

Statistical bulletin

# Internet access – households and individuals, Great Britain: 2019

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



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# 1 . Main points

- 87% of all adults used the internet daily or almost every day in 2019.
- In 2019, 61% of households without the internet did not feel that they needed the internet.
- In 2019, for the first time, more than half of adults aged 65 years and over shopped online, at 54%.
- The percentage of adults who make video or voice calls over the internet has more than trebled over the past decade, to 50% in 2019.
- In 2019, 7% of adults suffered fraudulent debit or credit card use from using the internet in the last 12 months.

## 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 2019 in this release refer to data collected in the January, February and April 2019 modules of the OPN.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) 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.

Figures that are the sum of components and calculations of annual increases in this release are calculated using unrounded figures. Comparisons using the accompanying [datasets](#) may be subject to rounding errors.

### Comparisons with Internet users

Comparisons made between estimates in this release and the [Internet users, UK: 2019](#) publication should be undertaken with caution. The Internet access – households and individuals 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 smaller sample size than the Labour Force Survey from which estimates for the Internet users statistical bulletin are derived.

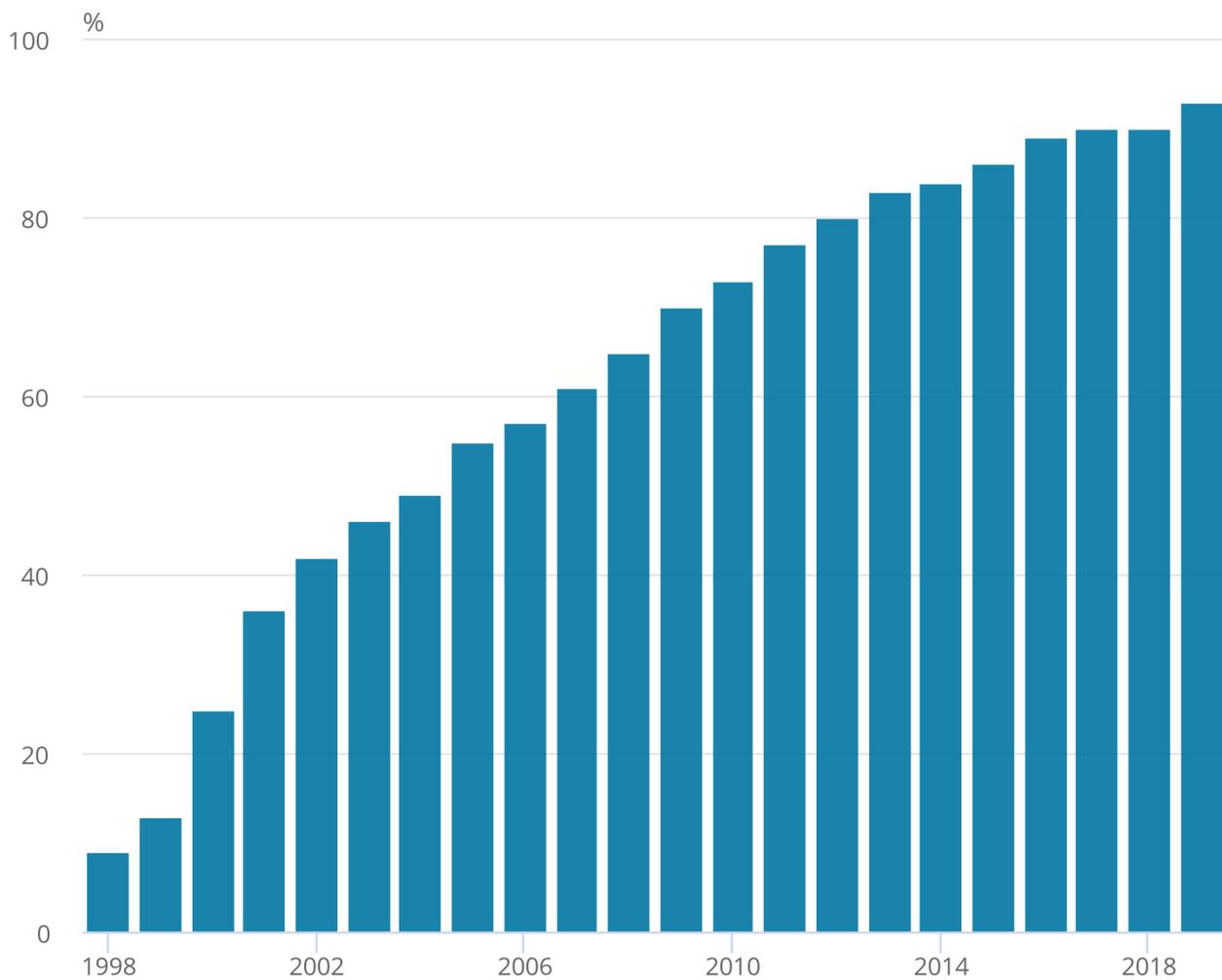
### 3 . Almost two-thirds of households now have mobile broadband access

