

Statistical bulletin

# Internet users, UK: 2019

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



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# 1 . Main points

- Virtually all adults aged 16 to 44 years in the UK were recent internet users (99%) in 2019, compared with 47% of adults aged 75 years and over.
- 7.5% of adults had never used the internet in 2019, down from 8.4% in 2018.
- 91% of adults in the UK were recent internet users in 2019, up from 90% in 2018.
- In 2019, the number of disabled adults who were recent internet users reached over 10 million for the first time, 78% of disabled adults.
- London and the South East were the UK regions with the highest recent internet use (93%) in 2019, while Northern Ireland remained the lowest at 87%.
- 95% of adults aged 16 to 74 years in the UK in 2018 were recent internet users, the third-highest in the EU.

## 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 2018](#) 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, 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.

### Changes since the previous release

For the first time, international comparisons have been included in the bulletin.

### **3 . Generation gap narrowing in recent internet use**

In 2019, within the UK, 91% of all adults had recently used the internet, with almost all adults aged 16 to 44 years (99%) being recent internet users. While there has been little change for adults aged 16 to 44 years in recent years, there has continued to be growth in internet use among older adults.

Since the survey began in 2011, adults aged 75 years and over have consistently been the lowest users of the internet. In 2011, of all adults aged 75 years and over, 20% were recent internet users, rising to 47% in 2019. However, recent internet use in the 65 to 74 years age group increased from 52% in 2011 to 83% in 2019, closing the gap on younger age groups (Figure 1).

Since 2011, the percentage of adults aged 65 years and over who had never used the internet has declined by 29 percentage points to 29%. This compares with a decline of 6 percentage points in adults aged 16 to 64 years to 2%.

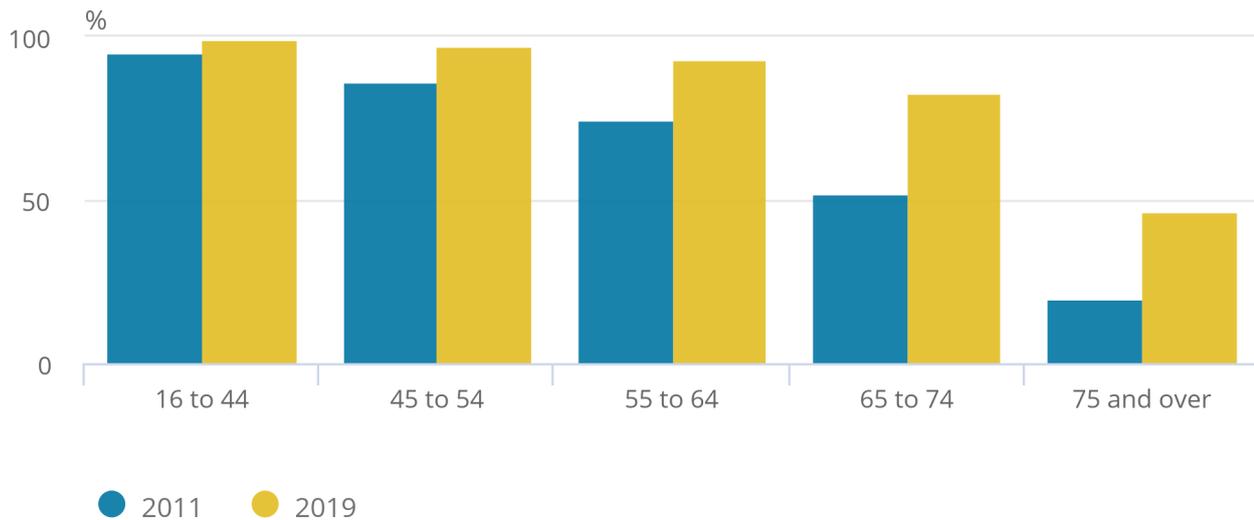
Recent internet use by retired adults increased by 27 percentage points since 2011, to 67% in 2019, reflecting the increase in internet use in the older age groups. Recent internet use by adults who were economically inactive increased by 19 percentage points over this period to 89%.

**Figure 1: Since 2011, the 65 to 74 years age group has seen the largest increase in recent internet use**

Recent internet users, UK, 2011 and 2019

Figure 1: Since 2011, the 65 to 74 years age group has seen the largest increase in recent internet use

Recent internet users, UK, 2011 and 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics - Labour Force Survey

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. 2019 refers to Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2019 only.

