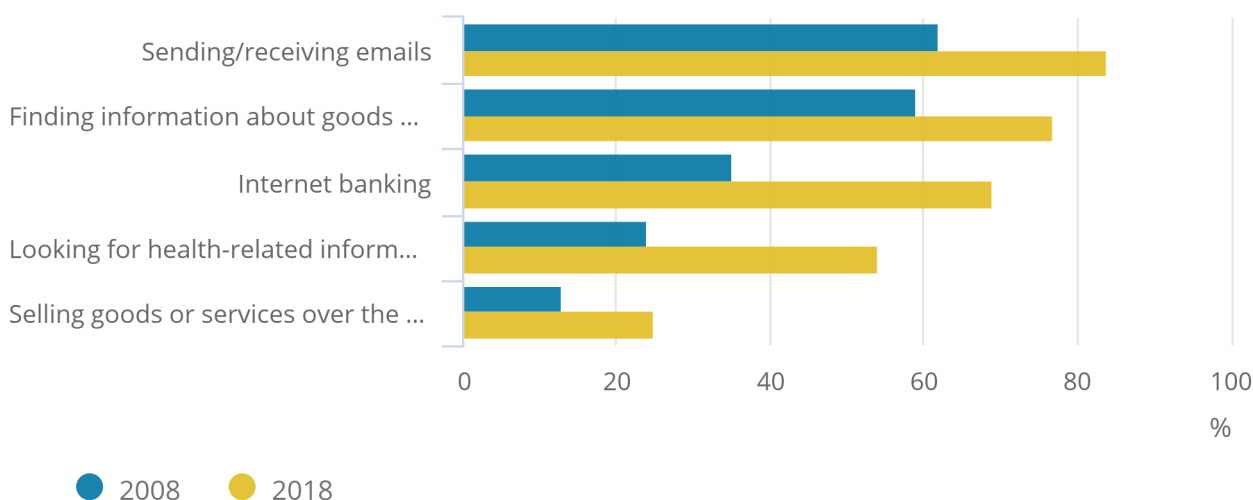
As the closure of high street banks continues to rise, internet banking has also shown yearly growth over the past decade. This activity has shown the largest percentage point increase, rising from 35% in 2008, to 69% in 2018. This is closely followed by looking for health-related information, which has shown a rise of 30 percentage points since 2008 (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Internet activities in Great Britain, 2008 and 2018**

Within the last 3 months

Figure 6: Internet activities in Great Britain, 2008 and 2018

Within the last 3 months



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Base: Adults (aged 16 years and over) in Great Britain.

## 8 . Older adults show largest increase in online shopping over the past decade

In 2018, among all adults, 78% bought goods or services online in the last 12 months, up 1 percentage point since 2017 and 25 percentage points since 2008.

A higher proportion of younger adults were online shoppers compared with older adults, with 95% of those aged 16 to 24 years and 96% of those aged 25 to 34 years carrying out this activity in 2018. This contrasts with adults aged 65 years and over who showed the lowest proportion of online shopping at 48%. However, this age group has shown the largest increase in this activity, rising threefold since 2008, from 16% to 48% in 2018. The age group with the smallest growth in online shopping was those aged 35 to 44 years, up 21 percentage points, to 89% in 2018.



Of those adults who purchased online in the last three months, adults aged 16 to 24 years were most likely to shop online once or twice, whereas those aged 25 to 54 years were most likely to shop online more than 10 times in the same period (Figure 7). All age groups were most likely to spend between £100 and £499. The most frequent online shoppers across all age groups were adults aged 35 to 44 years, with 48% shopping online more than 10 times in the last three months. This age group also had the highest percentage of adults who spent £1,000 or more in the last three months (30%).