Figure 1: While household internet access has risen over the last decade, it has been levelling off in recent years

Household internet access, UK and Great Britain, 1998 to 2019

Figure 1: While household internet access has risen over the last decade, it has been levelling off in recent years

Household internet access, UK and Great Britain, 1998 to 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. UK estimates from 1998 to 2004. GB estimates from 2005 to 2019.
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 1998 to 2004. See [Households with Access to the Internet](#), 1998 to 2004.
4. 2015 to 2019 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.

Of all households in Great Britain, 93% had access to the internet in 2019. This was a rise of 3 percentage points from 2018 and an increase of 23 percentage points in the last decade (Figure 1).

Fixed broadband has continued to be the most popular type of household internet connection since first measured in 2015, with 98% of households with internet access having this type of connection in 2019. However, many households that connect through fixed broadband also connect using mobile broadband while at home, with 64% of households connecting via mobile broadband in 2019.

While almost all households had access to the internet, 7% did not. Most of these did not have access to the internet as they felt that they did not need it, with 61% reporting as such in 2019. Lack of skills and privacy or security concerns were also factors, at 34% and 33% respectively.

## **4 . 9 in 10 adults use the internet at least weekly**

Of all adults, 87% used the internet daily in 2019, with an additional 4% of adults using it at least weekly but not daily. While there was only a 2 percentage point increase in daily use since 2018, it has risen by 32 percentage points in the last decade.

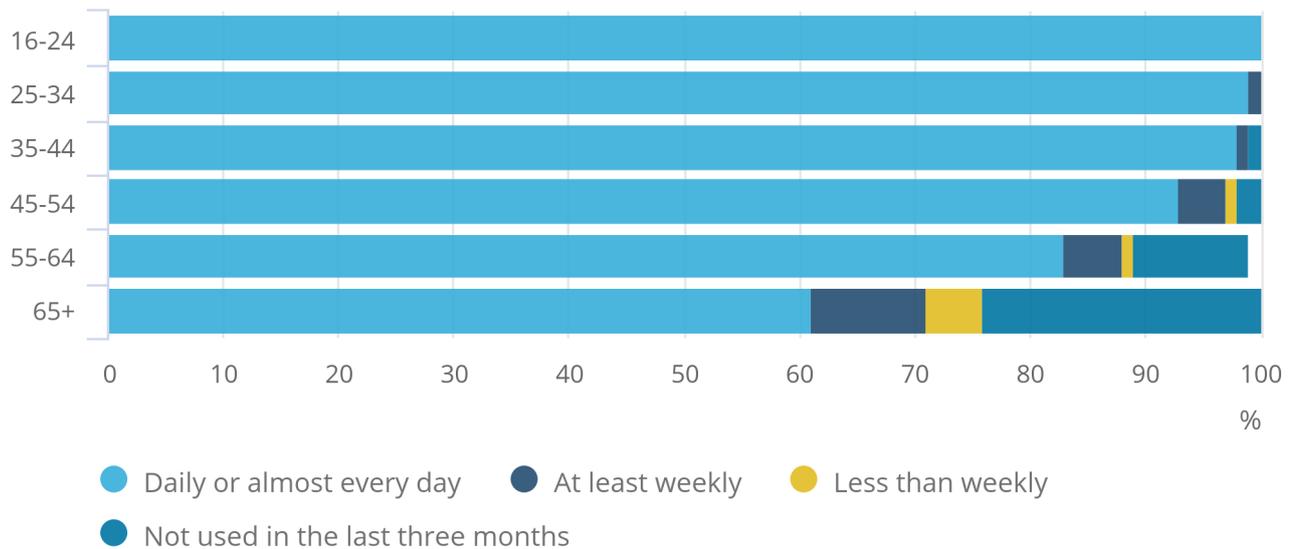
While almost all adults aged 16 to 44 years used the internet daily or almost every day (99%), the older age groups used it less frequently. This reduced across the older age groups, as 61% of adults aged 65 years and over used the internet daily, while 24% had not used the internet in the last three months (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: There are still many adults aged 55 years and over who have not used the internet in the last three months**

