

Digital Nation 2021: Sources

Good Things Foundation is a leading digital inclusion charity working in the UK, Australia, and beyond. We work in cities, towns and communities to help people thrive in a digital world. Every year, in our Digital Nation series, we bring together the latest statistics on fixing the digital divide, drawing on national datasets and authoritative analysis. Below, we provide the sources for statistics used in Digital Nation 2021.

List of sources used

- [UK's 3rd Essential Digital Skills Benchmark, Lloyds Banking Group \(2021\)](#)
- [UK Consumer Digital Index, Lloyds Banking Group \(2021\)](#)
- [Adults' Media Use and Attitudes, Ofcom \(2021\)](#) (includes analysis of data from [Ofcom's Technology Tracker](#))
- [Affordability of communications services, Ofcom \(2021\)](#)
- [Disconnected: Exploring the digital skills gap, World Skills UK \(2021\)](#) (research carried out by the Learning and Work Institute for World Skills UK)
- [Digital Inclusion and Older People. Age UK \(2021\)](#) (includes analysis of latest data on internet use from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing)
- [Economic Case for Digital Inclusion, Cebr \(2018\)](#)
- [Online Nation, Ofcom \(2021\)](#)
- Types of UK internet users, Prof. Simeon Yates' analysis of Ofcom data (2021)

Digitally excluded

- **10m people lack the most basic digital skills.** This is the proportion of adults who do not have all seven foundation-level digital skills, as defined in the government's Essential Digital Skills framework. (Lloyds Bank UK 3rd Essential Digital Skills Benchmark 2021)
- **1.3m non-users are worried about data privacy and security.** Of those who said they didn't use the internet in the past 3 months, 51% (1.3m) said they worry about having their identity taken or their privacy and security breached. (Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index 2021).
- **1.5m UK households have no internet access.** It seems that 6% of households still did not have access to the internet in March 2021. (Ofcom, Adults' Media Use and Attitudes; to note there has been a change in methodology compared to last year).
- **2m UK households struggle to afford internet access.** This is based on the number of households who reported a problem with internet affordability in the month before the survey. (Ofcom, Affordability of communications services 2021).
- **14.9m people have very low levels of digital engagement.** The UK Consumer Digital Index segments the population into Very Low, Low, High and Very High levels of digital engagement. (Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index 2021).
- **8.7m employed people (16% of the total adult population) have the Essential Digital Skill for Life (including the foundation-level skills) but lack the Essential**

Digital Skill for Work. (Lloyds Bank UK 3rd Essential Digital Skills Benchmark 2021).

- **42% of over-75 year olds in England are digitally excluded** - they do not use the internet. (Age UK 2021, analysis of English Longitudinal Study of Ageing data).
- **67% of people said they would improve their digital skills if they knew support was available** to help them if they needed it. (Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index 2021).

Fixing the UK's digital divide is about more than supporting people who are 'offline' so they can go 'online'. A significant number of people only use the internet in a 'limited' way - often reflecting a lack of affordable internet and/or digital skills and/or confidence and motivation. Using the latest data from Ofcom on adults' media use and attitudes, Prof. Simeon Yates has repeated his cluster analysis of different types of internet users - allowing comparison of 'extensive users' of the internet with 'limited users'. (For more detail on this analysis, see this post by Prof. Yates.)

Analysis by Prof. Yates of Ofcom Adults' Media Use and Attitudes survey data (2021 release) finds that, compared to extensive users, people who are 'limited users' are around:

- **4 times more likely to be from low income households** (social grades D and E)
- **8 times more likely to be over 65 years old**
- **1.5 times more likely to be from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups**

The map shows variation across UK nations and regions when comparing the proportion of people who are online but 'limited users' (in red) with 'extensive users' (in green). The table below shows the full comparison. (Analysis by Prof. Yates of Ofcom Adults' Media Use and Attitudes survey data, 2021 release).

Nation or region	North East	Yorks & Humber	North West	West Mids	East Mids	East of England	South West	South East	London	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	England
Limited users % in area	38%	28%	32%	31%	31%	33%	27%	28%	21%	32%	36%	32%	29%
Extensive users % in area	43%	44%	43%	44%	44%	34%	44%	45%	45%	44%	44%	41%	43%

Reasons for not being online: Many different reasons shape people's ability to go online, or their decision to not use the internet. These data are from Ofcom's Adults' Media Use and Attitudes Survey (2021), from their digital exclusion survey of non-users of the internet.

Reasons people gave for not being online (people could select more than one):

- **37% say they don't have the right equipment**
- **36% say it is too expensive for them**
- **42% say they are not interested - 'it isn't for me'**
- **46% say it is too complicated**

Digitally included

- **86% of UK adults used the internet in September 2020.** (Ofcom - Online Nation 2021)
- **30.8m people have high or very high levels of digital engagement.** The UK Consumer Digital Index segments the population into Very Low, Low, High and Very High levels of digital engagement. (Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index 2021).
- **1.5m more people went online in the last year.** (Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index 2021).
- **92% of businesses want a basic level of digital skills from employees.** (World Skills UK 2021).
- **25% of adults in England registered for the NHS App by the end of July 2021.** (Source: NHSX data)
- **65% of people video-called for the first time during the pandemic,** for example using Zoom or Teams. (Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index 2021).
- **35% of people said local support would be the easiest way for them to develop their digital skills.** This is a seven-fold increase from the previous year. (Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index 2021).
- **24% of over-75 year olds in England increased their internet use** in the pandemic; these were mostly older people who were already regular internet users. (Age UK 2021, analysis of English Longitudinal Study of Ageing data).

Benefits of being online accrue across every aspect of people's lives - including accessing essential services, improved earning power, ability to get better deals online - and for social and democratic participation more broadly. Benefits also accrue to the UK economy as a whole.

- **The UK gets good value.** Analysis conducted in 2018 by Cebr estimated that the UK benefits by almost £15 for every £1 invested in helping people acquire basic digital skills. (Cebr 2018; an updated analysis is planned for early 2022).
- **I'm healthier.** 49% of people say they manage their health and wellbeing online. (Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index 2021)
- **I'm happier.** 85% of people say using the internet helps them connect better with friends and family. (Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index 2021)
- **I get better value.** Those with the highest level of digital engagement pay £228 less per year on their bills than those with the least digital engagement. 67% of people also say it helps them save money and get better deals. (Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index 2021).
- **I'm better off.** Manual workers with high or very high levels of digital engagement earn £421 per month (ca £5k per year) than manual workers with less digital engagement. (Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index 2021).

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