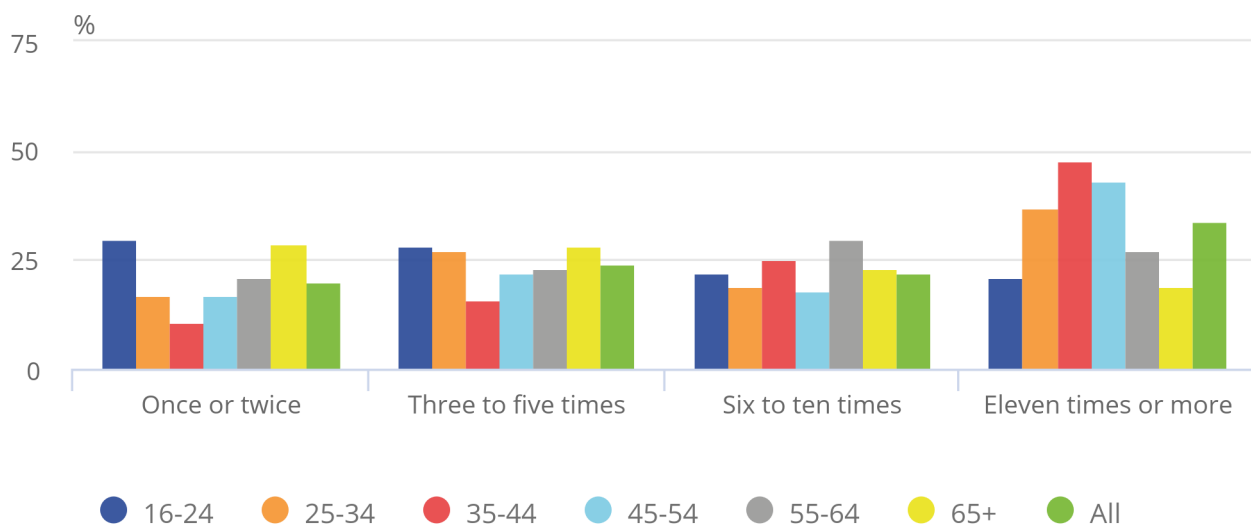
Clothes or sports goods were still the most popular online purchase in 2018, bought by 55% of adults. Household goods (for example, furniture, toys, vehicles and so on) were the next most popular items, purchased by 48% of adults. Holiday accommodation was purchased by 42% of adults.

The two most popular online purchases made by those aged 16 to 24 years were clothes or sports goods (74%) and tickets for events (51%). For adults aged 65 years and over, the most common online purchases were household goods (25%), closely followed by clothes or sports goods and holiday accommodation (24% for both) (Figure 8).

There were some differences in the online shopping habits of men and women. More women purchased clothes or sports goods online (59%), compared with men (50%). However, 35% of men purchased electronic equipment and 29% purchased video games software, other computer software and upgrades. This compares with 19% and 15% of women respectively.

**Figure 7: Frequency of online shopping, by age group, in Great Britain, 2018**

Figure 7: Frequency of online shopping, by age group, in Great Britain, 2018



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

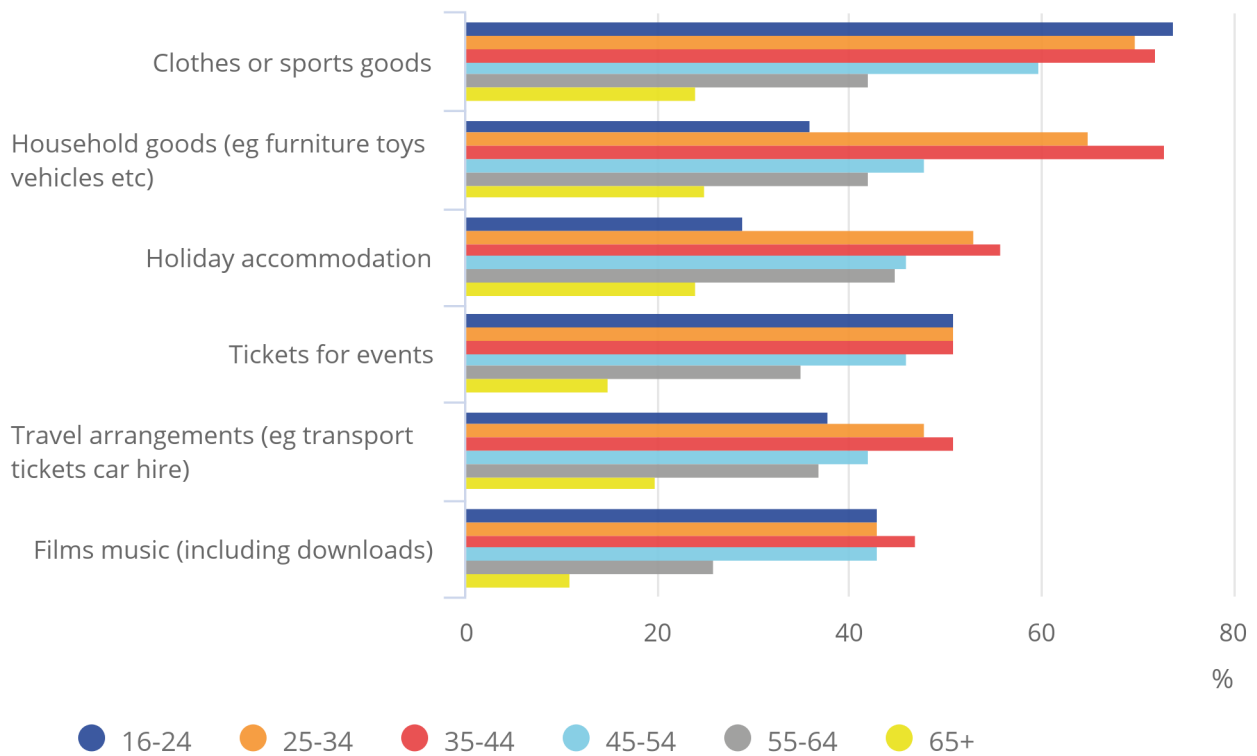
1. Base: Adults (aged 16 years and over) in Great Britain who purchased via the internet in the last three months.

