The Internet in Britain

The Oxford Internet Survey (OxIS)
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1. Internet Users

(a) Internet adoption

Three in five individuals currently use the Internet. Individual Internet use is broadly mirrored by Internet penetration within homes (61% of the 2005 sample say they have Internet access at home).

The data suggest that Internet penetration is growing slowly, with a 3% increase between 2003 and 2005.

Growth in Internet use is coming principally from broadband (the growth in Internet access through broadband has increased from 2003 by forty percentage points) but also from mobile technologies, so that access to the Internet is increasingly available regardless of geography.

However, there is a core group of respondents who are making a choice not to have the Internet, or to use it. They are drawn from those who have never had access to the Internet (non-users: 32%) and those who have had access but no longer do so (lapsed users: 8%).

Of those who do not currently have access to the Internet, most (69%) think they will not acquire the Internet within the next twelve months.

There is still growth to come and one in five of these respondents without current access said they will acquire access to the Internet in the next year.

(b) Levels and modes of access

The data suggest diversification of access will grow, be it based on technological change or on the growth in public Internet-connected spaces.

While there is growth in mobile technologies that offer access to the Internet, most access is from the home (with one in four users also saying they access the Internet from someone else’s home), while use in the workplace and in schools is also quite high.

However there is growth in access from public places such as the library or an Internet café, albeit from a small base.

(c) Technologies at home

Increasingly, digital technologies are being used in the home – mobile telephone penetration is high among the sample (with 85% of respondents saying they personally have access to a mobile), while three quarters of households have multi-channel television. A significant proportion of households also have digital cameras, and Web cams and other forms of digital technology are penetrating the market.

(d) Mobile phone users

Most of the sample (85%) has a mobile phone, and they are used for different forms of communication as well as making and receiving telephone calls, with nearly four out of five respondents saying they send text messages. Eleven per cent said they use their phones to access the Internet or send emails.

(e) Experience: proximity to the Internet

Increased use of the Internet leads to greater comfort with the technology and its capabilities. The heavier the use of the Internet (in terms of the time per week spent using it), the more proficient users feel they are and the more confidence they have in their ability to do a variety of things.

There is relatively little attempt made to use the computer or the Internet creatively, with small proportions of the sample saying they have ever set up (or tried to set up) a Web page (18%). However, if such an attempt is made, it is often successful, suggesting a level of proficiency before the task is attempted.

Young people (pupils) were significantly more likely than older respondents to have been successful in setting up a Web page.
2. Internet Uses

(a) Uses of the Internet

Most of the uses of the Internet (75% and over of mentions) are communications related (principally email), but also for the collection of information in specific areas, such as information about products, travel arrangements and factual information. Within this top quartile also falls a significant majority (83%) who say they just surf or browse the Internet.

The second quartile (50–75%) focuses more on uses associated with particular interests or geographical proximity (such as sport or news); just over half the sample say they also use instant messaging.

The next quartile (25–50%) is used for more specialist information (such as financial transactions or to look for jobs), as well as downloading music and other such activities. Chat rooms fall within this quartile.

The least frequently mentioned uses (in the bottom quartile, 0–25%) are particular interests such as visiting sex sites, gambling and visiting religious sites but also specialist activities such as researching the family tree.

e-Entertainment

Surfing the Internet seems to have become a means for people to be entertained – used to kill time as well as to find information.

The Internet is widely used as a supplementary entertainment service with music being the medium most often mentioned in relation to online entertainment (54% download or listen to music from the Internet). A further 48% say they play games.

Younger people (pupils) are particularly likely to use the Internet for music-related activities.

Respondents were asked if they thought it appropriate to copy music from the Internet without paying for it, and many of those who think it is (70%) also said they download music in this way. A further three in five who said the appropriateness depends on other things also downloaded or listened to music in this way. This suggests that many users do not necessarily think of the legal implications of what they are doing when material appears to be freely available to them.

e-Information

The Internet is used as an information source, much in the way of traditional media. It is used to collect information about local events (66%), to keep track of the news and weather (61% and 55%, respectively) and sport (54%). Two in five users also use the Internet as a job search facility.

A significant minority of users (37%) have also accessed health care information online; 20% say they have done so several times.

e-Money

The penetration of the Internet into everyday life is clear: over two in five users (45%) say they bank online, and nearly the same proportion (39%) say that they pay bills in this way. The use of the Internet for investments is made by a much smaller percentage of the sample (10%).

e-Learning

The Internet offers itself as a tool to increase formal education as well as ‘ambient’ learning: 78% of users say they use the Internet to look up a fact while nearly half say they look up the definition of a word (47%). A further two in five respondents say they use the Internet to find information for school and one in five use it expressly for distance learning.

e-Communication

The Internet is of prime importance as a tool for communication.

Almost all the sample say they use the Internet to check email, while two in three send email attachments and over half (56%) say they use instant messaging.

Smaller percentages of respondents also use Internet chat rooms (26%) or use the Internet to make or receive telephone calls (13%).

e-Travel

The ease of use, choice and convenience offered by the Internet mean that it is widely used to make travel plans (77% of respondents) and to book travel (71%).

(b) e-Commerce

The e-commerce aspect of the Internet is important for individuals. Nearly all users have sought product information or bought online (87% and 74%, respectively).

Use of the Internet for shopping is not only common, but also frequent (with 50% of users shopping once a month or more, and 13% shopping at least once a week).

Attitudes to the online shopping experience are generally positive. Most agree that shopping online offers more choice of products (78%) and that items are more competitively priced (73%). The ease of ordering is also commended, with 78% agreeing that online shopping is easy.

There are few negatives: the sample is split between those agreeing and disagreeing that it is difficult to exchange or returns goods bought on the Internet (29% disagree, and the same proportion agree, that it is difficult). Similarly, the lack of personal contact in online shopping is thought by equal proportions to be a negative as well as a positive (33% disagree that people mind the loss of face-to-face contact in the shopping experience, while 35% agree).
3. Impacts of the Internet

(a) Changing information habits and Internet practices

Three per cent of respondents said that they rely solely on an electronic diary and a further 6% said that they use both. This is to be set against the two in five respondents who use any diary.

There are few regular subscribers to any news service, be it paid or free, with only 12% of the sample having any sort of subscription. However, a significant minority of respondents (20%) read newspapers online that they do not read in print.

The use of the Internet for seeking information is established and it is often the first port of call for most types of information sought.

Most respondents have no fixed manner of using the Internet, going either to a specific Web page or to a search engine (60%). Nineteen per cent said they do one or the other.

(b) Internet and social interaction

The Internet plays an important role in allowing information to be collected and collated, but it also plays an important role in maintaining social interaction and supplementing other forms of sociability.

There are not many perceived downsides to the Internet, although a significant minority of users (32%) do feel they can be contacted by too many people through the Internet.

Few agree (16%) that the Internet has made it easier to make contacts – they are far more likely to agree that it helps maintain them (75% say that the Internet allows them to keep in touch with people they would not talk to often).

The Internet is most likely to be thought to have taken time away from other media, in particular television, where 28% of users said they watch less television than they did before they had the Internet.

There is some effect on time spent with others but the vast majority of users said there is no change (91% said the Internet has not affected the time they spend with friends and 88% said the same about family).

(c) Use of time

The Internet is seen to be beneficial to time-pressured lives (73% of users say it helps them save time), and relatively few are resentful of the time the Internet takes up – 16% say dealing with email takes up too much time.

