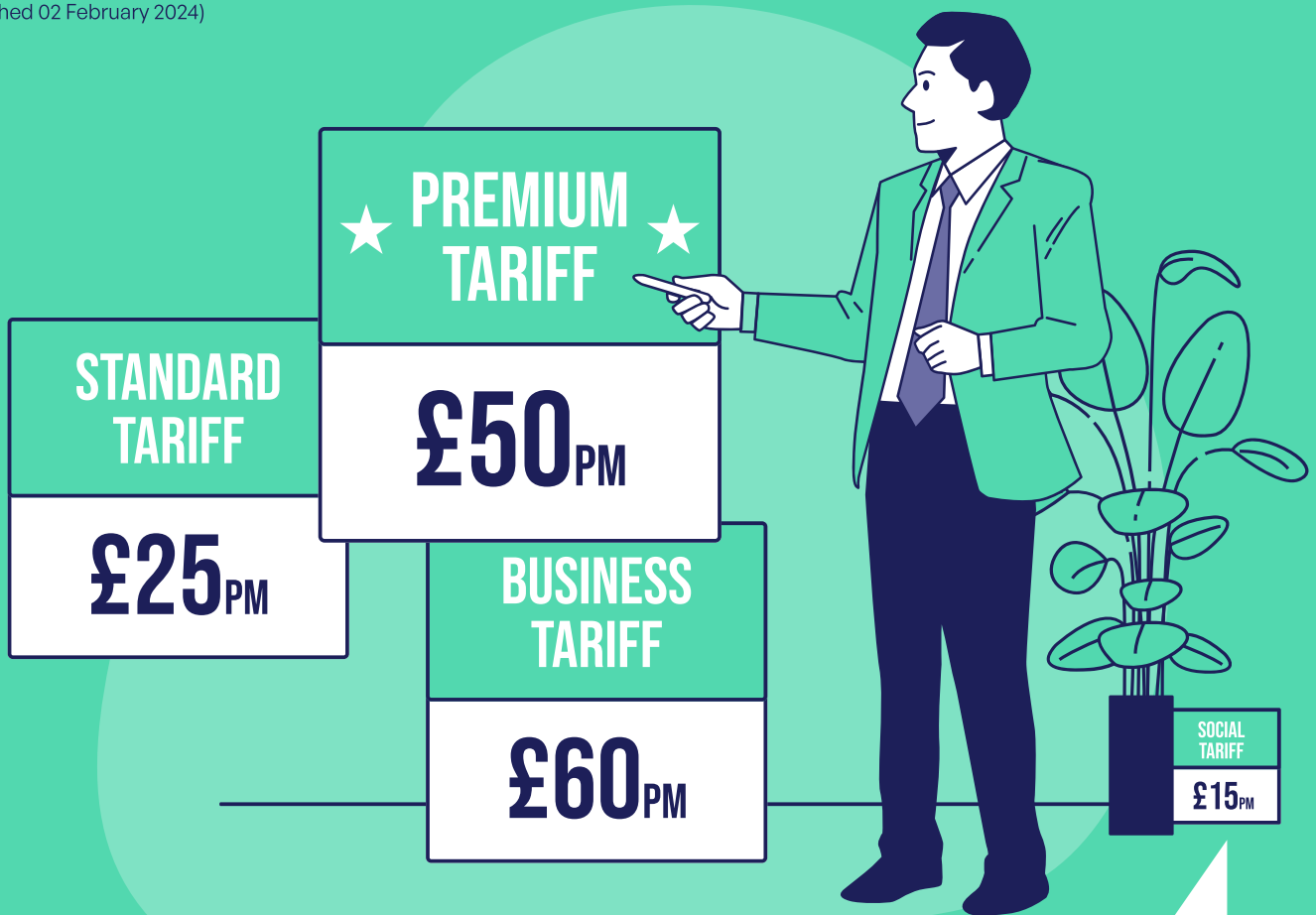


The State of Broadband

A Comprehensive Overview

January 2024

(Published 02 February 2024)



Special Feature

Social Tariffs

Discounted tariffs hiding on provider websites

Pages 11-13

The State of Broadband

This is the third edition of our State of Broadband Report – We provide a unique insight into the latest broadband statistics across the UK and intend to continue publishing updates. We will be tracking progress of key indicators and the wider broadband market. We expect to publish the next update in July 2024.



In this edition, we will be updating the usual state of the nations, fibre coverage and progress towards the UK government Project Gigabit targets, with English regional breakdowns including the best and worst local authorities for full fibre coverage, as well as a snapshot of the average prices of consumer fibre packages and more.

We are seeing increasing regulatory interest both in terms of imminent changes to inflation-linked price increases expected after the April 2024 round of updates, alongside tougher rules on advertising ‘fibre’ broadband from Ofcom in a rather delayed reaction with the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) having won a Judicial Review by CityFibre in 2018 ruling that ‘part fibre’ could be sold as ‘fibre’.

Key Stats – Full Fibre (FTTP) is now available to over **6 in 10 households** in the UK with Openreach leading the way with 39% of coverage and **8 in 10 have access to Gigabit-level speeds**. Alt-nets such as CityFibre are leading in terms of filling in the gaps, but it is still worth noting that there are over **4.4 million overbuild premises (14% of the UK)** where there are both alt-net FTTP providers and Openreach services available, somewhat to the frustration of those in the remaining part still struggling to get broadband beyond part fibre (FTTC) speeds, or even less. **Virgin Media are still the only Gigabit-capable provider in over 1 in 5 premises.**

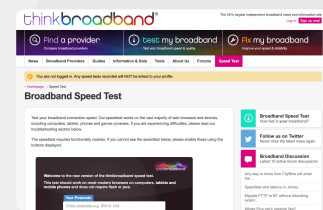
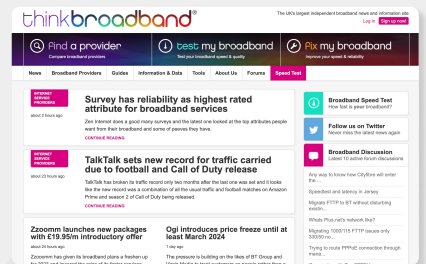
Unless otherwise stated the data in this report was extracted between 10 and 11 January 2024.

Please visit <https://labs.thinkbroadband.com/local> for the most up-to-date data for your area.

