



Under embargo until: 00:01 hrs Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2011

## PROFESSIONAL SURFERS: BRITS SPEND 50 HOURS A WEEK ONLINE

- **Internet-addicts:** the average Brit spends an astonishing 50 hours a week online – up from 30 hours in 2009<sup>[1]</sup>
- **Square-eyed:** on a normal working day Brits spend nearly 4 hours online for work purposes<sup>[2]</sup> and almost 5 hours for pleasure<sup>[3]</sup>
- **Addiction continues:** the average person puts in 4 hours a day on the internet at the weekend<sup>[4]</sup>, but 14% of 18–24 year olds spend more than 10 hours a day online<sup>[5]</sup>
- **One click shop:** 90% of UK consumers now shop online, 85% manage finances, 57% watch TV, films and video, and 31% download music
- **Hooked:** 93% of 18 – 24 year olds use social networking sites compared to 41% of over 55's
- **Regions:** Londoners spend the most time online, spending 55 hours a week, compared to 46 hours in the North East<sup>[6]</sup>

Brits are living two days of their week online according to new research by independent price comparison and switching service, [uSwitch.com](http://uSwitch.com). By using the web for work, rest and play, they are clocking up an astonishing 50 hours a week on the internet – an unprecedented jump of 20 hours a week in just two years<sup>[1]</sup>.

A typical working day in 2009 saw the average Brit spent five hours online. Now our web-hungry nation spends nine hours online – four hours for professional purposes<sup>[2]</sup> and five for pleasure and leisure<sup>[3]</sup>, including social networking, online shopping, managing finances, watching films and downloading music.

But our addiction isn't just contained to the working week. During weekend 'downtime', the average Brit spends four hours a day online<sup>[4]</sup>. The uSwitch.com research suggests that young adults take this even further. A staggering 14% of 18-24 year olds spend over ten hours a day

online at the weekend<sup>[5]</sup>, surfing the net, watching TV and keeping in touch with friends and family.

In fact, social networking is one of the main reasons that Brits now spend so much time online. 93% of 18-24 year olds regularly using sites such as Facebook and Twitter compared to 41% of silver surfers (aged 55 years or over). Online shopping has also contributed to the dramatic increase. With cash-strapped consumers keen to hunt down bargains, 90% of the UK now shops on the internet. On top of this, 85% of Brits spend time managing their money online, more than half (57%) watch TV, films and video online, and one third (31%) download music.

But, when it comes to spending time on the internet, there is a significant difference between the regions. The greatest internet addicts live in London, where the average person will spend 55 hours a week online. This is closely followed by people in the North West who spend an average of 53 hours a week online – three hours more than the national average. But the picture changes across the Pennines. Consumers in the North East spend just 45 hours online per week, 22% less time than those in the capital.

**Table 1: Regional breakdown of time spent online<sup>[6]</sup>**

| Region           | Hours per week spent online |
|------------------|-----------------------------|
| North East       | 46                          |
| North West       | 53                          |
| Yorks and Humber | 51                          |
| East Midlands    | 48                          |
| West Midlands    | 52                          |
| East of England  | 48                          |
| London           | 55                          |
| South East       | 51                          |
| South West       | 48                          |
| Wales            | 51                          |
| Scotland         | 49                          |

**Ernest Doku, technology expert at [uSwitch.com](http://uSwitch.com)**, comments: “These figures show just what an impact the internet has had on our lives. It’s become such a life essential that it’s very hard to

imagine how we would cope without it. It's likely that our reliance will only increase as the younger generations come to the fore and smartphones become more prolific. In fact many young people seem to prefer touchscreen technology to getting in touch with people face to face.

"But the regional differences show that we are still seeing signs of a digital divide and the risk of social exclusion for those unable or unwilling to go online. More work needs to be done to encourage greater take-up amongst vulnerable groups, who could be losing out if they are not logging on.

"In the meantime, it's more important than ever that consumers understand what their broadband package will provide them with. For example, those enjoying the delights of on-demand TV may not realise that there is a set limit as to how much data they are allowed use. A 45-minute TV programme, such as Desperate Housewives, uses up around 350Mb, while a two-hour movie could use up to 900Mb. And that's just standard definition. This soon adds up over a month and customers could well find themselves getting a warning that they are over-using their service, "unlimited" or not."

**Table 2: Guidelines to internet usage<sup>[7]</sup>**

| <b>File/activity</b>                                    | <b>Approximate size</b> |
|---|-------------------------|
| Email   | 4KB                     |
| Photo   | 1MB                     |
| Music track   | 4MB                     |
| Movie   | 700MB                   |
| 30 mins streaming of BBC iPlayer programme (at 500kbps) | 108MB                   |
| High Definition movie                                   | 4GB                     |

Following last month's acquisition of [Top10.com](http://www.top10.com), the UK's largest broadband and mobile phone comparison website, uSwitch.com is proud to announce its new broadband comparison channel which will help surfers save more money on their broadband prices than ever before. With exclusive broadband deals from just £3.25 a month with unlimited downloads on many packages, even the most data hungry internet users will find great savings by choosing their best package at <http://www.uswitch.com/broadband>.

For more information visit [www.uswitch.com](http://www.uswitch.com) or call 0800 093 0607

-Ends-

**For further information please contact:**

Katherine Cooper, uSwitch.com 020 7802 2961 / [katherinecooper@uswitch.com](mailto:katherinecooper@uswitch.com)

Anna Schirmer, Lansons Communications on 0207 294 3605 or <mailto:stuartl@lansons.com>  
annas@lansons.com

John Diviney, Lansons Communications on 0207 294 3696 or [johnd@lansons.com](mailto:johnd@lansons.com)

**Notes to editors:**

Total sample size in the YouGov survey was 7,417 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 24 months ago refer to same YouGov survey conducted August 2009. Questions were asked to consumers with broadband decision making involvement.

1. When asked “in an average weekly day (Mon – Fri) how long do you spend online for work/professional use?” the mean average was 3.83 hours. When asked “in an average weekly day (Mon – Fri) how long do you spend online for pleasure/personal use?” the mean average was 4.71 hours. When asked “in an average day during a weekend, how long do you spend online for pleasure/personal use?” the mean average was 3.89 hours. This totals 50.48 hours ( $[3.83 + 4.71] \times 5 + [3.89 \times 2]$ ).
2. When asked “in an average weekly day (Mon – Fri) how long do you spend online for work/professional use?” the mean average was 3.83 hours
3. When asked “in an average weekly day (Mon – Fri) how long do you spend online for pleasure/personal use?” the mean average was 4.71 hours
4. When asked “in an average day during a weekend, how long do you spend online for pleasure/personal use?” the mean average was 3.89hours
5. When asked “in an average day during a weekend, how long do you spend online for pleasure/personal use?” 14% answered “over 10 hours”
6. See Table 1: uSwitch.com calculations based on YouGov research.
7. Table 2: provided by uSwitch.com

**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](mailto:CustomerServices@uswitch.com) or write to Customer Services, uSwitch.com, Centro 3, 19 Mandela Street, London, NW1 0DU with their postcode and usage details.

uSwitch.com is owned by Forward Internet Group Limited, a privately funded collection of internet-based businesses focused on consumer engagement and innovation.