Many respondents (57%) said that they do other things while on the Internet – ‘multi-task’ – such as listen to music, and young people in particular are likely to do this (74% of pupils). This again suggests that greater familiarity with the Internet allows greater flexibility.
**Centrality of the Internet**

Over seven in ten users of the Internet (72%) said that the Internet has made their life better.

Its importance is clear – 28% of the sample said it is very important and a further 42% said it is important.

The level of importance is affected by its role in, and its relevance to, one’s life – retirees were far less likely to say it is important (50%) compared with pupils (82%) or those of working age (73%) who may well use the Internet as part of their working life.

To mobile phone users, that technology is particularly important – 41% said it is very important.

In general, therefore, users feel the technology is beneficial to them; 63% say that it is making their lives better, although one in five users have no opinion.

**Negative experiences and concerns**

There is significant trust in the Internet, with no respondent saying that they think all online information is unreliable, and almost half the sample (48%) saying that most of it is reliable.

There was no increase in the perceived overall levels of SPAM between 2003 and 2005. Just over one quarter of users (27%) said they do not receive SPAM, and a further 26% said they are not bothered by it. The remainder of the sample (46%) said they receive too much SPAM.

A far smaller proportion of users said they are unconcerned about viruses attacking their computers (12%) and the majority of users with such concern have done something about it (65%).

Many users also expressed concern about unpleasant email experiences (60%) – and 35% said they have done something about it.

Between 2003 and 2005, there was some increase in attempts to get personal information (12% of users in 2005 were asked fraudulently to provide bank details and 2% say they had their credit card details stolen), or in misrepresentations through the Web (an increase of five percentage points to 8% of users in 2005). However, certain of the other, more frequent unpleasant aspects of the Internet have been experienced by fewer respondents in 2005 (a decrease from 43% of 2003 users to 18% of 2005 users who have received a virus, for example).

Over half (55%) of all users said they have had at least one bad experience in the previous year and 26% have had more than one.

**Privacy**

There is a sense that personal privacy can be compromised by going online (54% agree), and many feel that the Internet allows access to personal information without explicit permission (45%).

**Freedom of expression and norms of use**

It is generally accepted that the Internet is a space that allows free expression (75% of the sample agree that people should be able to express their opinions even if personally offensive).

Nevertheless, there are some slight concerns about the levels of ‘immoral’ material available (57% express concern).
4. Shaping, Regulating and Governing the Internet

(a) Government versus self-regulation
What the role of the government should be in regulating the Internet is unclear for many (35% say they are undecided), while 29% say the government should be involved in regulation and 27% say it should not.

When respondents are focused on children and regulation, the same ambivalence remains about the government’s role.

Most users (80%) think there should be some restrictions on children’s access to the Internet, but the prime responsibility lies with parents (95%) and, to a lesser extent, with ISPs (75%). Fewer than half the sample (46%) think it is the government’s responsibility to regulate.

5. Addressing Digital Divides

(a) Social inclusion
There are clear digital divides among different social groups. Men were more likely to access the Internet than women, although the gap appears to have been closing since 2003. Younger people were overwhelmingly more likely to go online both in 2003 and 2005. Those who have left formal education later are more likely to use the Internet.

A clear economic divide is found in Internet use, with more users from the higher income brackets. More users from the highest income bracket are accessing the Internet with wireless connections or via mobile phones and PDAs. But there is also a less marked economic divide in broadband use.

(b) Proficiency, technology and choice
Practical or social use drives initial interest in the Internet – 74% of users said they first went online to get information while 71% said it was to email friends.

Many lapsed users (35%) say they were simply not interested in the Internet, while cost or convenience were other main issues (32% said they had no computer and 28% moved house or their job, while 29% said it was too expensive).

Of those who have never used the Internet, many of the barriers are in the acquisition of hardware (67% said they do not have a computer) or in concerns about requirements of technical proficiency (63% said they do not know how to use it, while 56% said it is too difficult). A significant proportion (44% of non-users) said they are not interested in it.

Again, the perceived relevance of the Internet to one’s life is a key variable and those who are more likely to use it at school or work for related activities are more likely to express interest (93% of pupils say they are interested, as do 71% of those of working age, compared with 32% of retirees).

The presence of children in the household also has a relationship with interest expressed in the Internet – 43% of those in households with children express interest compared with 24% in homes without.

(c) Social support
Use of the Internet is either self-taught (77%) or supported by people within one’s social circle (54% of users said help from the family is needed and 47% mentioned friends). There is little external or professional advice sought (18% mentioned a training course and 4% mentioned ‘paying someone’).

(d) Experience
Many lapsed users (65%) had had the Internet for over six months before they gave it up, but the remaining third had had it for less than six months, suggesting that their experience with it would be limited.
Internet Users

(a) Internet adoption

Does this household have access to the Internet? (2003-2005)

- Internet penetration in the household has plateaued

Internet penetration within households has shown little growth across the two samples, 2003 to 2005 (at three percentage points across both samples). There has also been little change in the percentage of households who have had access to the Internet in the past, and now no longer have access to it – 5% across both samples.

Do you yourself personally use the Internet at home, work, school, college or elsewhere or have you used the Internet anywhere in the past? (2003-2005)

- Levels of individual Internet use follow levels of Internet penetration in homes

Similar percentages of individuals use the Internet as say they have access to the Internet in their home (60% and 61%, respectively). Nearly one in ten respondents said that they used to use the Internet, but no longer do (lapsed, or former, users). There remains a third of respondents who said that they have never used the Internet – a similar proportion to those who said they have never had access at home (34% of households).

How long has your household had an Internet connection? (2005)

- Households continue to go online

Despite a plateau in the overall level of Internet diffusion, nearly 9% of Internet households said they came online in the last six months prior to our survey. Nearly one fifth (19%) have been online for only one year. The most common level of experience is between two and five years, for those who adopted the Internet in 2000 and 2003.
Is this household planning to get access to the Internet at home in the next year or so? (2003-2005)

- Diffusion will continue, but at a slower pace

While 40% of households currently have no access to the Internet, over one in five of these households said they are likely to acquire the Internet in the coming year. The proportion of households planning to get access to the Internet in the next year was similar in 2003 and 2005, suggesting that levels of diffusion will change slowly.

Are you planning to get access to the Internet in the next year or so? (2005)

- Lapsed users are undecided about getting reconnected to the Internet, while non-users are unlikely to get access

Lapsed users were more likely to say that they are planning to get access to the Internet than non-users (40% and 13%, respectively), suggesting that those who have experience of the Internet are more favourably disposed towards adopting it. However, almost one quarter of lapsed users said they do not know whether they will get access or not and a further 37% said they probably/definitely will not go online in the next year. Those without experience of the Internet were less likely to think that they will acquire it. Over half of non-users said they will definitely not get access to the Internet in the next year. A further one in five said they probably will not. Fourteen per cent said they don’t know.

Do you have a broadband Internet connection at home? (2003-2005)

- Broadband Internet has diffused rapidly over the last two years

The percentages of those who have Internet access through broadband is increasing rapidly, moving from 19% of households with Internet access in 2003 to 59% in 2005. So while the overall levels of Internet access remain quite steady, modes of Internet access have changed significantly, with users gaining more capacity with ‘always-on’ higher speed connections.
(a) Internet adoption

**Broadband connection in all British households (2003-2005)**

- Broadband penetration remains well below half of all households

Over a third (36%) of households in the 2005 sample have a broadband connection, twenty-five percentage points higher than in 2003.

