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USWITCH.COM: UK IS DIVIDING INTO INTERNET 'HAVES' AND 'HAVE NOTS'

The Office of National Statistics today issued its quarterly figures on internet access in Britain. Despite its finding that more than three quarters of UK households now have internet access, the figures also reveal that a sizeable chunk of people have never been online.

Ernest Doku, technology expert at uSwitch.com, comments: "Despite frenzied competition for business among broadband providers, this data shows that the internet revolution is passing many people by. The gulf between internet 'haves' and 'have nots' is getting wider and the danger is that growing swathes of the population will find themselves disadvantaged as a result of digital exclusion.

"The internet can play a vital role in helping people find lower prices and better value deals. Online prices are invariably cheaper than offline. People who are unable to go online are effectively losing out financially and very often they are those least able to afford to miss out on online savings.

"Age is clearly a factor. The number of people over 55 who have never used the internet fell very slightly, but more than one in five has still never been online. The proportion of over 75s who have never used the web even increased - and is now well over three quarters. Disabled people are also much less likely to be online - and the number of registered disabled people who have never been online rose to 37%.

"Our experience shows there's a clear difference in attitude between the generations too. Most younger Britons see the internet as a necessity, not a luxury. Many are now using smartphones as their primary way of accessing the net, rather than home computers, and are becoming used to the idea of having the world in their pocket.

"But while young Britons now take instant, and often constant, internet access in their stride, the awkward truth is that more than 8 million adults still have never used the internet. Whether this is due to a lack of information, expense or simply thinking it does not concern them, this is a great shame.

"We should be educating these sections of the population about the benefits and freedom that internet access can offer. Now it is cheaper and easier to get online than ever, and no-one needs be left behind."

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

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Notes to editors:

1. Research carried out online with the uSwitch.com Consumer Opinion Panel in May 2011. Sample size 1,760 UK adults. Calculations based on the fact that 95% of adults surveyed have a mobile phone for personal use. Assuming 48.3m adults (ONS) uSwitch.com calculates that there are 45.9 million mobile phone users in the UK. Reference to satisfied customers includes only those who responded positively that they were very satisfied or fairly satisfied. Only those who responded as fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied are referred to as 'dissatisfied'. Satisfaction ratings and rankings in tables are determined only by the percentage of satisfied respondents. 14% are fairly or very dissatisfied with customer service. Assuming this applies to the entire broadband population of 17 million customers (Ofcom 2010), this is 2.4 million.
2. Total sample size of YouGov survey was 6,721 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken in May 2010 with analysis conducted in June. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+). Specific reporting of results published for suppliers that received 50 or more responses. Results have been split by customers on pay as you go and those on pay monthly networks. Best Network scores and overall positions have been calculated by totalling the scores for 'very' and 'fairly' satisfied across each category. The mobile customers referred to throughout the report refer to all who haven't changed their mobile provider in the last month.
3. Reference to satisfied customers includes only those who responded positively that they were very satisfied or fairly satisfied. Only those who responded as fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied are referred to as 'dissatisfied'. **Satisfaction ratings and rankings in tables are determined only by the percentage of satisfied respondents.** Total sample size in the YouGov survey was 7,759 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken 16th – 21st February 2011 with analysis conducted in March. The survey was carried out online. Specific reporting of results published for suppliers that received 150 or more responses. Data has not been weighted. Comparisons to 12 months ago refer to same YouGov survey conducted 1st – 6th February 2010. 58% said they were satisfied with customer service, In 2010, 60% were satisfied overall with customer service.

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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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