About thinkbroadband

thinkbroadband is the UK’s leading source of broadband news and analysis and home to the UK’s largest community of users looking to get the most out of their home broadband. Run by a small team passionate about all things connectivity, we are independent of broadband providers and offer listings to any provider who meets our listing criteria, not based on whether they pay a commission.

Over the past two decades, we have created a wide range of free tools to help consumers understand how to make the most out of their broadband connection including speed tests, broadband maps, local broadband statistics, and our one-second resolution broadband quality monitor.



We have also developed a range of industry-specific solutions, such as our broadband availability API. This tool is designed to assist websites requiring information on broadband service availability in a particular area, enabling them to power their own services and deliver their users with accurate comparison listings.

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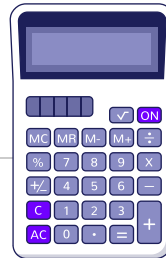
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Special Feature: Social Tariffs

An embarrassment for service providers? – This report we are looking into how service providers are doing the bare minimum in terms of promoting subsidised ‘social tariffs’ available to recipients of certain benefits, and how one small network is leading the way, far ahead of the bigger providers, in terms of making its potential customers aware of the product.



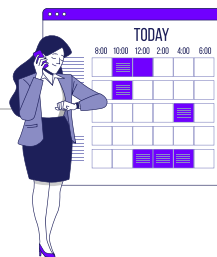
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State of the Nations



Current UK FTTP ("full fibre") Coverage



FTTP 85% prediction **FTTP 95% prediction**
 Sep 2025 ⬇️ Delay May 2026 ⬇️ No change

Current UK Gigabit Coverage



Gigabit 85% prediction
 Oct 2024 ⬇️ Delay

Data: Jan 2024; includes households and business premises

Country	Superfast Coverage 30 Mbps+	Gigabit Coverage (FTTP or DOCSIS 3.1)	Full Fibre (FTTP) Coverage	Alt-net FTTP*
England	98.1%	80.8%	60.2%	31.8%
Wales	96.9%	67.7%	59.2%	10.7%
Scotland	96.0%	73.7%	54.8%	25.3%
Northern Ireland	97.7%	94.7%	94.1%	29.4%

* For this purpose alt-nets EXCLUDE Openreach as well as KCom (Hull) and Virgin Media RFOG and Nexfibre

Source: labs.thinkbroadband.com

English Region Breakdown

Authority Name	Superfast Coverage 30 Mbps+	Gigabit Coverage (FTTP or DOCSIS 3.1)	Full Fibre (FTTP) Coverage	Alt-net FTTP*
London	98.5%	89.4%	64.8%	50.6%
West Midlands	98.4%	85.1%	57.2%	27.4%
North West	98.4%	82.3%	62.6%	21.1%
East of England	98.3%	76.6%	56.5%	28.5%
Yorkshire & Humberside	98.0%	83.2%	71.6%	35.2%
South East	98.0%	77.8%	56.6%	32.8%
East Midlands	98.0%	79.5%	59.0%	27.5%
North East	97.9%	79.7%	53.0%	27.5%
South West	96.8%	71.1%	56.9%	27.0%

* For this purpose alt-nets EXCLUDE Openreach as well as KCom (Hull) and Virgin Media RFOG and Nexfibre

Winners & Losers

Top 20 best and 10 worst local authorities for FTTP coverage. We also include a date for 85% and 100% FTTP prediction. Note that this is strictly 'full fibre' and areas with low fibre (which is future proof) may still receive Virgin Media 1Gbps services over DOCSIS 3.1.



↑ Top 20 Authorities by Full Fibre Rollout

Authority	Code	Full Fibre %	95% FTTP Prediction
City of Kingston upon Hull	E06000010	99.7%	Achieved
Mourne and Down	N09000010	96.0%	Achieved
Ards and North Down	N09000011	95.8%	Achieved
Belfast	N09000003	95.8%	Achieved
Coventry District	E08000026	95.1%	Achieved
Lisburn and Castlereagh	N09000007	95.1%	Achieved
Derry and Strabane	N09000005	94.1%	May 2024
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	N09000002	93.9%	March 2024
Milton Keynes	E06000042	93.7%	March 2025
Mid and East Antrim	N09000008	93.4%	August 2024
Antrim and Newtownabbey	N09000001	93.2%	November 2024
Causeway Coast and Glens	N09000004	92.5%	March 2025
Mid Ulster	N09000009	92.2%	May 2024
Hyndburn District	E07000120	92.1%	February 2024
Worthing District	E07000229	90.2%	April 2025
City of Peterborough	E06000031	90.1%	November 2027
Southend-on-Sea	E06000033	90.1%	May 2024
Fermanagh and Omagh	N09000006	89.1%	November 2024
Wirral District	E08000015	88.9%	September 2024
West Northamptonshire	E06000062	88.9%	December 2024