**When did you start using broadband in your household? (2005)**

- Broadband is continuing to diffuse at a strong pace

Of the households that have broadband, over half of all acquisitions have taken place within the last year. Prior to that, growth was slower, reflecting the roll-out of broadband within Britain.

**Is your household considering getting broadband in the next year or so? (2003-2005)**

- Broadband penetration will continue to grow

Of those who have Internet access through a non-broadband connection, a higher proportion of respondents in 2005 said they will consider getting broadband in the next year than said the same in 2003 (44% and 38%, respectively). This suggests that the additional benefits offered by broadband are attractive and physical access to broadband will drive its penetration. However, there remains a core of nearly two in ten respondents, who currently have narrowband Internet access, who said they are unlikely to consider getting broadband in the near future.
(b) Levels and modes of access

In your household is the Internet left on all or most of the time or connected only when you are actually using it? (2005)

- The possibilities of broadband remain to be fully utilized as habits change slowly

Nearly half of the sample of broadband users uses the Internet as though it were a dial up connection, only switching it on when they wish to use it. A quarter of the sample said that they leave the Internet on all the time, while a further quarter said they leave it on most of the time. There remains a need for greater understanding of the way in which broadband works, and how it can be used more efficiently and be made a more effective part of everyday life.

In which of the following ways can members of your household get access to the Internet at home? (2003–2005)

- Newer modes of Internet access are growing, albeit from a small base

While ‘established’ forms of Internet delivery dominate the market, particularly via telephone lines, newer forms of access are growing fast. Much of this growth comes from mobile hardware, suggesting the integration of the Internet into everyday life, so that access can be achieved at all times from all locations.

Could I ask about all of the places where you access the Internet? Do you currently access the Internet…? (2003–2005)

- Individuals are integrating the Internet into many different parts of their lives

The main place of use of the Internet is the home, but the workplace or school account for a significant amount of use. Importantly, public places of access (public libraries and Internet cafes) have doubled in importance in 2005 although access from these venues is still relatively low. One quarter of the sample said that they sometimes access the Internet from someone else’s home.
(b) Levels and modes of access

Access at another person’s home by life stage (2005)

- Young people, more often than older users, tend to access the Internet at other people’s homes

One quarter of those who access the Internet said they do so at someone else’s home. The data show that it is young people in particular who do this, forming 70% of those who do. Those of working age and those who are retired also did so, but in far smaller proportions.

Where did you start using the Internet? (2003–2005)

- Home is the starting block for access to the Internet for most people

In line with the data which show that the home (be it one’s own home or someone else’s) is the key place for access to the Internet, the majority of Internet users (both in 2003 and 2005) said that they first started using the Internet in their own homes. About 15% mentioned work or school as the next most frequent place. The data suggest therefore that use most often begins at home or through a specific need (work or school) and develops later to encompass other places of access, perhaps as confidence in, and experience with, the technology grows.
Let me read off a number of things that some households have and others do not. Could you tell me if your household has…? (2005)

- Internet use is part of a larger pattern of information and communication technologies (ICTs) consumed by households

Three quarters of the sample have access to multi-channel television while 70% have access to a computer and three in five have access to the Internet at home. The penetration of all forms of digital technology continues to increase – in 2005 questions were asked for the first time about household penetration of digital cameras and half the sample said they had one. Nearly one in ten said they have an i-Pod in the home and Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) are found in a significant minority of homes (6%). In addition, most of the individuals in the sample (85%) have a mobile telephone. As these data are based on individuals, it is likely that the average household has more than one mobile phone.

Multi-channel TV in the household (2003–2005)

- Multi-channel television is becoming the norm, albeit delivered in different ways

The areas of greatest growth between the 2003 and 2005 samples have been in satellite television and digital terrestrial television, each gaining ten percentage points from 2003 to 2005.

How many television sets are there in your household? (2005)

- Television is all-pervasive

All households have at least one television set. One in five had four sets or more, while a quarter had three sets.
How many working computers are available for people to use in this household? (2003–2005)

- Most homes have computers

Two in three homes have a computer, with the majority having one. Sixteen per cent have more than one, although multiple computer growth shows slow increase year on year and is probably due to the upgrading of hardware. Having a computer is key to using the Internet for most users, which helps explain why a third of respondents remain offline.

Do you yourself use a computer whether or not it is connected to the Internet? (2005)

- Computer use is nearly synonymous with use of the Internet

Almost two thirds (63%) of respondents use a computer, whether or not they use the Internet. However, the proportion of the public online is almost identical to the proportion using a computer, suggesting that personal computers and the Internet remain closely tied to one another.

Leaving the internet aside for a moment, how frequently do you use a computer? (2005)

- Computers are routinely used by Britons

Most respondents who use a computer are likely to use it at least weekly, with daily use being the most common pattern. Nearly one in five computer users said they use it several times a day. This indicates that computers have become part of everyday life.
Do you yourself have a mobile phone? (2003–2005)
• Is mobile telephone penetration reaching saturation?

The majority of respondents (85%) in the sample say that they use a mobile telephone themselves.

![Chart showing mobile phone usage](chart1.png)

Does your mobile phone have a camera? (2005)
• Nearly half of mobile phone users have a camera phone

Of the 85% of respondents with mobile phones, two in five (44%) have cameras as part of their telephones.

![Chart showing camera phone usage](chart2.png)

Besides making phone calls, do you use your mobile phone for...? (2005)
• Mobile phones are important in terms of interaction and social communication and can also act as a link to the Internet

While the overwhelming use of mobile telephones is to keep in touch, via voice or text messaging, 11% of users say that they access the Internet through their phone. Nearly two in five uses the phone to take pictures, while 28% play games, a more solitary activity.

![Chart showing mobile phone uses](chart3.png)
About how long have you been using the Internet? (2005)

- Use of the Internet continues to grow, but only one quarter of users have more than five years of experience.

Within this sample, the majority of users (67%) have been using the Internet for more than two years (one quarter for over five years). There is still movement, however, and 16% began using the Internet at home within the last year.

How would you rate your ability to use the Internet? (2003–2005)

- Most Internet users feel confident about their level of proficiency.

Nearly two thirds (66%) of all users rate themselves as good or excellent – and this is an increase from 2003. Very few people indeed (less than 5%) rate their ability as poor or very bad, suggesting that the Internet is increasingly user friendly.

Average time spent online in a week by self-rated ability in using the Internet (2005)

- Use of the Internet is related to one’s proficiency.

Ability – self-rated – is clearly related to the time users spend online. On average, users spend over 10 hours per week online, but this ranges from an average of less than 1 hour for users with the lowest level of proficiency, to nearly 20 hours per week for those with the highest level of proficiency.
(e) Experience: proximity to the Internet

Do you have an email address? (2003–2005)

• Almost all Internet users have an email address

Within the sample of Internet users, almost all have at least one email address, underlining the role of the system in supporting communication processes. Very few people limit themselves to using the Web only to accessing information.

Have you yourself ever tried to set up a Web page? (2003–2005)

• Production within the Internet space is not often tried

Most respondents have never tried to set up a Web page, suggesting that the production process is not one attempted by many users. However, one in five has done so, and, of these, most have been successful. Moreover, there has not been a growth in Web development efforts. In fact, a smaller percentage of users have successfully constructed a Website in 2005 than in 2003, suggesting that, unlike early adopters, current Internet users are becoming comfortable with just consuming the Web rather than producing content.