Internet use within the last three months, Great Britain, 2019

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Internet use within the last three months, Great Britain, 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

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

## 5 . Over 8 out of 10 adults access the internet "on the go"

Among all adults, 84% had used the internet "on the go" in 2019, using a mobile phone, smartphone, laptop, tablet or handheld device (Figure 3).

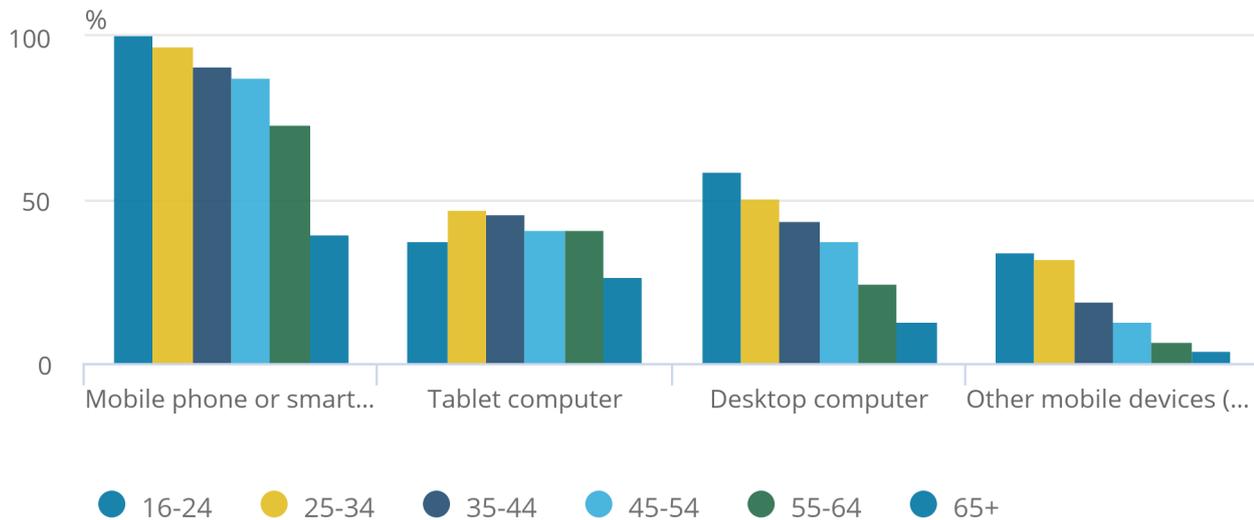
In 2019, the most common type of device used to access the internet on the go was a mobile phone or smartphone at 79%. This has risen by 26 percentage points since 2013, from 53%. Other mobile devices were used far less to access the internet on the go, with 39% of adults using a tablet and 36% of adults using a laptop.

**Figure 3: Mobile phones and smartphones are by far the most popular devices to access the internet on the go**

Devices used to access the internet on the go within the last three months, Great Britain, 2019

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Devices used to access the internet on the go within the last three months, Great Britain, 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

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.

## 6 . Email remains the most common internet activity

Email was used by 86% of adults in 2019, more than any other internet activity. Other widely used activities included finding information about goods or services (78%), internet banking (73%) and use of instant messaging services such as Skype and WhatsApp (72%).

There has broadly been growth in the percentage of adults who perform internet activities. Adults looking for health-related information grew from 54% in 2018 to 63% in 2019, while adults listening to music grew to 65% in 2019, up from 58% in 2018. The only activity measured that showed a decrease was uploading created content to a website to be shared, which dropped to 35% of adults in 2019, down from 48% in 2017 when it was last measured.