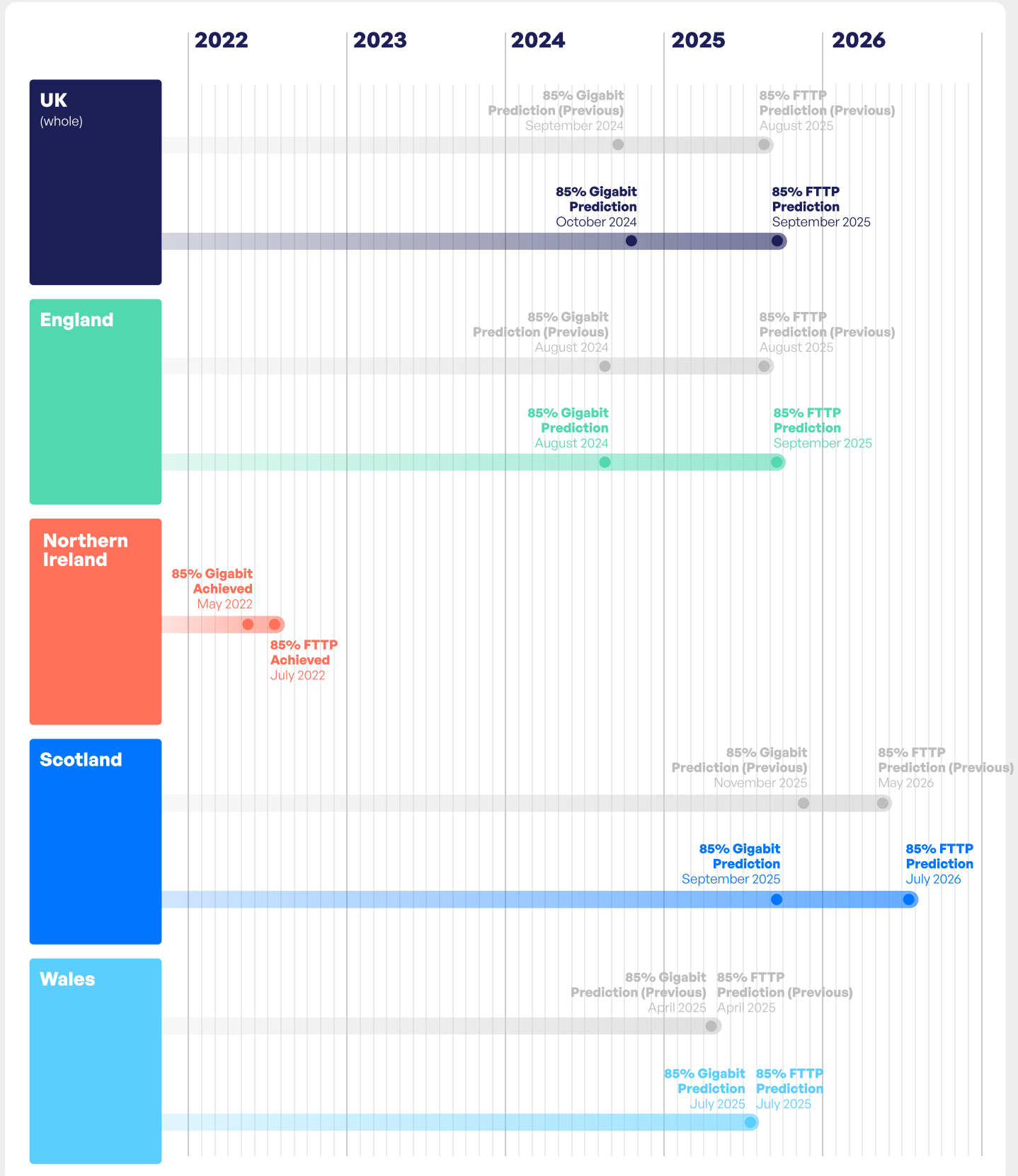
Note: Where we cannot predict, no date is shown. Dates in far future are not necessarily likely as intervention may apply changing the likely dates. This information relates to 'full fibre' and does NOT include DOCSIS 3.1 cable services which can deliver 1Gbps broadband. **The prediction of future dates is based exclusively on the performance in the past 9 months; future performance is not necessarily based on past performance.**

↓ Bottom 10 Authorities by Full Fibre Rollout

Authority	Code	Full Fibre %
Blaby District	E07000129	18.7%
Tamworth District	E07000199	17.7%
Perth and Kinross	S12000048	16.0%
Argyll and Bute	S12000035	13.6%
Harlow District	E07000073	13.5%
West Dunbartonshire	S12000039	10.7%
Orkney Islands	S12000023	8.0%
Na h-Eileanan an Iar	S12000013	6.3%
Shetland Islands	S12000027	5.8%
Isles of Scilly	E06000053	2.6%

UK Nations – Progress Towards Government Targets

Progress towards 85% Gigabit and 85% FTTP targets

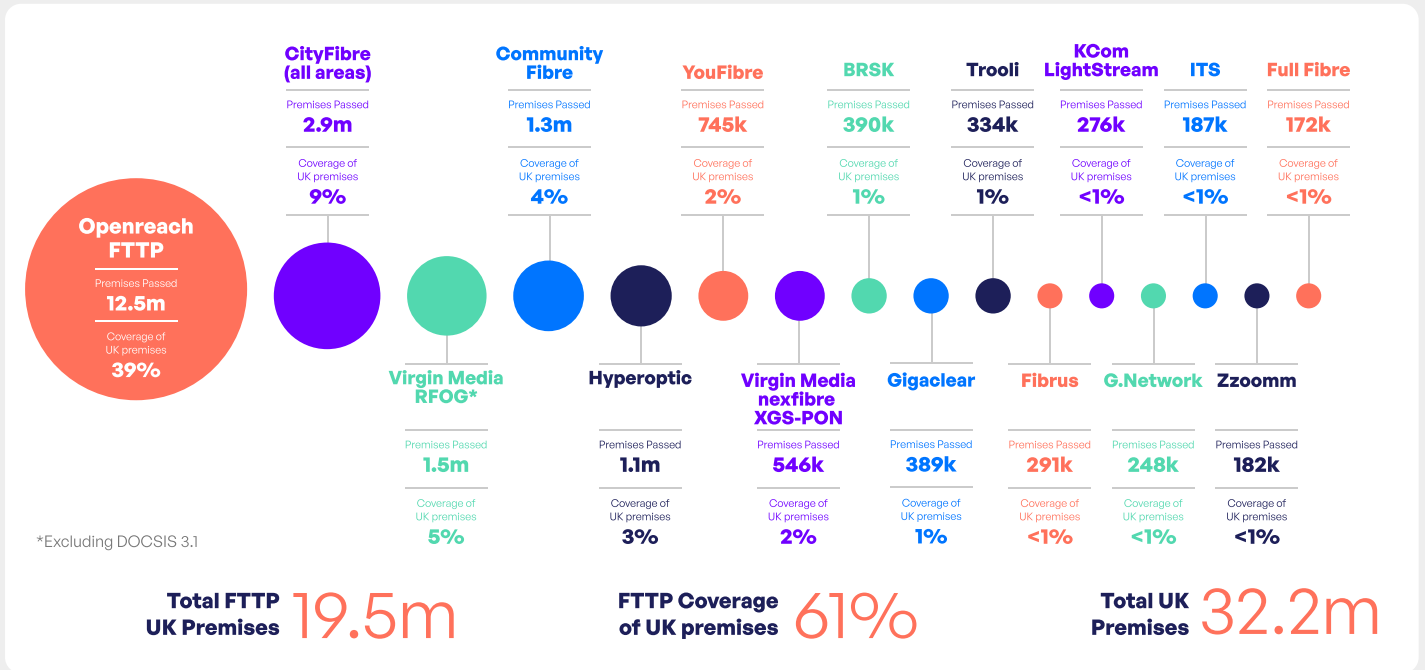


Source: labs.thinkbroadband.com; theoretical prediction is based on performance in the past 9 months.