Tried to set up a Web page by life stage (2005)

• Younger people are far more likely to try and produce content for the Internet

A substantial percentage of pupils (39%) have set up a Web page and over three quarters of them say they have been successful. In contrast, older respondents (working age and retirees) are much less likely to attempt to produce content but have a similar success rate when they do.
Have you yourself ever written a computer program? (2005)

- A sizable number of respondents are sufficiently computer literate to have written a computer program.

The majority of computer users have never written a computer program, although 15% say they have. Of that 15%, most have been successful in their attempts, suggesting that only those who are relatively proficient take that creative step.
Internet Uses

Types of use (2005)

• The most frequent uses of the Internet are to communicate or to find information

OxIS 2005 data show that there is a great variety in the types of Internet use. Respondents were asked whether they use the Internet for different purposes either several times a day, daily, weekly, monthly, less than once a month or never.

Email remains central to use of the Internet. The top quartile of uses (over 75% of users saying they use the Internet in this way) are either communications-related or to seek information e.g. factual information, product information or to make travel arrangements. A significant proportion of users (83%) also just browse. The second quartile is more specific with local or personal interest-based uses mentioned, such as obtaining news or looking up local information. Fifty-six per cent of the sample also said they use instant messaging. In the next quartile (mentioned by 50-25% of users) are more specialist activities such as file sharing, financial transactions and to look for jobs. Just over a quarter of the sample said they use ‘chat’ on the Internet. The least frequently used services (the fourth quartile) are those that serve particular interests such as sex-related sites and religious sites, but also other interests such as researching the family tree, and more innovative services, such as using the Internet for telephony, fall in this set.

e-Communication (2005)

• Communication, particularly email, remains a prime use of the Internet

Almost all Internet users (92%) use the Internet to check email, and over two thirds said they also send email attachments, suggesting that the Internet supports truly interactive patterns of communication. Over half the sample of users use the instant messaging service to communicate and a quarter use chat rooms. A sizeable minority of users (13%) uses the Internet to make or receive telephone calls. Clearly, the Internet is an important and significant tool in the way people communicate with one another.
e-Information (2005)

- The Internet is used widely as an information source, including as a means for accessing local knowledge.

Two thirds of all users of the Internet said they look for information about local events on the Internet, while three in five said they look at the news on the Internet. A smaller proportion (but still over half the sample) uses the Internet to look at weather forecasts and for sports information. Two in five users said they use the Internet as a job search facility. The Internet is used for surveillance much as other traditional media: to collect information about events that have a potential impact on individuals and their interests.

Have you accessed health care information online within the last twelve months? (2005)

- There is significant use of the Internet to get information about health care, but not usually on a routine basis.

While most users said they have never used the Internet to get health care information, one in five said they use it in this way frequently. A further 17% sometimes uses the Internet in this way, suggesting that a significant proportion of users find the Internet is a source of health information when required.

e-Travel (2005)

- Significant numbers of users use the Internet to plan and book travel.

Over three quarters of users said they use the Internet to make travel plans, while a slightly smaller proportion (seven in ten) said they use the Internet to book travel arrangements. The Internet seems to offer users not only a convenient way of planning and choosing where they will go and how they will get there, but also for booking their travel arrangements.
e-Entertainment (2005)

- The Internet has become a source for entertainment, with music and playing games among the most frequent uses.

Over half the sample of users downloads or listens to music on the Internet, while nearly the same proportion plays games. Just over a third of users said they exchange jokes on the Internet, while a third downloads and watches videos. A similar proportion also listens to the radio online. This growth accompanies the diffusion of broadband.

Download or listen to music on the Internet by life stage (2005)

- Listening to music downloaded from the Internet is not just for the young.

While most pupils have downloaded or listened to music from the Internet, a significant proportion of people of working age have also done so, as have over a third of users who were retirees. Music delivered over the Internet is not exclusively a young person’s interest.

Download or listen to music by appropriateness of copying music from the Internet without paying for it (2005)

- Most of those who download or listen to music via the Internet think it is appropriate to do so without paying for it.

Respondents were asked whether they think it appropriate to copy music over the Internet without paying for it. Of those users who think it is appropriate to download music from the Internet (27% of the sample), 70% do so. Among those who think it is not appropriate (35% of the sample), less than half (37%) said they have downloaded music. Since some music is fully available to the public, this suggests that users do not necessarily dismiss the legal implications of material that appears freely available to them on the Internet.
### e-Learning (2005)

- One of the most frequent uses of the Internet is to validate information.

The Internet is used by most of the sample to look up a fact and by a smaller percentage (but still nearly half of all users) to look up the meaning of a word. Two in five users say they use the Web to get information for school-related work. A significant proportion of users said they use the Internet as an aid to “distance learning” (for an academic degree or job training), suggesting that the Internet is used often for learning activities, even if not in formal distance education settings. The Internet adds to the battery of learning tools available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Users</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Look up a fact</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look up a word definition</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School material</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distant learning</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### e-Money (2005)

- Well over a third of users use banking services and pay some bills online.

While the more specialist uses of the Internet such as investments are quite limited, over a third of users (39%) use the Internet to pay their bills. Forty-five per cent said they use their bank online services, underlining the convenience of the Internet and its integration into everyday life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Banking online</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying bills</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investing in stocks &amp; funds</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Other uses (2005)

- There are many special Internet uses that are supported by the Internet.

One factor behind the popularity of the Internet is its ability to enable individuals to pursue their own special interests. Examples from the survey show that significant numbers (at least one in ten users) have used the net to construct family trees, visit sexually explicit sites, or gamble, but also to look for religious or spiritual sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family tree</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read blogs</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual sites</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual/religious sites</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamble</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
e-Commerce (2005)

- The Internet is widely used for e-shopping

Nearly all users of the Internet say they have used it to find information on products, and three quarters say they have bought online. This is an important aspect of the Internet for many.

How often shop online (2005)

- Most users of the Internet have shopped online

Three quarters of Internet users have shopped online, with over half shopping occasionally (monthly or less than monthly). The Internet has become an important e-commerce vehicle for individuals.

Shopping attitudes: People get a much wider choice of goods on the Internet (2005)

- Shopping on the Internet offers more choice

Most of those who shop online think that they have a wider choice of goods on the Internet (78%). Only a small proportion disagrees (6%).
Shopping attitudes: The prices of things on the Internet are lower (2005)

- Most Internet users think prices for goods on the Internet are generally lower than in high street shops.

While 16% of users had no particular view about the prices on the Internet in comparison with ‘traditional’ retail, 73% believed they could find lower priced products on the Internet, and only 5% disagreed.

Shopping attitudes: It’s difficult to return or exchange goods ordered on the Internet (2005)

- Internet users are as likely to agree as disagree that it is difficult to exchange or return goods bought online.

Internet users are evenly split between those that agree, those that disagree and those that have no view about the difficulty of returning or exchanging goods on the Internet. This suggests that for most users (over 50%) the Internet shopping experience is no more difficult than traditional shopping, but that questions over the return of unwanted items could be a barrier to greater use of this facility.

Shopping attitudes: People are uncomfortable with the lack of face-to-face contact when shopping on the Internet (2005)

- There is disagreement over how important face-to-face contact is as part of the shopping experience.