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, compared with men (71% and 64% respectively). Furthermore, 68% of women looked for health-related information online, compared with 59% of men. However, the proportion of men who sold goods or services over the internet was 10 percentage points higher than women, at 34% and 24% respectively.

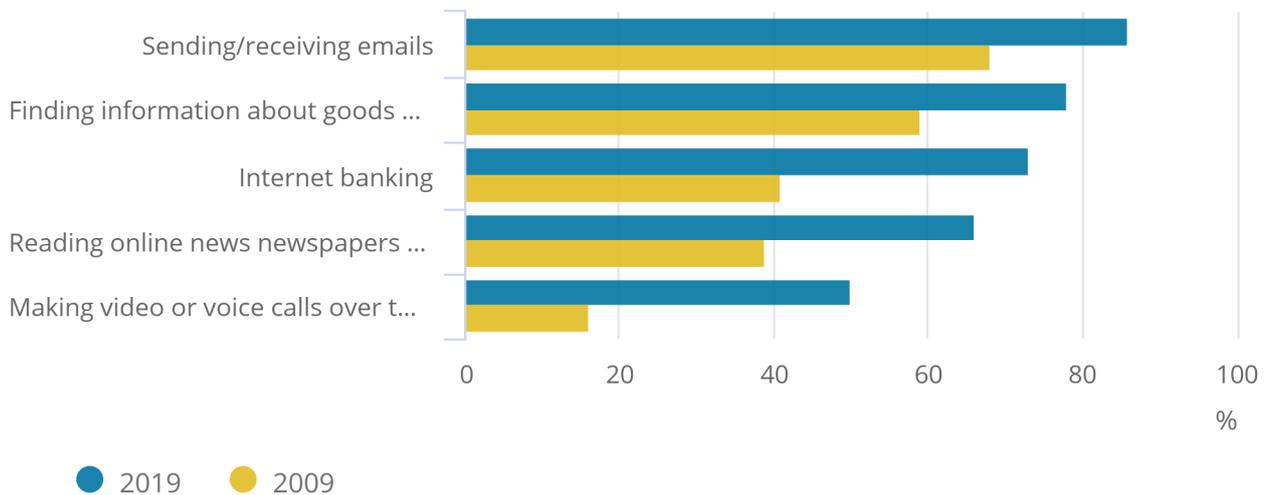
The percentage of adults making voice or video calls using the internet more than trebled over the past decade, rising from 16% in 2009, to 50% in 2019. With high street bank closures continuing to rise, internet banking has also shown a large percentage point increase, rising by 32 percentage points since 2009 (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Other internet activities have been catching up with sending emails over the last decade**

Internet activities within the last three months, Great Britain, 2009 and 2019

Figure 4: Other internet activities have been catching up with sending emails over the last decade

Internet activities within the last three months, Great Britain, 2009 and 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

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

## 7 . Over half of all adults aged 65 years and over are now online shoppers

In 2019, among all adults, 82% bought goods or services online in the last 12 months, an increase of 5 percentage points since 2018. This is seen mainly in adults aged 35 years and over, with a 6 percentage point increase since 2018. In comparison, there was little change in adults aged under 35 years who shopped online, at 1 percentage point since 2018. At 54% in 2019, this was the first time that over half of adults aged 65 years and over were online shoppers.

Adults who shopped online were most likely to purchase 11 or more times in the last three months, as 35% of adults who shopped online fell into this category (Figure 5). This can also be seen in all age categories for adults aged between 16 and 64 years. Adults aged 65 years and over, however, did not shop online as much, with only 14% of adults in this age category purchasing 11 or more times online within the last three months. Instead, adults aged 65 years and over were most likely to purchase between three and five times (35%).

In 2019, of adult internet shoppers, 44% spent between £100 and £499 in the last three months. In comparison, 15% spent more than £1,000 in the last three months, while 9% spent less than £50.

Clothes or sports goods remained the most popular online purchase in 2019, bought by 60% of all adults. Household goods were the next most popular item (49%), followed by tickets for events (44%) (Figure 6).

