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OLYMPICS BRACED FOR 3G MELTDOWN THIS SUMMER AS LONDON MOBILE INTERNET SPEEDS ARE REVEALED AS SLOWEST OF UK'S TEN LARGEST CITIES

- **Average 3G speeds in London are behind Birmingham, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Leeds^[1]**
- **Tale of two cities: Of the UK's biggest cities, Portsmouth enjoys fastest 3G speeds; while smartphone users in Wolverhampton lag behind^[1]**
- **Mobile internet users speak: 39% not happy with 3G speeds; 47% say coverage is 'patchy' or 'non existent'; 42% have daily problems with connections^[2]**

Millions of visitors will descend on London this summer to watch the fastest athletes on Earth compete at the Olympics, but the capital's 3G speeds are unlikely to make it past the heats. Results of 3G speed tests carried out by consumers during 2011 show that London has the slowest average speeds of any of the UK's top ten largest cities (by population), according to independent price comparison and switching service, uSwitch.com.

Speeds tests taken using uSwitch.com's [3G speed test app](#), which is available on iTunes, revealed that locals, businesses and tourists visiting London for the Olympics will have to make do with average 3G mobile broadband download speeds of just 2.71 Megabits per second (Mbps). With the extra strain on provider capacity of thousands of Olympic tourists expected over the summer, the worst case situation may be much of the 3G network grinding to a halt.

The speed seen in London is already 24% slower than Portsmouth – the fastest city in the UK – and trails behind neighbouring capital cities Cardiff (2.90Mbps) and Edinburgh (2.94Mbps).

Birmingham, the UK's second largest city with a thriving business community, fares little better, lagging behind smaller cities such as Edinburgh, Leeds and Liverpool with an average download speed of 2.81Mbps.

Of the UK's 30 largest cities, smartphone users in Portsmouth are enjoying the fastest connections with average download speeds of 3.56Mbps, while gadget fans in Wolverhampton are enduring the slowest speeds with a sluggish average of 2.46Mbps in 2011.

A recent uSwitch.com survey^[2] of more than 1,000 smartphone users reveals that many of us are disappointed with the 3G connection and speeds we are currently receiving. Four out of ten (39%) respondents are unhappy with their current 3G speeds, with almost half (47%) saying their download speeds are 'slow'. Only 6% are happy with the 'very fast' speed of their mobile internet.

Survey respondents clearly feel their 3G service quality leaves a lot to be desired, with almost half (47%) describing their coverage as 'patchy' or 'non existent', while 42% report problems with mobile broadband connections on a daily basis. A massive 91% experience 3G blackspots where there is simply no coverage at all.

Mobile broadband might be designed for on-the-go web browsing, but smartphone users claim to experience problems with 3G reception when outdoors (14%), while 17% said 3G coverage was problematic on trains and 13% say travelling in a car causes problems. But by far the biggest gripe was getting 3G coverage when not al fresco, with 43% reporting problems when trying to connect to 3G indoors.

The following table lists the 30 largest cities in the UK in terms of population, and reveals their average 3G mobile broadband download speeds (fastest to slowest):

City	Average Download Speed (Mbps)
Portsmouth	3.554
Liverpool	3.297
Stoke-on-Trent	3.26
Nottingham	3.19
Bradford	3.124
York	3.118
Glasgow	3.117
Newcastle	3.095
Sheffield	3.057
Leeds	3.057
Derby	3.027

Wakefield	3.004
Edinburgh	2.944
Swansea	2.943
Peterborough	2.941
Bristol	2.911
Cardiff	2.906
Manchester	2.841
Birmingham	2.81
Aberdeen	2.789
Brighton	2.773
Southampton	2.755
Sunderland	2.749
London	2.712
Oxford	2.606
Coventry	2.574
Leicester	2.573
Hull	2.572
Plymouth	2.547
Wolverhampton	2.463

Source: uSwitch.com

Looking at 3G speeds across the mobile phone networks, O2 is top of the pile with average 3G download speeds of 3.22Mbps. But Vodafone is hot on its heels, with customers receiving average speeds of 2.95Mbps. With some catching up to do are Orange and T-Mobile, currently the slowest providers with average speeds of 2.67Mbps and 1.65Mbps respectively – although their customers are increasingly benefiting from increased 3G coverage since the networks merged^[3].

Broadband Provider	Average Download Speed (Mbps)
O2	3.224
Vodafone	2.952
Three	2.698
Orange	2.672
T-Mobile	1.647

Source: uSwitch.com

Ernest Doku, technology expert at uSwitch.com, comments: “As you’d expect, UK cities are better serviced by mobile internet than rural areas, but the 3G experience is frustrating for many, even those living and working in large urban conurbations. Across large swathes of the UK, and worryingly in some of the country’s most populated towns and cities, 3G connections are simply not consistent enough at the moment, with too many users experiencing drop-offs and blackspots.

“Despite Government efforts to bring Britain into the digital age, it seems the road to seamless telecoms infrastructure is not an altogether smooth one, with consumers reporting patchy 3G coverage, and tests revealing that major UK cities, including London, are being left in the slow lane.

“There is clearly a long road to travel before smartphone and tablet users can enjoy a web browsing experience akin to that of superfast broadband currently being rolled out across the country to homes and businesses.

“Advancements in mobile communications technology and the rollout of fourth generation mobile internet (4G) will be crucial if Britain hopes to remain an economic force on the world stage and compete in the global marketplace. More and more businesses are becoming reliant on mobile internet, but without adequate investment across networks, aspirations of mobile broadband speeds of up to 20 times faster than are currently achieved will be just a pipe dream.”

For more information visit www.uswitch.com or call 0800 093 0607

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Notes to editors:

1. Research based on almost 30,000 3G speed tests conducted by iPhone users via the uSwitch.com 3G speed test app, available to download from iTunes - <http://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/speed-test-uswitch/id397731702?mt=8> during 2011. Data was collected in Megabits per second (Mbps). In contrast to Ofcom's mobile internet statistics, which are collected via dongles, uSwitch.com's data is collected by smartphone users using an iPhone app that tests 3G speeds. Previous 3G data, such as the BBC's 3G crowd sourcing survey, has only revealed 3G coverage.
2. Results of the consumer survey on smartphone users' attitudes to 3G service were collected in January 2012. A total of 1,027 people took part in the survey.
3. For more information about Orange and T-Mobile mast sharing see <http://everythingeverywhere.com/> and for their recent announcement on sharing 3G signals, click [HERE](#).

About us

uSwitch.com is a free, impartial, online and telephone-based comparison and switching service, helping consumers compare prices on gas, electricity, water, heating cover, home telephone, broadband, digital television, mobile phones and personal finance products including mortgages, credit cards, current accounts and insurance. In 2010 uSwitch.com celebrated ten years of saving customers money.

uSwitch.com is the first comparison website to achieve the Plain English Campaign's Internet Crystal Mark, which is recognised as a standard that a website has clear language, is accessible and easy to use, and has been tested on a sample of its users.

uSwitch.com is dedicated to helping consumers save money whether they have internet access or not. It offers a dedicated call centre, manned by uSwitch customer service representatives, as well as a freepost 'Send us your bill' service, whereby customers can post their latest energy bills with their

telephone number to FREEPOST USWITCH, to get a free call back from a dedicated customer services representative. The service is also available via fax, email and post. Consumers should fax 0203 214 8417, email CustomerServices@uswitch.com or write to Customer Services, uSwitch.com, Centro 3, 19 Mandela Street, London, NW1 0DU with their postcode and usage details.

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