

Introduction to Rural and Mountain Connectivity Northern Ireland, UK

The annual OFCOM report measures progress in the availability and capability of broadband and mobile services in Northern Ireland and highlights the work Ofcom is doing, alongside UK and devolved governments and communications companies, to improve the UK's connectivity. Alongside this Northern Ireland report, we publish separate reports on broadband and mobile availability for the UK as a whole and each of its nations. Our interactive dashboard allows people to easily access data for different areas of the UK and specific types of services.

This data is also available at Scottish local authority, Scottish Parliament and UK Parliament constituency level. We are also releasing the International Broadband Scorecard 2021, which compares the UK's recent position on broadband availability with a number of other European nations. More than half a million homes in Northern Ireland (539,000) now have access to full-fibre broadband connections; over 116,000 more than last year. These connections can deliver much higher download speeds and are also more reliable than older, copper-based broadband.

Among the four UK nations, Northern Ireland (71%) has the highest availability of full-fibre services, compared to England (27%), Scotland (27%) and Wales (27%).

- Northern Ireland's full fibre position is a result of a combination of aggressive commercial rollout and publicly funded schemes designed to improve broadband in rural areas.
- Superfast broadband (at least 30 Mbit/s), is available to 91% of premises in Northern Ireland, 2pp (percentage points) higher than last year.

Thinkbroadband records full fibre coverage at 42.1% of Scotland's premises and 31.09% of the Highlands (England 44.8%, Northern Ireland 88.7%, Wales 42.4%).

Superfast coverage (>30Mbps) is at 95.3% for Scotland and 83.6% of the Highlands. Ofgem's figures are lower with full fibre availability of 27% for Scotland and 17% for rural Scotland. Superfast coverage is similar at 94% and 73% for Scotland and rural Scotland respectively.

The labs.thinkbroadband.com/local site provides broadband coverage statistics, availability checker, maps and additionally speeds as recorded by the public and is produced by thinkbroadband. Thinkbroadband uses an independent model which differs to the methodology used by Ofcom, which is reliant on data provided by broadband providers. By running their model they are able to provide a verification for the Ofcom data and are not reliant on quarterly data releases but can update data on a daily or weekly basis as needed.

The largest factor for any differences with the Ofcom analysis is down to the timing of publication. Where Fibre is talked about this refers to fibre based broadband which encompasses VDSL2, FTTC, FTTN, G.fast, cable broadband, FTTH and FTTB. Superfast broadband coverage figures is a subset of the fibre based figures as it adds a speed qualifer of 24 Mbps or 30 Mbps.