While nearly two in five Internet users agree that people are uncomfortable not having face-to-face contact when shopping on the Internet, almost the same proportion disagrees. A further 23% has no view, and 7% do not know what they think about the statement.
Shopping attitudes: It’s easy to order products from Websites (2005)

- The Internet is seen to provide an easy way to shop

No users disagree strongly that the Internet is an easy way to buy products, and the overwhelming majority (78%) agree that it is easy, underlining the convenience of online commerce.

![Graph showing shopping attitudes: easy to order products](image)

N=1,309 (Current Internet users)

Shopping attitudes: It’s difficult to assess product quality when shopping on the Internet (2005)

- While online shopping is generally seen as a positive experience, there is less satisfaction with the ability to gauge the quality of products online

There is significant agreement (56% of users) that it is difficult to gauge the quality of a product when shopping online. About a quarter of users neither agrees nor disagrees, while 16% said they disagree. While the online shopping experience is generally well received, therefore, the inability to judge the quality is a detriment.

![Graph showing shopping attitudes: difficult to assess product quality](image)

N=1,309 (Current Internet users)
**e-Government: Did at least one e-government action online (2005)**

- A significant proportion of Internet users has used e-government services online.

Use of e-government services is high, with 2 in 5 Internet users saying they have ever used any of the services listed in the following figure.

**Internet and e-government (2005)**

- Most e-government usage to date has been for general information seeking

Of those that use any e-government service, most use has been for general information seeking (about 20% of any use in each case). Users are far less likely to use the Internet to make contact with their civic representative or for transactions, such as paying for government (local or national) services. (This excludes other electronic services, such as electronic direct payments, which are more commonly used in Britain.)
The Internet helps people express their concerns to Government (2005)

- The potential for the Internet to be used for augmenting civic participation is perceived positively

While few people said they use the Internet to contact civic leaders, most see this as potentially useful. Two in five users said that the Internet helps people express their concerns to government. The same proportion either said that they neither agree nor disagree or don’t know. This suggests that there is scope for increasing possibilities of civic participation through the Internet.

Attitudes towards postal and Internet voting (2005)

- Respondents are generally supportive of online voting, but a substantial minority are opposed

The public is somewhat more supportive of postal voting (51%) than Internet voting (43%) as an option. Few people believe that online voting should be compulsory, and 21% believe that online voting should not be permitted.
Providing information online (2005)

- A significant minority of users post information through the Internet

Almost one in five users (18%) said that they post pictures or photographs on the Internet. Slightly fewer (16%) have a distribution list they maintain for email while the same proportion takes part in online discussion groups. Fourteen per cent have a Website, while a blog, still a relatively new application, is employed by considerably fewer users, at 5% of the sample.
If you needed to use the Internet to send an email or something, do you know someone who could do this for you? (2005)

- Most lapsed and non-users know someone who could use the Internet on their behalf

Over half the sample of lapsed users said they definitely know someone who could send information for them, in comparison with two in five non-users. Conversely, fewer than one in ten lapsed users said they would not know someone who could use the Internet for them, while rather more non-users (25%) said they would not know anyone. These data suggest that those who have used the Internet are more likely to know others who use the Web.

In the past year have you asked someone to send an email for you, get information from the World Wide Web or make a purchase from the Internet? (2005)

- Some lapsed users and non-users have had occasion to ask someone else to use the Internet for them in the recent past, but this is the exception

Non-users are far less likely than those who are lapsed users to ask other people to use the Internet on their behalf, suggesting that they may not understand the potential of the Internet as well as those who have used it in the past. Neither group has asked for such access often, with occasional use being common.
Impacts of the Internet

(a) Changing information habits and Internet practices

Do you read any newspapers or news service online that you do not read in print? (2005)

- For a significant minority the Internet extends access to news
One in five users said that they read online newspapers or news services that they do not read in print. The Internet allows wider exposure to news and information sources than would otherwise be the case, reconfiguring an individual’s access to the world.

Do you subscribe to any online news service? (2005)

- Fewer than one in ten users subscribe to any online news subscription service
Most respondents said that they do not subscribe to any online news service (88% are certain and a further three per cent said they do not know). Where subscriptions are taken up, they are overwhelmingly for free services, while there is very little paid-only take up or paid and free service take up.

People vary in the way they look for information. Where would you go first, if you were looking for information on...? (2005)

- The significance of the Internet to aid information seeking is apparent, regardless of the information being sought
In almost all cases where respondents describe seeking information, significant proportions of respondents said that they use the Internet first rather than other forms of information retrieval. The exceptions are when paying taxes, where telephone contact is more frequently mentioned, or finding out about a book or the local school. In both those cases, personal contact is more likely.
When you use the Web, do you mainly look at specific pages, mainly use a search engine or do you rely on both about the same? (2005)

- Users vary in the way they use the Web, but search engines have become at least as significant as specific Web pages.

Three in five Internet users said that they either go to specific pages or to a search engine when they want to use the Web; they do not generally make a choice to go to one or the other. On the other hand, the rest of the sample is equally split between those who go to specific pages and those who go to a search engine (19% of the sample fall into each category).

Do you use an electronic or paper diary? (2005)

- Electronic diaries are gaining in popularity, but remain exceptional.

While three in five respondents do not use a diary at all, nearly one in ten say they use an electronic diary, either alongside a paper diary or as well as a paper one. This is one way in which electronic media are beginning to be more integrated in everyday life.
The Internet allows me to keep in touch with people I normally could not talk to so often (2003–2005)

- The Internet plays a significant role in maintaining social relationships

The Internet plays an important role in maintaining relationships with people with whom one does not communicate frequently. One quarter of users ‘agree strongly’ that the Internet allows them to keep in contact with people not normally contacted frequently, with a further half agreeing. In total, three quarters of the sample say that this is a positive function of the Internet and only 12% disagree.

Too many people can contact me over the Internet (2003–2005)

- Concern about unwanted contact through the Internet exists, but varies across individuals

While over two in five users disagree that they can be contacted by too many people over the Internet, and nearly a quarter have no fixed view, there is a third that feels they can be too easily contacted through the Internet. Again, the access that the Internet can afford is highlighted, but this time in a negative way for some: an inability to control access.

Has the use of the Internet increased or decreased your contact with the following groups of people or has your contact remained the same? (2005)

- The Internet can allow people to be part of communities of interest, seldom reducing social contact

While the majority of respondents said that their contact with people who share common interests has remained the same, a significant minority (16%) said that the Internet has increased their interaction with people with similar personal interests. However, very few respondents believe that the Internet has increased their contact with people who share their religious beliefs (3%) or their political interests (2%). The Internet permits respondents to develop communities of interest, reconfiguring the way in which people can come together by allowing access to different groups, even at a distance, but most people use the Internet to reinforce existing social relationships.
(b) Internet and social interaction

It is easier for me to meet people online than in person (2005)

- Internet users are sceptical about the Internet’s ability to help develop social relations

While the Internet can allow respondents to meet others with like interests, and 16% of users agree that it is easier to meet people online, the majority disagree. One third ‘disagree strongly’ that it is easier to meet people online than in person. Thirteen per cent of users have no view on this.

Some people meet new people and make friends while they are online, others don’t. Have you ever met new people or made friends online? (2005)

- The Internet can increase social spheres

A significant minority of respondents (one in five users) said that they have either met new people or made friends online, thereby increasing their circle of contacts.