However, while the gap is closing, there was still a large difference between the generations. Of the 4 million adults who had never used the internet in 2019, more than half (2.5 million) were aged 75 years and over.

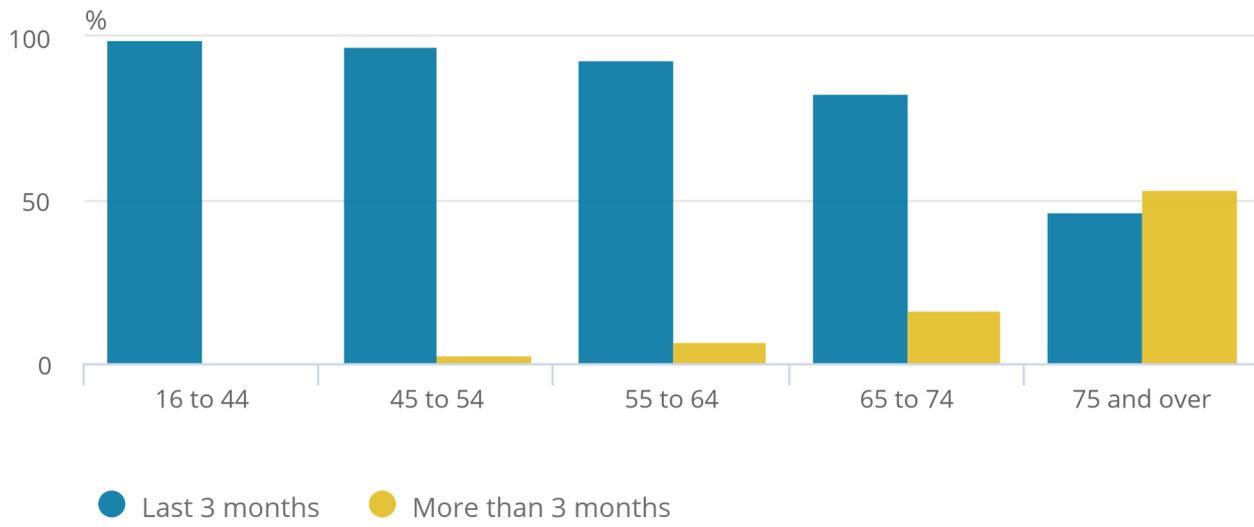
The proportion of adults who were lapsed internet users rose from 3.9% in 2011, to 7.3% in 2017, before falling to 6.1% in 2019. While there has been an increase in recent internet use in adults aged 75 years and over, they remain the age group with the highest proportion of lapsed internet users (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Most adults aged 75 and over have not used the internet in the last three months**

Internet users, UK, 2019

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Internet users, UK, 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics - Labour Force Survey

Notes:

1. 2019 refers to Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2019 only.

## 4 . Still a difference in internet use between men and women in older age groups

The proportion of men who had recently used the internet in 2019 was higher than women, at 92% and 90% respectively. In 2011, the proportion of men who had recently used the internet was 82%, compared with 77% of women.

The source of the difference in 2019 of recent internet use between men and women was in the oldest age groups. Of those adults aged 65 to 74 years, 84% of men and 82% of women were recent internet users. Furthermore, 54% of men aged 75 years and over were recent internet users, compared with 41% of women in this age group.

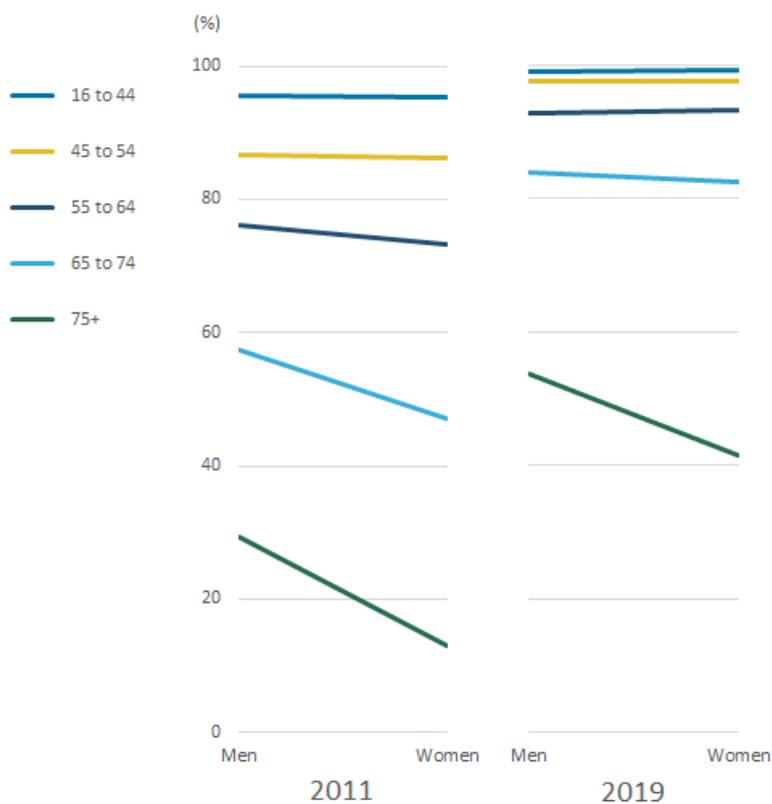
Figure 3 shows the differences in recent internet use between men and women for each age group. For comparison purposes, this has been shown for 2011 and 2019.