Largest Full-Fibre Networks

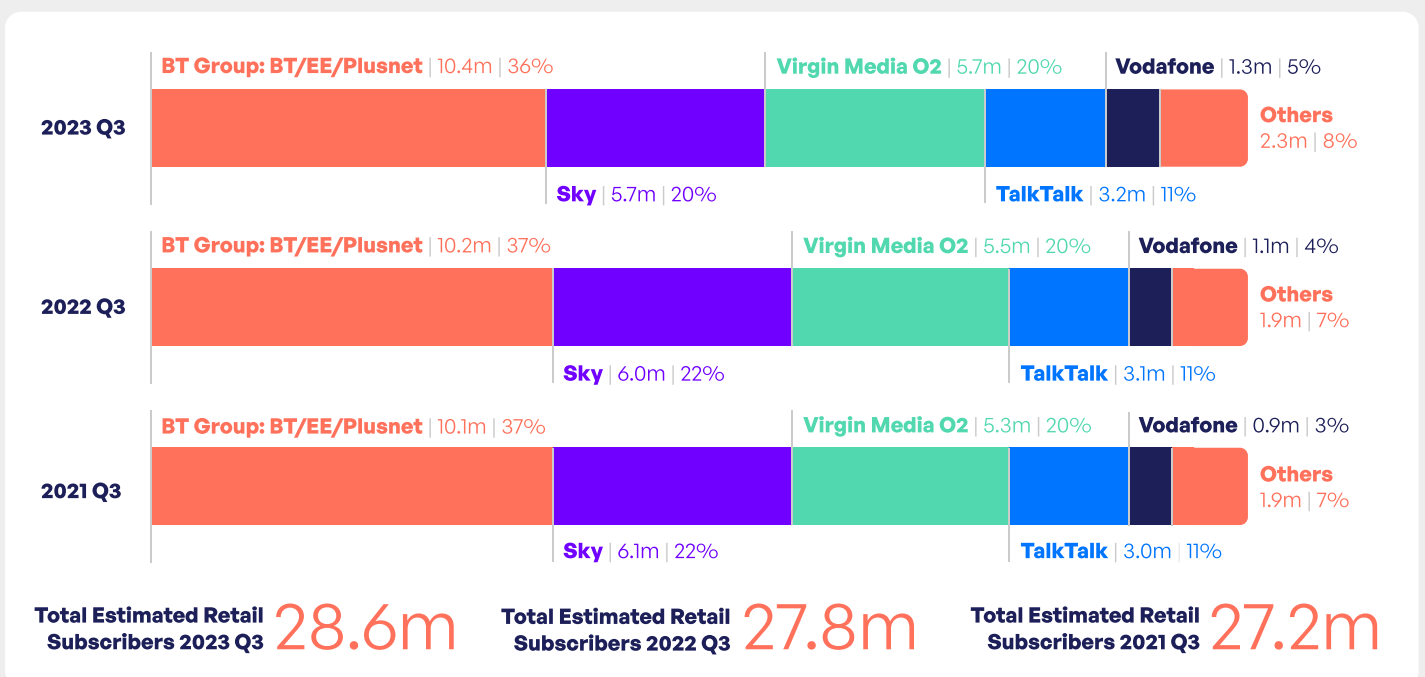
The UK has many alternative network operators (altnets), and competitors to the incumbent networks (Openreach and KCom in Hull). In spite being smaller in size, these altnets play a vital role where incumbent FTTP services are not available, providing an alternative commercial proposition, which

can often be superior to the consumer. Despite being less known, these smaller networks are an essential part of the UK's broadband infrastructure and provide a critical lifeline for local communities desperate for fast broadband.



Source: labs.thinkbroadband.com. Note: This refers to 'full fibre' (FTTP) networks and not gigabit-capable networks. As such the current Virgin Media DOCSIS 3.1 footprint (capable of delivering gigabit broadband) is not included. We expect Virgin Media will upgrade its network to RFOG (Radio Frequency over Glass) so this will increase Virgin's FTTP share in due course. **Data is based on our database which tracks 'available to order and deliver within a standard order timeframe'** (usually a couple of weeks). If a site requires additional wayleaves, this would not be considered live. Our criteria for inclusion is strict and therefore may not match information claimed by operators in press releases or financial results, however the methodology we use is consistent.

Relative Market Share of the Big Retail Providers



Source: Point-Topic UK Plus Data Set. Note: These figures will include estimates as not all providers publish information in a consistent manner. Only 'consumer' services are included. We note that BT Business has a significant lead in the business segment.

Average Prices of Consumer Fibre

We track average broadband prices by speed category for major providers to provide market guidance. There are always offers available as well as a wider selection of broadband providers, so these **prices are only guidelines and not intended to be used for selecting a provider.**



50-80 Mbps Downstream
(5-21 Mbps upstream)



150 Mbps Downstream
(20-30 Mbps upstream)



500 Mbps Downstream
(36-73 Mbps upstream)



1 Gbps Downstream
(52-111 Mbps upstream)



Most fibre-based services require an 12- to 24-month contract. Above prices are based on 18-24 month contracts.

IMPORTANT NOTE: We are expecting the [2024 broadband price increases](#) from major providers of up to 7.9% from the beginning of April. These increases are NOT shown in the data below. Please check updated pricing before subscribing. Many alt-nets have not announced price increases at least yet, so you may fare better.

Category	Package	Download Speed	Upload Speed	Contract	Cost/month
50-80 Mbps	BT Fibre Essential	35 Mbps	8 Mbps	24 months	£27*
	Sky Superfast 80	61 Mbps	20 Mbps	18 months	£28 + £5 setup
	TalkTalk Full Fibre 65	77 Mbps	20 Mbps	24 months	£28
	BT Fibre 1	46 Mbps	8 Mbps	24 months	£33* + £32 setup
	Virgin Media M50	54 Mbps	5 Mbps	1 month	£43 + £80 setup
150 Mbps	Virgin Media M125	132 Mbps	20 Mbps	18 months	£26.50
	BT Full Fibre 100	150 Mbps	30 Mbps	24 months	£28
	Sky Ultrafast	145 Mbps	30 Mbps	18 months	£29 + £5 setup
	TalkTalk Full Fibre 150	152 Mbps	30 Mbps	24 months	£35
	Virgin Media M125	132 Mbps	20 Mbps	1 month	£49 + £80 setup
	BT Full Fibre 100	150 Mbps	30 Mbps	12 months	£41
500 Mbps	Sky Ultrafast+	500 Mbps	59 Mbps	18 months	£33 + £5 setup
	Virgin Media M500	516 Mbps	52 Mbps	18 months	£39
	TalkTalk Full Fibre 500	525 Mbps	72 Mbps	24 months	£45
	BT Full Fibre 500	500 Mbps	73 Mbps	24 months	£48
	BT Full Fibre 500	500 Mbps	73 Mbps	12 months	£51
1 Gbps	Sky Gigafast	900 Mbps	92 Mbps	18 months	£42 + £5 setup
	Virgin Media Gig1	1,130 Mbps	104 Mbps	24 months	£45
	BT Full Fibre 900	900 Mbps	110 Mbps	24 months	£53
	TalkTalk Full Fibre 900	944 Mbps	110 Mbps	24 months	£54
	BT Full Fibre 900	900 Mbps	110 Mbps	12 months	£61