Average number of online friends met in person and average number of online friends never met (2005)

*Average number of friends with standard deviation
People who ‘often’ use different media to communicate with family and friends close by and far away (2005)

- Email is an additional form of communication available to maintain contact with friends and family, regardless of geographical distance.

Respondents were asked how often they contact family and friends who live nearby, and family and friends who live far away (never, rarely, sometimes, often). The telephone remains the most effective medium for communicating with friends or family, regardless of their geographical distance. If they live close by, respondents are more likely to say that they visit. Email or written communication is only occasionally used more often for friends or family that live far away than for those who are close by.
How has the Internet changed the amount of time you spend with the following activities? Do you engage in the following activities less than, about the same or more than you did before you started using the Internet? (2005)

- Other media are most affected by the time spent on the Internet

While time spent on the Internet negatively affects time spent on face to face interactions for a moderate proportion of respondents (9% say they spend less time with family and 6% say they spend less time with friends), the main time effect is time taken from television. Over a quarter of respondents said they spend less time watching television now that they have the Internet. Smaller proportions said that the Internet has acted as a detriment to the time they spend reading books (17%) or newspapers (13%). Just less than one in ten said that they spend less time playing sport now that they use the Internet. Conversely, a small proportion of users said that the Internet has increased their social interaction, the time spent with other media, or increased time spent on sporting activities.

Dealing with email takes up too much time (2003–2005)

- Email is not seen by most as a time detriment

While 16% of users said that dealing with email takes too much time, the majority (65%) said that it does not. Across the two samples the more positive view towards email has increased by a small proportion (six percentage points).
The Internet helps me save time (2005)

- The Internet is seen to be a benefit in a time-starved world

For three quarters of users the Internet is seen as a positive, helping them save time. While one in seven has no view, just over one in ten disagrees, but only 3% ‘disagree strongly’.

Do you do more than one activity while you are online such as listening to music, watching TV or using the telephone? (2005)

- The Internet allows respondents to ‘multi-task’: do more than one thing at a time

Most respondents (43%) feel able to do other things such as listening to music or watching television while they use the Internet. It is a technology that, for many, is integrated into their daily activities and does not demand complete attention at all times – 14% said they generally do something else while they are using the Internet. Conversely, two in five said they never do anything else while they use the Internet.

Multi-tasking by life-stage (2005)

- Younger respondents are most comfortable using the Internet

Three quarters of pupils said that they multi-task while using the Internet and a significant proportion of people of working age (60%) said they do the same but less frequently than do the respondents who are pupils. While a third of retirees also multi-task, 68% never do compared with 40% of those of working age and a quarter of pupils (26%).
Multi-tasking by hours spent on the Internet (2005)

- The more time users spend with the Internet, the higher the propensity to multi-task

Those who said that they multi-task while online spend almost twice as much time on the Internet (between 11 and 15 hours) as those that said they do not (8 hours). This suggests that increased familiarity with the Internet, through use, can create a framework where the Internet can be used to support and permit other activities.
Overall, how important is the Internet to your everyday life? (2005)

- The Internet has come to be viewed as an important part of everyday life.

Only 3% of Internet users regard the Internet as not at all important. Seventy per cent view it as important or very important.

Importance of the Internet by life stage (2005)

- The importance and relevance of the Internet is most transparent to younger people.

Young people (those defined as ‘pupils’) overwhelmingly think that the Internet is important (82%) and over half of these say it is very important. Similarly, respondents of working age said the Internet is important, although nearly three in ten said it is not. Even within the group of retirees, where the perceived importance of the Internet is less pronounced, half said it is important. The perception of the Internet as an essential part of modern life is clear.

Overall, how important is a computer to your current way of life? (2005)

- Computers are viewed as an important part of everyday life.

Over half of computer users (63%) said that computers are important or very important to their everyday life.
How important is the use of a mobile phone to your everyday life? (2005)
• Mobile phones have become an integral part of daily life
The majority of those with mobile phones (75%) said that mobile phones are an important part of the user’s life, with two in five saying the mobile phone is ‘very important’. The remaining quarter of users said their mobile is not particularly important to their everyday lives.

The Internet is making life better (2005)
• The Internet is considered to be a general benefit, not just of benefit to individuals
While three quarters of the user sample agrees that the Internet saves them time as individuals, almost three quarters also agree that the Internet makes life better in general. One in five said they do not feel strongly either way but no user disagrees ‘strongly’ with this statement, and only 6% disagree at all.

Technology is making things better for people like me (2003–2005)
• Respondents are generally positive about the role of technology in society
Over three in five respondents (63%) agree that technology is improving their lives and the lives of those around them. Few disagree – the percentage is the same as those that agree ‘strongly’ with this statement. Thus, the view that technology is bettering one’s life is important in Britain.
When new services are invented, it is a good idea to try them (2003–2005)

- People agree that new services should be tried out

Three in five current users agree that it is a good idea to try new services as they come out, with fewer than 10% disagreeing. This shows that people are not averse to trying new things, although one quarter suggests they are indifferent.

OxIS 2003: N=1,201 (Current Internet users); OxIS 2005: N=1,309 (Current Internet users)
How much of the information found on the World Wide Web overall do you think is reliable and accurate? (2005)

• There is a healthy scepticism about the reliability of information available on the Web

No users think that the information available on the Web is totally unreliable, and few (4%) think it is all reliable. However, almost half think that most of the information is reliable, while a further third said that about half of it is. Only 10% think that a small portion of the information is reliable.

How concerned are you about protecting your computer from viruses? (2005)

• Those who are concerned about viruses seek to protect their computers

The majority of computer users (over 80%) said that they are concerned about virus attacks on their computers and most of them have made some attempt to protect their computers from attack. Twenty per cent of those who admit concern however, have done nothing about it. A small proportion (12%) said they have no concerns at all.

How concerned are you about unpleasant experiences when using email? For example being sent obscene or otherwise unwanted emails? (2005)

• Many of those expressing concern about unpleasant experiences when using email have taken some action

Two in five email users are not concerned at all about bad experiences when using email. Of those who are concerned, a quarter have done something to protect themselves, while about a third have not done anything.
Which of the following most closely describes your attitudes towards receiving unsolicited mail, sometimes called SPAM? (2003–2005)

• Perceived levels of SPAM have not increased from 2003 to 2005

Most email users said that they receive SPAM messages but the proportion has not changed since 2003. Just over one third of those that receive SPAM said they are not bothered by the material they receive, or by the number of messages. The remainder said they receive too many SPAM communications. Just over a quarter of email users said they receive no SPAM.

Bad experiences in the past year (2003–2005)

• There is a change in the sorts of bad experiences that people have

In 2005 SPAM was the most often mentioned negative experience among email users. However, there appears to be an emerging trend with people being asked for personal information or being in some way misled through the Internet – be it the theft of personal financial information, or the misrepresentation of an item purchased online. There is a significant decrease year on year in the levels of reported viruses and a smaller decline in obscene or abusive emails received.

Number of bad experiences on the Internet (2005)

• The majority of email users has had at least one bad experience in the last year

While 44% of the sample of those who use the Internet have had no negative experiences in the previous year, a quarter have had more than one such experience and 29% can recall at least one.
People who go online put their privacy at risk (2003–2005)

• People believe that their privacy can be compromised by going online

About half the sample of users agree that privacy can be compromised by going online, while a quarter has no view. One in six disagrees with this.