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 82% in 2019.

Overall, there was still a higher proportion of women who had never used the internet at 8.7%, compared with men at 6.3%.

**Figure 3: There is still a large difference between men and women in the percentage of recent internet users in the older age groups**

**Recent internet users, UK, 2011 and 2019**



Source: Office for National Statistics - Labour Force Survey

**Notes:**

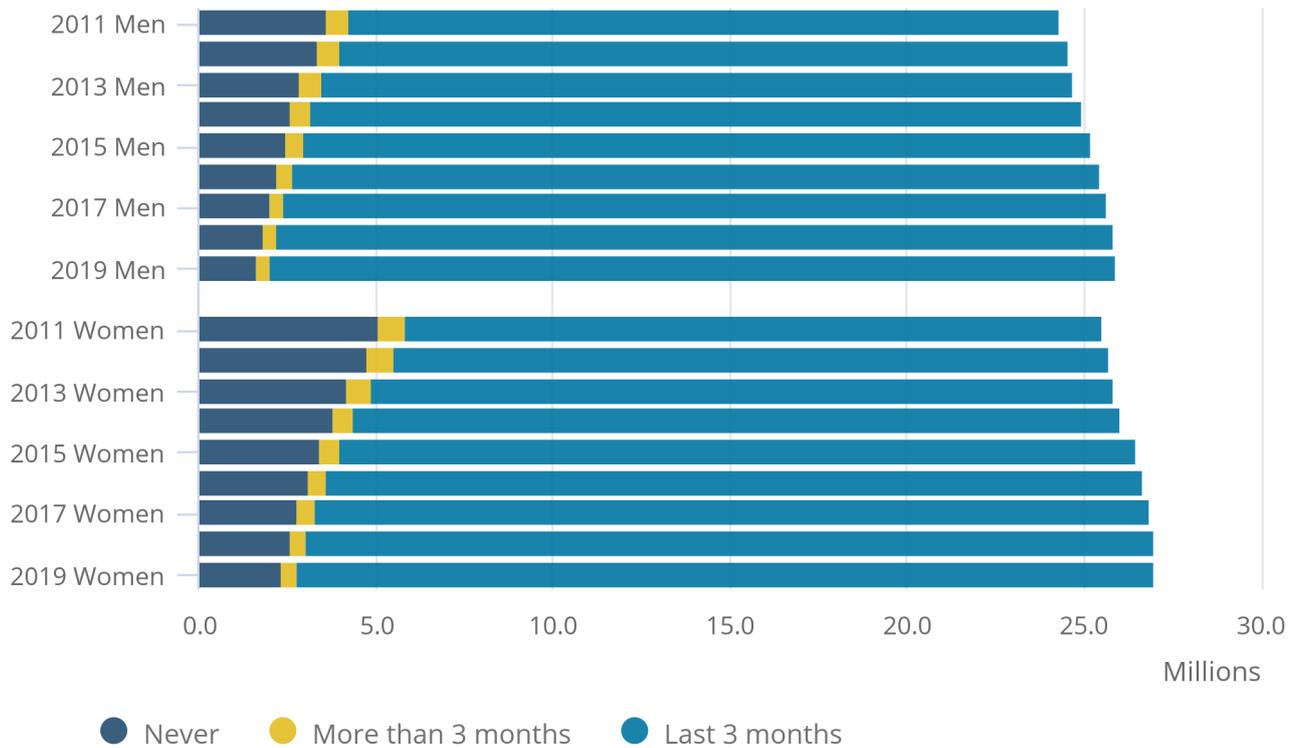
1. Recent internet users are adults who have used the internet within the last three months.
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3. 2019 refers to Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2019 only.