* BT Fibre Essential and Fibre 1 priced checked 25/01/2024 as not offered on BT website on all postcodes during original 10-11/01/2024 data collection, however believed to be available on the original comparison date.

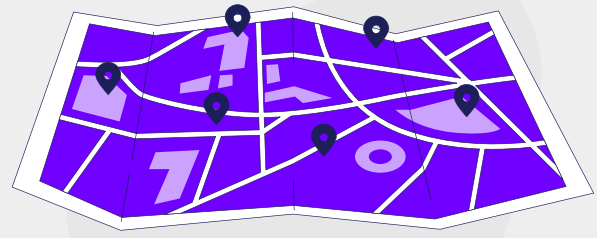
Methodology: Comparisons on 10-11/01/2024 based on provider websites for comparable products, noting that variations apply. We have not as included promotions which include an initial period at a lower price, unless this is substantially less over contract length purpose of this report is to outline broad prices rather than recommend individual services. No bundling of other services (telephone, TV, mobile) is included. Pricing for services is likely to increase mid-contract in most cases annually, around April. Where speed ranges quoted, we will use the marketed

average figure or a mid-point rounded figure, so caution advised on minor variations (e.g. 74 vs 78 Mbps) as these are likely to be on the same underlying technology. This simplification has been provided for ease of comparison. Pricing may vary by location however our lookup is based on the same address on what we believe indicates market for full fibre services. Pricing is rounded up to nearest pound where it is close.

Do not use this table to select a provider for your personal circumstances – This list is provided as a guide to understand market pricing only. Please visit thinkbroadband.com and compare deals specific to your location and requirements.

Altnet Prices

The UK has many 'altnets', or so called 'alternative network operators' which typically refers to challengers to the incumbent (BT Openreach and Virgin Media nationally). They often offer faster services at lower prices, so we have included a separate table of prices to track.



Category	Package	Download Speed	Upload Speed	Contract	Cost/month
100 - 150 Mbps	Community Fibre 150	150 Mbps	150 Mbps	24 months	£20 + £14.95 setup
	Community Fibre 150	150 Mbps	150 Mbps	12 months	£27 + £14.95 setup
	Hyperoptic Superfast	150 Mbps	150 Mbps	24 months	£32 + £19 setup
	Hyperoptic Superfast	150 Mbps	150 Mbps	12 months	£30 + £19 setup
	Hyperoptic Superfast	150 Mbps	150 Mbps	1 month	£40 + £39 setup
	YouFibre 150	150 Mbps	150 Mbps	24 months	£20
	YouFibre 150	150 Mbps	150 Mbps	1 month	£30
	Vodafone Full Fibre 100 (CityFibre)	100 Mbps	100 Mbps	24 months	£25
300 - 500 Mbps	Hyperoptic Ultrafast	500 Mbps	500 Mbps	24 months	£38 + £19 setup
	Hyperoptic Ultrafast	500 Mbps	500 Mbps	12 months	£40 + £19 setup
	Hyperoptic Ultrafast	500 Mbps	500 Mbps	1 month	£50 + £29 setup
	YouFibre 500	500 Mbps	500 Mbps	24 months	£26
	YouFibre 500	500 Mbps	500 Mbps	1 month	£30
	Gigaclear Ultrafast 300	300 Mbps	300 Mbps	18 months	£17
	Gigaclear Ultrafast 400	400 Mbps	400 Mbps	18 months	£20
	G.Network Ultrafast	300 Mbps	100 Mbps	24 months	£24
	G.Network Ultrafast	300 Mbps	100 Mbps	12 months	£37
	G.Network Ultrafast	300 Mbps	100 Mbps	1 month	£36 + £29 setup
	Vodafone Full Fibre 500 (CityFibre)	500 Mbps	500 Mbps	24 months	£30
1 Gbps	Community Fibre 1Gbps	1 Gbps	1 Gbps	24 months	£25 + £14.95 setup
	Community Fibre 1Gbps	1 Gbps	1 Gbps	12 months	£32 + £14.95 setup
	Hyperoptic Hyperfast	1 Gbps	1 Gbps	24 months	£45 + £19 setup
	Hyperoptic Hyperfast	1 Gbps	1 Gbps	12 months	£40 + £19 setup
	Hyperoptic Hyperfast	1 Gbps	1 Gbps	1 month	£60 + £29 setup
	YouFibre 1000	1 Gbps	1 Gbps	24 months	£28
	YouFibre 1000	1 Gbps	1 Gbps	1 month	£40
	Gigaclear Hyperfast 900	830 Mbps	830 Mbps	18 months	£49
	B4RN Residential	1 Gbps	1 Gbps	12 months	£33 + £60 setup
	G.Network Ultrafast	1 Gbps	1 Gbps	24 months	£32
	G.Network Ultrafast	1 Gbps	1 Gbps	12 months	£37
	G.Network Ultrafast	1 Gbps	1 Gbps	1 month	£41 + £29 setup
	Vodafone Full Fibre 900 (CityFibre)	910 Mbps	910 Mbps	24 months	£29
3 Gbps+	Community Fibre 3Gbps	3 Gbps	3 Gbps	24 months	£49 + £14.95 setup
	YouFibre 8000	7 Gbps	7 Gbps	24 months	£100
	B4RN 10Gbps	10 Gbps	10 Gbps	12 months	£150 + £360 setup

Methodology – see previous section.