There were some differences in the online shopping habits of men and women. More women purchased clothes or sports goods online compared with men (64% and 56% respectively). However, 42% of men purchased electronic equipment, 34% purchased video games software and other computer software and 21% purchased computer hardware. This compares with 26%, 17% and 8% of women respectively.

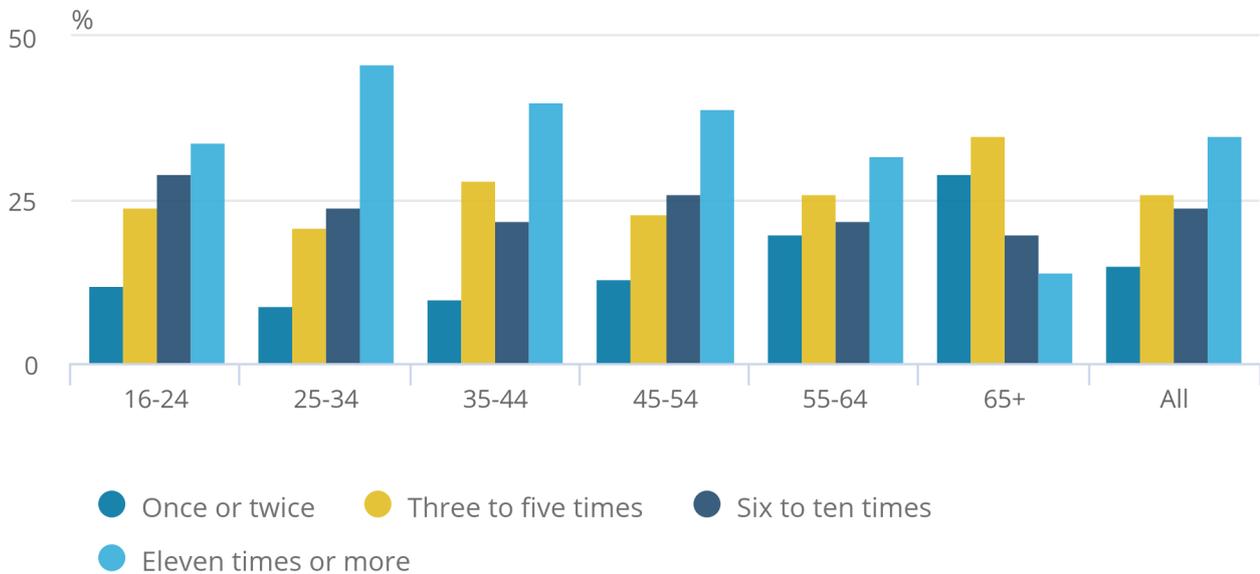
The percentage of disabled adult internet shoppers was lower than those who were not disabled, at 73% and 85% respectively. However, spending patterns between disabled and non-disabled adults showed little difference.

**Figure 5: Adults were most likely to purchase online 11 or more times in the last three months, except for those aged 65 years and over**

Frequency of online shopping in the last three months, Great Britain, 2019

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Frequency of online shopping in the last three months, Great Britain, 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