**Figure 4: The difference in active internet users between men and women has been closing**

Internet users, UK, 2011 to 2019

Figure 4: The difference in active internet users between men and women has been closing

Internet users, UK, 2011 to 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics - Labour Force Survey

Notes:

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

## 5 . Recent internet use by disabled adults reaches 10 million adults

In 2019, the proportion of recent internet users was lower for adults who were disabled (78%) compared with those who were not disabled (95%).

The difference between internet use in disabled and non-disabled adults was greater in the older age groups. For adults aged 75 years and over, 41% of disabled adults and 54% of non-disabled adults were recent internet users. In comparison, 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.

Since 2014, the number of disabled adults who had recently used the internet increased by 13 percentage points to just over 10 million in 2019.

Of the 0.8 million adults who had last used the internet over three months ago, 0.4 million were disabled.

## **6 . Northern Ireland shows the largest regional increase in recent internet use since 2011**

In 2019, London and the South East were tied for the region with the highest proportion of recent internet users (93%) (Figure 5).

Northern Ireland had the largest regional increase in recent internet use since 2011, a rise of 18 percentage points, although this region still had the lowest proportion of recent internet users (87%) when compared with other regions.

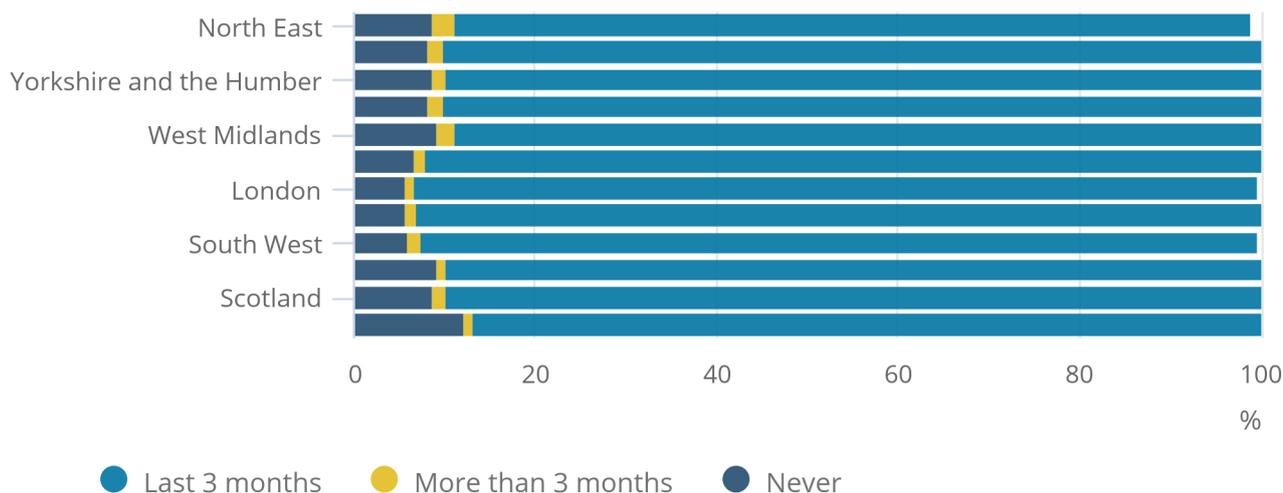
In both Scotland and Wales, 90% of adults were recent internet users.

**Figure 5: Despite rapid growth, Northern Ireland still trails behind other UK regions in internet use**

Internet users, UK, 2019

Figure 5: Despite rapid growth, Northern Ireland still trails behind other UK regions in internet use

Internet users, UK, 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics - Labour Force Survey

Notes:

1. 2019 refers to Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2019 only.

## 7 . UK ranked third in the EU for recent internet use in 2018

In 2018, of all adults aged 16 to 74 years, 95% were recent internet users. Figure 6 shows how the UK compares with other EU countries in internet use, ranking third out of all EU countries. The UK was 10 percentage points above the EU average of 85%. Only Denmark and Luxembourg had higher proportions, at 98% and 97% respectively.