Do not use this table to select a provider for your personal circumstances – This list is provided as a guide to understand market pricing only. Please visit thinkbroadband.com and compare deals specific to your location and requirements.

Broadband Speed Requirements

What speed broadband connection do you really need for most applications?

Application	Recommended Bandwidth	
	Up	Down
 Video Streaming (Netflix / YouTube)	Standard Definition / SD	1-2 Mbps
	High Definition / HD	3-5 Mbps
	UHD / 4K	15-20 Mbps
 Zoom Calls	1080p Full HD ¹	4 Mbps
	720p	1.2 Mbps
	Standard Video	0.6 Mbps
 VoIP Calls / Digital Voice	0.5 Mbps	0.5 Mbps
<p>Actual usage may be less but more likely to be affected by other usage during call</p>		
 Online Gaming (real-time multiplayer) Varies by game. This will vary a lot and it's less about the raw speed for the game but about avoiding latency/jitter associated with saturating the line if you're doing more than one thing or your household has multiple users.	Fortnite	3 Mbps
	Roblox	4-8 Mbps
	Call of Duty MW2	4-8 Mbps
<p>"Gigabit fibre with [...] symmetrical upload and download speeds absolutely smashes those requirements out of the arena"</p>		
 Twitch Streaming / Broadcasting	3-10 Mbps	20 Mbps
<p>Some recommendations increase upload speed to 25Mbps</p>		
 Web Browsing, E-mail & Social Media	1 Mbps	5 Mbps
<p>Once connection is above 40Mbps, unlikely to see much improvement as DNS lookups likely to be more of a factor than raw speed</p>		
 Downloading Games and Large Content	-	100 Mbps
<p>100 Mbps or faster is ideal but balance cost vs patience</p>		
 Larger Households	<p>For real-time simultaneous use, you need to multiply the above. E.g. two people watching Netflix at 4K might need up to 40Mbps; a third is probably not going to be watching at the same time.</p>	

¹ <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362023-Zoom-system-requirements-Windows-macOS-Linux>

² <https://blog.frontier.com/2022/08/4-ways-fiber-helps-you-win-in-fortnite/>

³ <https://en.help.roblox.com/hc/en-us/articles/203312800-Computer-Hardware-Operating-System-Requirements>

Feature

Social Tariffs

The Internet is very much considered a basic necessity in today's online world. Many government services and educational content for children is online. To find the best deals you need access to online sites to compare prices across insurance companies, supermarkets, gas and electricity. Without the Internet, you will pay more.

For these reasons, the government and Ofcom has encouraged the industry to provide basic broadband services, known as 'Social Tariffs' to those on qualifying benefits at a lower cost, to ensure everyone in society is able to take advantage of the benefits of ubiquitous Internet access.

To qualify you need to be receiving one of the following five benefits: -

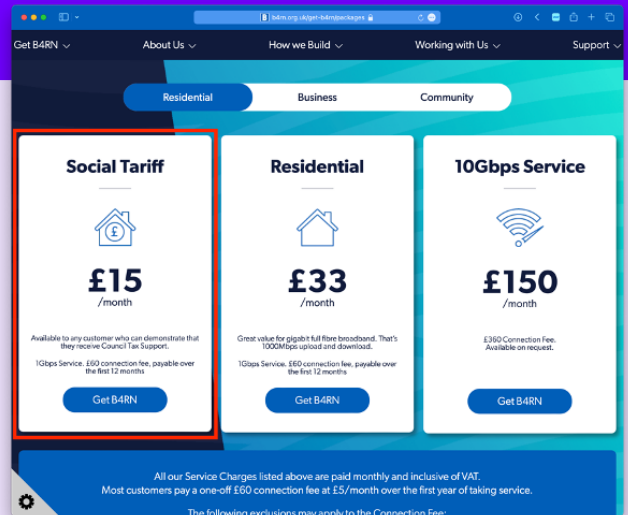
- **Universal Credit**
- **Pension Credit**
- **Income Support**
- **Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance**
- **Income-based Employment Support Allowance**

Note: Recipients of Personal Independence Payment or Attendance Allowance may also qualify in some cases however this may vary by provide. The contract needs to be in the name of the qualifying person.

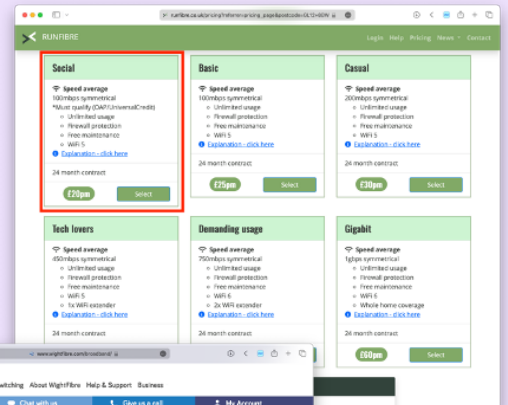
However, one of the major problems lies in the fact that providers are not making customers aware of these tariffs. Therefore, if you are a consumer who might qualify for one of these rates, it is crucial for you to proactively find out about them! This means millions of potentially eligible households may be struggling to pay for broadband services they could get at a lower cost if they switched.

Not all providers offer Social Tariffs however most of the major ones, and even many smaller altnets have begun to offer them. A small (in the bigger scheme of things) Community Internet Company, B4RN (Broadband 4 Rural North – b4rn.org.uk) is not listed by Ofcom as offering a Social Tariff, but it lists one on its main residential packages page right next to other services. 1 It also offers discretionary pricing for smaller primary schools and village halls, etc. Their criteria is that you receive Council Tax Support.

Similarly, RunFibre (runfibre.co.uk) and WightFibre (wightfibre.co.uk) list Social Tariffs right alongside their regular packages. 2 Other providers seem to simply relegate Social Tariffs to separate pages with links occasionally from menus, footers or product pages.



1 B4RN (Broadband 4 Rural North – b4rn.org.uk)



2 RunFibre (runfibre.co.uk) and WightFibre (wightfibre.co.uk)



“We reviewed all the broadband providers listed on Ofcom’s website, and only RunFibre and WightFibre were actively making potential customers aware of Social Tariffs. Alongside B4RN, it is smaller alt-nets who are leading the way in informing consumers of their options, with none of the national players stepping up to the mark.

Some others include it in their menus or footers, or small links on product pages, and not always with wording that would lead eligible recipients to locate them.”