The Internet permits people to get personal information about me without my permission (2003–2005)

• Issues around privacy on the Internet are a concern

While a quarter of users say they neither agree nor disagree that the Internet permits unauthorised access to personal information, there is much greater concern that this is so (45% say this). A smaller proportion (24%) disagrees.

Do you think that the present use of computers is an actual threat to personal privacy in this country? (2005)

• A substantial percentage of people feel that the computer is a threat to personal privacy

While one in five respondents say they do not know, almost half feel that computers allow personal privacy to be threatened. A third says computers are not a threat.
With respect to personal information about you, how concerned are you about threats to your personal privacy in Britain today. Are you…? (2003–2005)

- There has been a slight increase in concern about personal privacy in Britain

The concern about computers as a threat to personal privacy is reflected in answers to this question about general threats to personal privacy, where over 60% of respondents said they are either somewhat or very concerned. Indeed, only 13% say they are not at all concerned. Importantly these data show an increase from 2003 to 2005.

Do you think that personal information about yourself is being kept in a file somewhere for purposes not known to you or would you say that is unlikely? (2003–2005)

- Respondents feel somewhat safer today than in 2003 that files are not being kept on them that they are not aware of

Data protection or awareness might have assured more respondents that files are not kept on them. However, most respondents believe that information is kept about them somewhere and that they are not well informed about its presence or purpose.
People should be able to express their opinions on the Internet even if they might be offensive to me (2005)

- The Internet is a positive enabler of comment and expression is generally accepted.

There is agreement (75% of the user sample) that people should be able to express their opinions through the Internet, even if the individual finds that opinion offensive. Only four per cent of the sample disagrees with this. Just under one in five have no particular view.

I am concerned about the amount of immoral material on the Internet (2005)

- There is concern about the nature of the material available on the Internet.

While one in five users has no particular view on the amount of immoral material that is available on the Internet, over half the sample says they are concerned while a further one in five says they are not.

People disagree over what is appropriate or inappropriate for people to do with various communication technologies like mobile phones and the Internet. Do you think it is appropriate or not appropriate to…? (2005)

- A consensus might be developing around normative judgements about what is appropriate to do online.

SPAM is widely perceived to be inappropriate, while sending jokes or e-cards are generally believed to be appropriate. A lack of consensus surrounds the copying of music.
Some people think governments should regulate the Internet, others think governments should not regulate the Internet. What do you think? (2005)

- The public is undecided and of two minds about Internet regulation

Nearly one in ten users said they do not know who should regulate the Internet, and over a third are undecided. The remainder of the sample is split equally between those who think the government should regulate the Internet and those who think that it should not.

Attitudes towards Internet regulation by presence of children in the household (2005)

- In households with children the ambivalence about governmental regulation is still apparent

In households with children, there is still ambivalence regarding regulation by the government, with nearly half the sample saying they are either undecided or don’t know. Those in households without children are more likely to say that governments should not regulate the Internet than those in homes with children (a difference of ten percentage points).

Some people think that access of children to content of the Internet should be restricted, others think it should not be restricted. What is your opinion? (2005)

- Most users think it is desirable to restrict children’s access to the Internet

Only 4% of users think there should be no restrictions on children’s access to the Internet (and a similar proportion said they don’t know), while 11% think there should be very few restrictions. Most of the sample (80%) thinks some restrictions are appropriate.
If children’s content was restricted, which of the following do you think should be responsible for making these restrictions? (2005)

- It is the responsibility of the parent and the ISP to restrict children’s access to the Internet

Among those who think that children’s access should be restricted, almost all think that the responsibility for controlling access lies with the parent. Three quarters also think that it is the responsibility of the ISP to restrict access to material. Less than half the sample, although a substantial minority, thinks that the government has a duty to regulate children’s access. So while prime responsibility lies with the parent, many respondents also expect complementary external regulation.

Everyone in Britain should be required to carry an identification card (2005)

- Britons are generally supportive of an ID card

However, a sizable minority (17%) object, and an equal number (17%) of Britons have not decided.

If people in Britain were required to carry an identification card, what information should be included on the card? (2005)

- A photograph is the least objectionable identifier for an ID card

However, there is a surprising lack of discrimination across various identifiers, with almost as many people (65%) being comfortable with fingerprints as are comfortable with a signature (70%).
Addressing Digital Divides

(a) Social inclusion

Internet use by income (2005)

- There is a clear relationship between economic status and Internet use.

More users of the Internet come from higher economic brackets. This could well be a reflection of the working practices of different earning bands.

Broadband use by income (2005)

- There is an economic divide in broadband use.

While there is an economic divide in broadband access among Internet users, it is not as great as that found in access to the Internet.

Different modes of access by income (2005)

- Higher income groups are more likely to have wireless access and access via mobile phones and PDAs.

While there are no differences in income between users who access the Internet via telephone line or cable TV, users from the highest income group are much more likely to access the Internet with wireless connections or through mobile phones and personal digital assistants than users from the lower income groups.
### Internet use by education (2005)

- Those who have left formal education later are more likely to use the Internet.

The majority of those who have gone on to further education use the Internet, while two thirds of those who went on to take some qualifications also do. A far smaller group (27%) who have no qualifications say they use the Internet, but this suggests that there is an opportunity for such groups to be introduced to the Internet.

### Internet use by gender (2003-2005)

- More men than women use the Internet.

A larger percentage of men (63%) than women (57%) said they use the Internet but the gap appears to have been narrowing across the two year samples.

### Internet use by life stage (2003-2005)

- Internet use varies dramatically across different life stages.

While Internet use is almost universal among pupils, and more than half of respondents of working age use the Internet, only three in ten retirees are currently online.
Internet use by age (2005)

- Younger people are overwhelmingly more likely to use the Internet.

Most of the youngest respondents are current users of the Internet, and there is a clear correlation between age and use with those aged 65 and over significantly less likely to use the Internet than those younger than them.
(b) Proficiency, technology and choice

How important was each of the following to you in first deciding to go on the Internet? (2003)

- Informational and communicational use drives initial interest in the Internet

Most Internet users said that they started to use the Internet in order to gather specific information or to email friends. Over one third of this sample said that they started to use the Internet driven by a desire to learn about the Web, while half mentioned information for school-related work. Almost half of the respondents mentioned online shopping and work as further reasons for starting use of the Internet. Therefore, the Internet as an information source is often a trigger for the acquisition or use of the system.

I will read a number of reasons that some people give to explain why they don’t use the Internet. Tell me if any apply to you (2005)

- Most of those who are choosing not to use the Internet have concerns

Around two thirds of non-users of the Internet said they have no computer. Most of the other reasons given centre around concerns about lack of experience and proficiency, about cost and also about privacy. One third of those who are non users cannot see how the Internet could be useful for them, while slightly more (nearly two in five) think that the Internet is not for them, at their age. This suggests that the benefits of the Internet are not well understood, nor is a degree of technical proficiency required.
People have given a number of reasons for stopping use of the Internet. We would like to know if any of these reasons were important to your decision? (2005)

- Many who have stopped using the Internet are making a positive choice to do so

Of the five per cent of users who used to use the Internet but do so no longer (lapsed users), one third say they have no interest in the Internet. They are effectively making a choice that, having tried the Internet, it does not meet their requirements. A further third no longer have access to a computer. The remainder of reasons given for stopping use of the Internet varies and is based on cost, convenience and experience (13% say they found it too difficult while 11% say they had bad experiences).

