



# Home Broadband Performance

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Confirmation of cessation of research project

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# Overview

This document confirms the cessation of Ofcom's Home Broadband Performance research project, meaning that the report covering March 2023 measurements, which is due for publication in September 2023, will be the final report.

The research was initiated to provide consumers with accurate information regarding the real-world connection speeds that different broadband services provided and has since been expanded to include information on a wider range of metrics that help determine the user-experience delivered.

Changes in the rules around the use of connection speeds in the advertising of broadband services, and the implementation and revision of Ofcom's [Voluntary Residential Code of Practice on Broadband Speeds](#) mean that consumers now have access to accurate speed information prior to, and during, the purchase process.

The research shows continued improvement in the average broadband connection speeds and as consumers have migrated to superfast and ultrafast services, connection speed is no longer a limiting factor for most users. Similarly, even the worst performance that we see in the other metrics that the research covers are unlikely to negatively impact the user-experience in most use cases.

This document also summarises the responses we received after our proposal to conclude the UK Home Broadband Performance research project was published on 1 June 2023.

## What we have decided – in brief

- Ofcom's UK Home Broadband Performance research project will be concluded after the report covering March 2023 measurements, which is due for publication in September 2023.

If you have any queries, please email [MID@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:MID@ofcom.org.uk)

# Confirmed cessation of Ofcom's Home Broadband Performance

Ofcom has been publishing research into residential fixed broadband performance since 2009. The research was initiated as there was a disjoint between actual and advertised download speeds; however, there have subsequently been changes in broadband advertising guidelines and Ofcom's Voluntary Residential Code of Practice on Broadband Speeds which ensure that people buying broadband from providers who have signed up for the Code receive clear, realistic speed information at point of sale and after-sale.

The research is based on data collected from a panel of volunteers who connect a hardware monitoring unit to their broadband router. Since 2022, Ofcom has also requested 'embedded' test data from some ISPs and, together, used these to measure the performance of some of the UK's most popular fixed broadband packages and assess how they vary by technology, package, location, and time of day.

Examination of the Home Broadband Performance data over time shows continued improvement in the average broadband connection speeds (due to people upgrading to faster services rather than material improvements in the performance of individual lines/packages) and a decrease in the proportion of homes that do not receive a decent broadband service.

As consumers have migrated to superfast and ultrafast services, connection speed is no longer a limiting factor for most users, and even the worst performance that we see in the other metrics the research covers are unlikely to negatively impact the user-experience for most use cases. This includes network slowdown data, where average download speeds during busy times are typically over 90% of those experienced in quieter periods.

There are also limitations to the Home Broadband Performance research which cannot be addressed without major investment. For example: i) the cost of a hardware-based measurement solution limits the size of the panel the research is based on, meaning it is not possible to analyse geographic performance differences other than at a comparatively high level; ii) the requirement for a sufficient panel size to obtain robust results makes it both costly and difficult to recruit for services with lower take-up (including many full fibre services); and iii) the research only considers performance to the customer's router (and not over Wi-Fi) meaning it does not capture the full user experience.

The addition of 'embedded' test data collected from some broadband providers does allow for a larger panel size; however, it covers only a subset of ISPs and metrics and presents data comparability issues.

## Comments on the proposed changes

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Some respondents voiced concerns that our proposal would reduce the amount of accurate and reliable information available to consumers regarding the actual performance of home broadband connections. The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) and the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) set [guidance on how broadband providers should use numerical speed claims in advertising](#), outlining that providers should show an average speed that at least 50% of their customers receive at the network's peak time (defined by Ofcom as 8-10pm).

Ofcom's [Voluntary Residential Code of Practice on Better Broadband Speeds](#) also means that [providers who are signed up to the code](#) should always give accurate information on how fast a broadband service will be, including a minimum guaranteed speed for a purchased broadband service and the estimated speed a user of the purchased service is likely to experience at peak times (e.g. between 8-10pm for residential customers). These providers should offer consumers the right to exit a contract without penalty if broadband speeds are less than was guaranteed, and if the problem lies within their network and cannot be fixed within 30 days.

We are therefore confident that changes in the rules around the use of connection speeds in the advertising of broadband services, and the implementation and revision of the Voluntary Residential Code of Practice on Broadband Speeds mean that most consumers will continue to have access to accurate speed information prior to, and during, the purchase process.

Another concern which was raised was that stopping the research would mean that there would be no independent information available to audit connection speed claims made by broadband providers under the Voluntary Residential Code of Practice on Better Broadband Speeds or in broadband advertising.

While the ASA/CAP's guidance does not mandate a specific method or approach to gathering and processing speed testing data for use in advertising, it identifies some acceptable approaches to the measurement, sampling, and statistical analysis of speed data for use in advertising and highlights relevant factors that may cause a reduction or variation in speeds which should be considered.

Similarly, the Voluntary Residential Code of Practice on Better Broadband Speeds sets out [high-level principles](#) by which signatories should derive the speed estimates provided to those purchasing home broadband services. We therefore believe that in, both cases, there will remain a framework for auditing broadband provider speed claims and ensuring compliance with the Broadband Speeds Codes of practice following the cessation of Ofcom's Home Broadband Performance reporting.

Responses to our notification of proposed changes document expressed interest in Ofcom's plans for broadband speeds research in the future. Ofcom continues to believe there is value in making information regarding the performance of UK broadband connections available to consumers and stakeholders, and we are exploring the use of alternative data sources, including ISP 'embedded' test data, to do this. Ofcom's Connected Nations research will continue to report on the broadband speeds and services available across the UK, including the coverage of networks which are capable of delivering download speeds of 1Gbit/s or higher. Some of the data that underpins our Connected Nations research will also continue to be made available to download.

## Our decision

We have decided to proceed with the cessation of Ofcom's Home Broadband Performance research project, and the report covering March 2023 measurements, which is scheduled for publication in September 2023, will be the final report.