Sebastien Lahtinen, thinkbroadband.com

Feature

Social Tariffs

List of social tariffs

When looking for references we looked for “Social Tariff” or “universal credit” or otherwise clear messaging. We have rated providers based on the following criteria:



Equal prominence with other packages; immediately obvious



Featured in broadband menu or significant presence on product using term “Social Tariff”, “universal credit” or otherwise clear



Included in menu/product page but with less-than-ideal terminology, or from footer



Cannot be found easily on website (ignoring any site map or site search)

National Fixed Broadband

Provider / Package	Grade	Monthly Price	Download Speed
BT Home Essentials No Income (Universal Credit-recipients with zero income)		£15	36 Mbps
BT Home Essentials Unlimited 36 Mbps	F	£20	36 Mbps
BT Home Essentials Unlimited 67 Mbps		£23	67 Mbps
NOW Broadband Basics	F	£20	36 Mbps
Shell Essentials Fast Broadband		£15	11 Mbps
Shell Essentials Fibre Broadband	B	£20	38 Mbps
Sky Broadband Basics	F	£20	36 Mbps
Virgin Media Essential Broadband		£12.50	15 Mbps
Virgin Media Essential Broadband Plus	B	£20	54 Mbps
Vodafone Fibre 2 Essentials*	C	£20	73 Mbps

* Vodafone include a “Vodafone Essentials Broadband” box on the product page referring to £20/month price however do not refer to eligibility or use clear terminology; our lookup only showed the Fibre 2 Essentials package, not the Fibre 1 package at £12/month for 38Mbps listed by Ofoom.

Mobile Networks (4G, 5G)

Provider / Package	Grade	Monthly Price	Download Speed
EE Basics	F	£12	Up to 25 Mbps
SMARTY Social Tariff	B	£12	Up to 5G
VOXI For Now**	F	£10	Up to 5G

** VOXI include a link to “VOXI For Now” in their footer but this isn’t clearly labelled as a Social Tariff and could only be found when looking for the term.

Feature

Social Tariffs

Limited Coverage Networks

Provider / Package	Grade	Monthly Price	Download Speed
4th Utility Social Tariff		£13.99	30 Mbps
B4RN		£15	1 Gbps
Community Fibre Essential		£12.50	35 Mbps
Connect Fibre Basic Essentials		£20	50 Mbps
Connect Fibre Essentials		£25	150 Mbps
Country Connect Social Tariff		£15	50 Mbps
County Broadband Essential Broadband Tariff		£15	15 Mbps
G.Network Essential Fibre Broadband		£15	50 Mbps
Grayshott Gigabit Connect		£19	100 Mbps
Hey! Broadband Everyday Fibre		£16	100 Mbps
Hyperoptic Fair Fibre 50		£15	50 Mbps
Hyperoptic Fair Fibre 150		£20	150 Mbps
KCOM Full Fibre Flex		£14.99	30 Mbps
Lightning Fibre Social Tariff		£15	50 Mbps
Lothian Broadband Social Tariff		£19.99	100 Mbps
Quickline Social Tariff		£16.50	100 Mbps
RunFibre Social Tariff		£20	100 Mbps
Truespeed Basic		£20	30 Mbps
Wildanet Helping Hand Social Tariff (Universal Credit-recipients only)		£20	30-100 Mbps
WightFibre Essential Broadband		£17.50	100 Mbps
YouFibre Social Tariff		£15	50 Mbps

Notes:

- B4RN is not listed on Ofcom site.
- Grayshott Gigabit has a "social connect" link in the "more" menu with nothing in Pricing or For Home menus.
- Hey! Broadband has an "everyday fibre" link in the "more" menu and a footer link.
- Lothian Broadband include a "Social Tariff" link on product page without pricing requiring a form to be filled in

Social Tariff Data collected by thinkbroadband on 30/01/2023.

Do not use these tables to select a provider for your personal circumstances – These lists are provided as a guide to understand market pricing only. List of Social Tariffs obtained from Ofcom with updates to some prices made reflecting updates on providers' websites. Always check for updated listings.

Contract Lengths – Ofcom point out that Social Tariffs have no mid-contract price increases, and no early exit fees if you switch or cancel prior to the end of your contract on a Social Tariff, so a longer contract period only helps the consumer, as opposed to most broadband services. However, we note some providers have longer contracts at a lower cost which do not quite match up with this expectation.

Types of Broadband

ADSL (or variations thereof, e.g. ADSL2+)

Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Lines which means broadband through your phone line. The speed is determined by the distance between your property and the telephone exchange (usually up to a few kilometres) and the quality of your line. Asymmetric means the download speed is usually much faster than the upload speed, common in all consumer broadband. There are variants such as ‘Annex M’ which allow you to sacrifice some download speed for faster uploads. These were typically ‘up to 8 meg’ or ‘up to 24 meg’ type services depending on generation but speeds vary wildly based on the quality and length of the line.

“FTTC” or “VDSL2” or commonly called “fibre broadband”

Broadband where the fibre optic cable ends at the street cabinet, which is likely to be some distance from your house. A phone line is then used for the final link to your house, similar to ADSL. VDSL is the underlying technology, “Very High Speed Digital Subscriber Line” which allows faster speeds than ADSL, but it is more limited by distance – a few hundred metres rather than kilometres.

“FTTP”, “FTTH”, “FTTB” or “full fibre”

Fibre to the premises/home/building. i.e. the entire circuit to the property is fibre. There may in some cases be copper wiring inside the building depending on the setup. The speed is usually not limited by the distance where you can get FTTP as this is delivered over a fibre optic wavelength.

“FTTx”

Combination of the ‘fibre to the...’ services, i.e. fibre to the home and fibre to the cabinet.

Cable & DOCSIS 3.1

Cable broadband (typically meaning Virgin Media) is broadband delivered through the copper co-axial network (in most cases; FOG- excepted) used to deliver cable TV services. This has traditionally been capable of delivering faster speeds than phone line based services. The latest generation, DOCSIS 3.1, can deliver gigabit broadband services.

Satellite

Satellite broadband uses geostationary satellites in space to deliver broadband to hard-to-reach areas. Aside from cost the main disadvantage is latency, which makes satellite broadband services slower to use for very ‘interactive’ applications, such as online gaming. Starlink claims to reduce this significantly. If you’re in an area with limited options, this may be worth considering however.