**Figure 8: Online purchases, by age group, in Great Britain, 2018**

Within the last 12 months

**Figure 8: Online purchases, by age group, in Great Britain, 2018**

Within the last 12 months



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Base: Adults (aged 16 years and over) in Great Britain.

Over the last decade, the proportion of adults purchasing from UK sellers has consistently remained far higher than the proportion purchasing from other countries. However, the percentage who purchased from other EU countries over the same period has almost trebled, rising from 12% in 2008, to 33% in 2018. Similarly, the proportion purchasing from the rest of the world has also increased, from 18% in 2008, to 35% in 2018.

## 9 . 24% of smartphone users unaware of whether smartphone security has been installed

Despite the increasing use of smartphones to access the internet, 26% of smartphone users did not have smartphone security. Furthermore, 24% of smartphone users did not know whether they had smartphone security software installed and the proportions of these adults were similar across all age groups. Although the proportion of adults who had lost information or data as a result of a virus or hostile program was only 2%, this could potentially become a concern in the future due to lack of awareness surrounding the importance of security installation.

Of adults who used a smartphone, only 3% said they did not use apps. The same percentage of respondents said they did not know it was possible to refuse access to personal data when using or installing a smartphone app. Of those adults who used a smartphone, 65% of those aged 16 to 24 years refused access to personal data when using or installing smartphone apps in the last 12 months. This contrasts with 31% of those aged 65 years and over. This could be an indication of the level of smartphone app use among these age groups.

## 10 . Most employed adults believe they have the required computer skills for their jobs

In 2018, of all employed adults aged 35 to 44 years, 83% used computers or portable devices at work, the highest proportion across all age groups. Of those aged 16 to 24 years, 51% had needed to learn how to use new software or computerised equipment in the last 12 months for their jobs, compared with 15% of employed adults aged 65 years and over.

In 2018, employed respondents were asked to select one out of three statements that best described their skills relating to the use of computers, software or applications in work. Most respondents felt they already possessed the required skills to do their job well (70%).

Of employed adults, 22% felt they have the skills to do a more demanding job well, with those aged 16 to 24 years and 65 years and over scoring the lowest of all age groups for this statement (10% each). This may be a reflection of those aged 65 years and over reaching the end of their careers, whereas those aged 16 to 24 years, being at the start of their careers, have not yet gained the experience to progress. Experience levels could also explain the difference between the percentage of those aged 16 to 24 years (6%) and 25 to 34 years (17%), who develop or maintain IT systems or software as part of their jobs.

## 11 . Quality and Methodology

Please note that the survey is voluntary so that people who do not wish to take part in the survey can refuse to do so.

The Internet Access Households and Individuals [Quality and Methodology Information report](#) contains important information on:

- the strengths and limitations of the data and how they compare 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