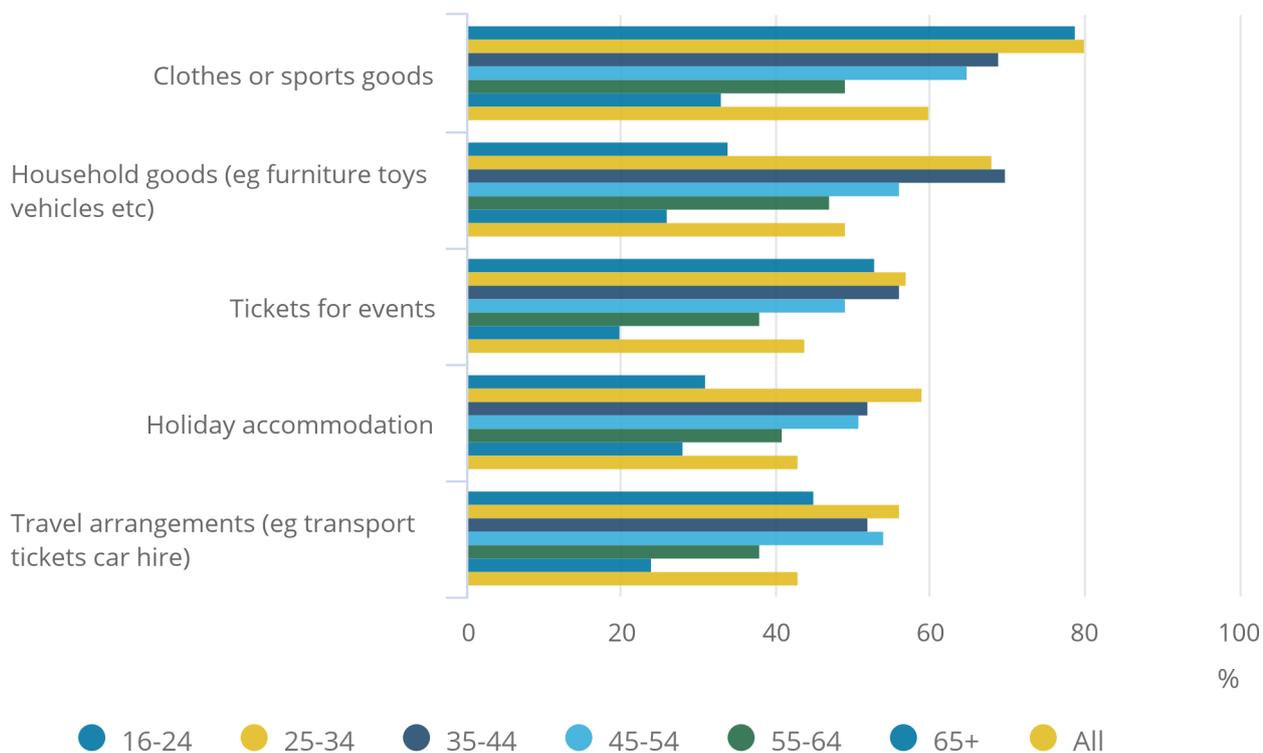
1. Base: adults (aged 16 years and over) in Great Britain who purchased via the internet in the last three months.

**Figure 6: Clothes and sports goods were the most popular internet purchases for almost all age groups**

Internet purchases within the last three months, Great Britain, 2019

### Figure 6: Clothes and sports goods were the most popular internet purchases for almost all age groups

Internet purchases within the last three months, Great Britain, 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

**Notes:**

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

The proportion of adults purchasing from UK sellers reached 90% in 2019 and has been consistently higher than the proportion who purchased from other countries. However, the percentage who purchased from other EU countries has risen from 17% in 2009 to 33% in 2019. Similarly, the proportion purchasing from the rest of the world has also increased, from 18% in 2009 to 39% in 2019.

Of those adults who did not shop online within the last 12 months, the most popular reason given was a preference to shop in person, at 83% in 2019. Other reasons for not shopping online included privacy and security concerns (43%) and uncertainty about how to shop online (31%).

## 8 . 7% of all adults have suffered from fraudulent credit or debit card use in the last 12 months

Adults faced various security issues while using the internet. In 2019, of all adults, 7% suffered fraudulent credit or debit card use during the last 12 months from using the internet.

The most common security issue faced by adults when using the internet was fraudulent emails and messages, with 37% of adults encountering this problem in 2019. Being redirected to fake websites asking for personal information was also a common issue at 24% of adults, while 2% of adults encountered problems with online identity theft. While fake websites and fraudulent emails were common, only 2% of adults suffered financial loss as a result of these issues combined with identity theft.

Other security problems such as losing data because of viruses and misuse of personal information were experienced by 2% of adults, while social network or email accounts being hacked and content posted affected 4% of adults.

Security concerns also had an effect on what activities adults carried out over the internet in the last 12 months. In 2019, of all adults, 23% did not use public WiFi at least once because of security concerns. Additionally, 19% of adults did not provide personal information to social or professional network services at least once, while 17% of adults did not download software or apps at least once because of security concerns.

## 9 . Links to related statistics

Additional information on the use of the internet can be found in the [Internet users, UK: 2019](#) release, which provides social and geographic breakdowns of internet users using data from the Labour Force Survey.

## 10 . 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