

## **More people are using digital TV, the internet and broadband, but not everyone is benefiting yet, Consumer Panel report shows**

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More and more people in the UK are not only using digital TV, the internet and broadband at home, a new report from the Consumer Panel, the independent voice for the consumer interest in communications, shows. They are also exercising more choice in how and what communications technologies they use.

Findings from the Consumers and the communications market: 2007 survey reveal that ownership of home internet is now at 61%, and over a third (36%) of people now own a mobile, internet and digital TV. Levels of switching landline provider are on the increase too, and have risen by 8%. The Consumer Panel believes that this could be driven by the growth in 'bundled' broadband and fixed line services. However, people on low income and older people are being left behind. Far fewer access the internet at home at only around a third compared to the UK average of 61%. Digital TV ownership is lower too at 67% of people on a low income and 57% of older people compared to the UK average of 74%.

Commenting on the 2007 survey, Consumer Panel Chairman, Colette Bowe, said: "Our annual tracker report has shown that consumers are exercising more choice in how and what communications technologies they use, and that has to be a good development. However, we remain concerned that there is a worrying gap in owning and using communication technologies between people on low incomes and older consumers and the rest of the population. Older consumers, in particular, continue to shy away from owning and using communication technologies."

Further, the report shows that 61% of people are worried about security and safety on the web, an issue the Panel has already raised with Ofcom's Chief Executive, Ed Richards. Writing to the Chief Executive, Consumer Panel Chairman Colette Bowe highlighted public nervousness about the complexity of communications services, costs, service quality, including broadband services, and predicted that this is set to increase further.

Key findings from the Consumers and the communications market: 2007 survey:

- 61% are worried about internet security and safety
- consumer complaints about landline and mobile call charges and the internet are up by 2%
- levels of switching have increased by 8%
- consumers commenting on the ease of switching internet provider has dropped by 12%
- mobile phone use in Scotland and Northern Ireland is up by 7% and 8%
- broadband uptake has increased across all nations with big rises in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales at 12%, 18% and 18%.

The Consumer Panel survey has also thrown up some unexpected findings. People living in rural areas are less likely to feel positively about digital switchover, but are the best prepared for switchover in the country.

However, Colette Bowe says that the Panel continues to have concerns that older consumers, vulnerable groups and people living in more rural areas are still being disadvantaged: "Lack of access to digital TV, a PC or the internet at home is still a

significant issue that could have an adverse impact on how well some children do at school, and make it difficult for vulnerable people to access important public services. However, the survey shows that there are continuous improvements, and many more people are making full use of communications technologies in a way that works for them,” she said.

Ends

#### NOTES FOR EDITORS AND CSEs

The Consumer Panel was established to advise Ofcom on the consumer interest in the markets it regulates. The Panel is independent and sets its own agenda. Visit [www.ofcomconsumerpanel.org.uk](http://www.ofcomconsumerpanel.org.uk) for more information.

For a copy of the Consumers and the communications market: 2007 survey go to [www.ofcomconsumerpanel.org.uk](http://www.ofcomconsumerpanel.org.uk) or ring Julia Guasch on 020 7783 4027.

Consumers and the communications market: 2007 is a survey based on interviews carried out by Ipsos MORI, GfK NOP, and BMRBA across the UK.

The Panel’s members appointed by Ofcom are:

Colette Bowe , Chairman

Ruth Evans , Deputy Chairman

Fiona Ballantyne

Roger Darlington

Simon Gibson

Graham Mather

Kevin McLaughlin

Jeremy Mitchell

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