Generally speaking, how interested would you say you are in the Internet? (2005)

- Those who use the Internet are most interested in it, indicating the importance of experiencing the technology and the benefits it offers

The vast majority of users of the Internet (90%) said that they are interested in it. One per cent said they are not at all interested. Those who are lapsed users have a less keen interest (7% say they are ‘very interested’) while over a third said they are interested. However a total of 56% express no interest in the Internet, having had experience of it. Within the sample of non-users, their lack of experience with the technology has created a disinterest in it, with three in five saying they are ‘not at all interested’.
**Interest in the Internet by life stage (2005)**

- Young people have the most interest in the Internet, having been exposed to it the most.

  Pupils, who have the most experience of the Internet, are most likely to express interest in it (93%). Those who are less likely to have had experience, the retirees, are least likely to be interested in the Web (66%).

![Graph showing interest in the Internet by life stage.](image)

**Interest in the Internet by presence of children in the household (2005)**

- Interest in the Internet is higher in households with children.

  Those without children in the household and without Internet access are significantly less likely to express interest in the Internet than those with children in the home (43% and 24%, respectively).

![Graph showing interest in the Internet by presence of children in the household.](image)
We are interested in the kinds of help that people need to get started on the Internet. Did you…?

(2003)

- Adopters rely on many others to get started on the Internet

While half of the users started using the Internet without any help, another half mentioned help from either friends or family members, highlighting the importance of social support networks for getting started on the Internet. Significant minorities received help at school or work, while only one in ten users mentioned training courses or paid help.

Kinds of help people need to use the Internet

(2005)

- As with getting started, social support is a key tool in helping people use the Internet

While the most frequent help that respondents seek when using the Internet is trying to work through the issues themselves, calling on family or friends is a significant form of help. Equally, support in the school or workplace is mentioned by nearly one in three respondents. Relatively few have sought ‘professional’ help, either through training courses or other paid support. The Internet is seen very much as an experience technology with (social) support systems in place from others who have learnt how to use the systems themselves.
For how long did you use the Internet? (2005)

• Lapsed users are slightly more likely to have used the Internet for a short period of time. Most lapsed users (two thirds) said they had the Internet for over six months before ending their use of it. However, over one in three lapsed users had the Internet for six months or less, suggesting that they had little time to experience it fully. Previous data have shown that the longer and more experienced one is in using the Internet, the more one can take positive advantage of it.

How long ago was it that you stopped using the Internet? (2005)

• The majority of lapsed users stopped using the Internet within the previous year, and most in the previous six months. Within the sample of lapsed users, nearly seven in ten had stopped using the Internet in the previous year with two in five saying they have stopped within the last six months. About one in seven lapsed users has not used the Internet for two years or more.

In the past year have you had any of the following experiences because you are not using the Internet? (2003)

• Lapsed users and non-users do not perceive disadvantages tied to being offline. For those who are not current users of the Internet there are no strong feelings that the Internet has disadvantaged them in any particular way. Those who are lapsed users are more likely to suggest that they have been encouraged to get on to the Internet so that they are not disadvantaged.
The Two-Stage Sampling Design

The 2003 and 2005 OxIS surveys were based on a two-stage sampling design. In the first phase, a random sample of 175 paired Enumeration Districts (EDs), stratified by region, were selected. Within each selected ED, a random sample of ten addresses were selected from the Postal Address File.

The selection of ED sample points was based on the following process:

Sampling points were allocated to each of the ten Government Regions in proportion to the population in each region. These regions (with proportion of sample achieved) were: North East (4% in 2003, 3% in 2005), North West (11% in 2003, 10% in 2005), Yorkshire and Humberside (10% in 2003, 9% in 2005), East Midlands (5% in 2003, 6% in 2005), West Midlands (8% in 2003, 9% in 2005), Eastern (8% in 2003, 8% in 2005), London (15% in 2003, 11% in 2005), South East (12% in 2003, 11% in 2005), South West (8% in 2003, 9% in 2005), Wales (6% in 2003, 4% in 2005) and Scotland (13% in 2003, 20% in 2005).

In each Government Region all EDs were paired with an adjacent ED that is most similar in terms of its ACORN type.1

Within step 2 above, all paired EDs with a combined population of 60 or more people were listed in descending order of ACORN type, the most affluent pair at the top of the list and the poorest pair at the bottom.

The populations of each set of paired EDs were accumulated down this list. Using a random start and fixed sampling interval the required number of paired EDs were selected. This gave each ED a probability of selection proportionate to its size.

In the second stage, interviewers within each selected ED were issued with ten randomly-selected addresses from which they were expected to achieve a 60% response rate. A further three addresses were issued to be used only if six interviews could not be achieved with the original ten addresses.

In 2003, out of a total of 3,500 addresses issued, 74 lay in areas where interviewers felt unable to work, such as very deprived inner city areas with very significant drugs problems and an area used by prostitutes, or did not need to use the full list of addresses provided. In all, 3,426 addresses were visited by ICM staff. The outcome of these visits is shown in Table A.

In cases where the selected addresses proved to be vacant, demolished or were commercial property, interviewers were allowed to go to the closest inhabited dwelling. In all, out of 3,426 addresses visited by ICM staff for the purpose of this research 392 were substitute addresses used because the original address proved to fall into one of these categories, with a completed interview being the final outcome.

Table B: 2005 Outcomes of Tracking Addresses

| Address Occupied | 93% | 2834 |
| Property vacant/no longer a dwelling/new building not occupied | 2% | 71 |
| Commercial property | 1% | 22 |
| Interviewer unable to locate address | 4% | 123 |
| Total | 100% | 3050 |

Selection of Respondent at Household Address

At each address, respondents for interview were selected by asking the person who answered the door if it would be possible to interview the person normally resident at that household whose birthday (aged 14 or over) is the next one in the household. A ‘person normally resident’ was defined as someone living in the household who is related to the person answering the door or living with someone in the household as a partner. In cases where the person answering the door did not know which household member had the next birthday, a respondent was selected according to the alphabetic position of the first letter of their first name. On the initial occasion this was encountered by the interviewer, the person with a

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1 For a description of ACORN and other classifications of socioeconomic status, see: http://www.businessballs.com/demographicsclassifications.htm
starting letter nearest the beginning of the alphabet was selected; next time, a person with a first name starting with a letter nearest the end of the alphabet; and so on. In 2003, in all, 244 respondents were selected by the alphabet rule, rather than by birthday. In 2005, in all, 326 respondents were selected by the alphabet rule, others were selected by the birthday rule.

Outcomes of Interviews

The results of the contacts made at each address in 2003 are shown in Table C; the results of contacts made at each address in 2005 are shown in Table D.

Table C: 2003 Interview Outcomes at Selected Addresses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Addresses visited</th>
<th>100%</th>
<th>3077</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Productive interview obtained</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>2030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refusal by person answering the door</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refusal by selected respondent (including four interviews begun but terminated)</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to contact after repeated visits to address during fieldwork period</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table D: 2005 Interview Outcomes at Selected Addresses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Addresses visited</th>
<th>100%</th>
<th>3050</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Productive interview obtained</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>2190*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refusal by person answering the door</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refusal by selected respondent including terminated interviews</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to contact after repeated visits to address during fieldwork period</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NB of the 2190 completed interviews, five had to be rejected as they had not correctly followed the routings on the questionnaire hence the overall final sample size is 2185.