3G / LTE / 4G / 5G (mobile broadband)

These are mobile technologies, evolutions beyond GPRS (2G) and EDGE (2.5G) which were the first types of data used by mobile phones and offered much slower speeds. The later generations like 5G can deliver very fast connections, although the performance varies significantly based on where you are. Using a fixed 4G/5G setup can take advantage of a fixed antenna which will perform better. The difficulty lies when in a congested city environment using a mobile phone, where it’s quite possible for a 5G service to perform slower than a 4G one, so newer isn’t always better (in the real world).

Wireless

Some broadband providers use wireless technologies such as directional Wi-Fi and microwave links to deliver broadband, often across wide open rural areas, where laying cables could be prohibitively expensive.

Glossary

“meg” or Mbps

The speed of broadband services is these days measured in Megabits per second (or Mbps). It is commonly referred to (albeit technically incorrectly) as “meg”. 1 Mbps is broadly speaking 1,000Kbps, and 1Gbps (gigabit per second) is around 1,000 Mbps (technically it’s a multiplier of 1024 from binary, rather than 1000). Note in particular that a Megabit (Mb) and Megabyte (MB) are very different, 1MB/s = 8Mbps as there are 8 bits in 1 byte. Sometimes you may see speeds when downloading expressed as MB/s, but broadband speeds are referred to in Mbps.

“Gig” or “Gigabit” broadband

Broadband that is capable of achieving speeds of 1Gbps (gigabits per second) or thereabouts. In practice this usually means FTTP or DOCSIS 3.1 cable services.

“Premises passed”

Term used to describe a premise which is able to order a broadband service with a given provider.

“Decent” broadband

This is a definition used by Ofcom of a broadband connection capable of delivering 10 Mbps downstream, and 1 Mbps upstream.

“Take-up”

The ratio between premises that order a service and the total ‘premises passed’ (where a service is available). It should be noted that even if full fibre is available, it doesn’t mean all services are provided at 1 Gbps speeds.

Recent Developments



Navigating the Web of Deception: A Comprehensive Guide to Online Scams & Traps

Many of our readers are avid early adopters of tech who are confident about how technology works, spotting scams of all kinds very quickly, but we all have colleagues, neighbours, children and other loved ones who may not be as technically astute. These people may come to us to ask for advice on all things tech, but what if they don't know they should be seeking advice? This isn't directly about broadband, but it affects every Internet user around the world.

Online scams are a massive problem, far bigger than many imagine. In its online fraud report, Ofcom reported in March 2023 that almost half of all adult Internet users have been drawn into engaging in an online scam or fraud, and many of us know people who have become victims.

Please read and share our comprehensive guide to online scams and traps.

<https://www.thinkbroadband.com/online-scams>

- 17/01/2024** **Latest inflation figures used for setting broadband prices show increases of up to 7.9% are on the way**
<https://www.thinkbroadband.com/news/9839-latest-inflation-figures-used-for-setting-broadband-price-rises-on-the-way>
- 16/01/2024** **BT to move away from inflation based price rises in Summer 2024**
<https://www.thinkbroadband.com/news/9838-bt-to-move-away-from-inflation-based-price-rises-in-summer-2024>
- 07/01/2024** **January 2024 update on broadband availability across the UK, nations and regions**
<https://www.thinkbroadband.com/news/9826-january-2024-update-on-broadband-availability-across-the-uk-nations-and-regions>
- 21/12/2023** **Alternate full-fibre networks now covering 3 out of 10 UK premises**
<https://www.thinkbroadband.com/news/9816-alternate-full-fibre-networks-now-covering-3-out-of-10-uk-premises>
- 19/12/2023** **Ofcom Connected Nations report estimates full-fibre take-up running at 28%**
<https://www.thinkbroadband.com/news/9813-ofcom-connection-nations-report-estimates-full-fibre-take-up-running-at-28>
- 14/12/2023** **One Touch Switching - Further Delays**
<https://www.thinkbroadband.com/news/9805-one-touch-switching-delayed>
- 13/12/2023** **Ofcom issues statement to reduce confusion over fibre terminology**
<https://www.thinkbroadband.com/news/9802-ofcom-issues-statement-to-reduce-confusion-over-fibre-terminology>
- 12/12/2023** **Ofcom consults on ban of inflation linked price rises**
<https://www.thinkbroadband.com/news/9799-ofcom-consults-on-ban-of-inflation-linked-price-rises>
- 03/11/2023** **UK full-fibre coverage now at 58% of premises**
<https://www.thinkbroadband.com/news/9750-uk-full-fibre-coverage-now-at-58-of-premises>
- 17/10/2023** **Ofcom thinks UK will be at 91% full-fibre availability in May 2026**
<https://www.thinkbroadband.com/news/9729-ofcom-thinks-uk-will-be-at-91-full-fibre-availability-in-may-2026>
- 13/09/2023** **INCA claims differences between Government and Ofcom are risking competition benefits**
<https://www.thinkbroadband.com/news/9700-inca-claims-differences-between-government-and-ofcom-are-risking-competition-benefits>
- 07/09/2023** **August 2023 update on broadband availability across the UK, nations and regions**
<https://www.thinkbroadband.com/news/9691-august-2023-update-on-broadband-availability-across-the-uk-nations-and-regions>
- 30/08/2023** **PSTN switch-off hiccups still causing problems for the public**
<https://www.thinkbroadband.com/news/9679-pstn-switch-off-hiccups-still-causing-problems-for-the-public>
- 31/07/2023** **BT appoints Allison Kirkby a new CEO from 2024**
<https://www.thinkbroadband.com/news/9650-bt-appoints-allison-kirkby-a-new-ceo-from-2024>

“When we began our journey to deliver broadband information twenty-three years ago, it was because we were eager to inform the public about the early stages of broadband developments. Since then, the Internet is no longer something we connect to once a day, but part of our everyday lives.

We have always strived to be different. We aren’t another comparison site. Hey, we don’t even consider ourselves a comparison site as most of the time, we aren’t trying to persuade users to switch providers. A lot of the tools we have written are designed to help you troubleshoot your broadband connection. We even work with providers to troubleshoot issues at times.

In 2023 we step into our twenty-fourth year of running the site, with the same passion as when we started, and we look forward to further improving what we offer. We are the most up-to-date source of broadband availability and speed information in the UK, and we want to provide the best and most unique tools to help you understand the performance of your Internet connection.

I am proud that after all this time, the team that was there in the first year is still the team that runs the website today.”

Sebastien Lahtinen Director



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