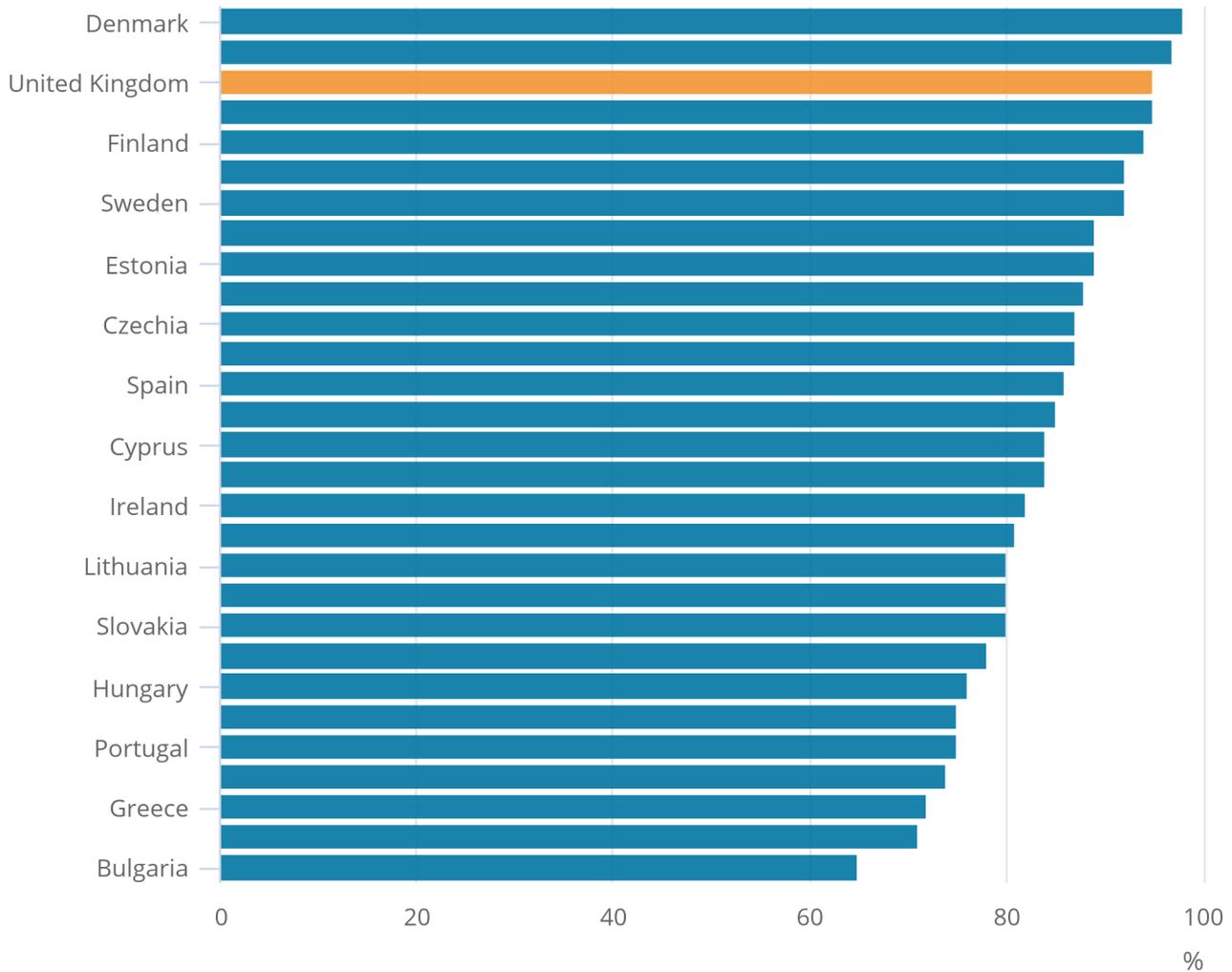
International comparisons have been performed using 2018 data, as international data are not currently available for 2019 at the time of publication.

### Figure 6: The UK has among the highest recent internet use in the EU

Recent internet users, adults aged 16 to 74 years, EU, 2018

## Figure 6: The UK has among the highest recent internet use in the EU

Recent internet users, adults aged 16 to 74 years, EU, 2018



Source: Office for National Statistics - Labour Force Survey, Eurostat

Notes:

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

## 8 . Quality and methodology

### Data sources

International comparisons made in Section 7 used estimates from Eurostat's [Individuals – Internet use](#) data table.

The [Internet users Quality and Methodology Information](#) 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