

# **Digital Britain: attitudes towards internet content among adults**

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**March 2009**

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## **Executive Summary**

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The findings in this report are based on the survey 'Digital Britain: Attitudes to Internet Content' which was carried out by BMRB's Social Research Division in March 2009. The survey was carried out in Great Britain as part of BMRB's face to face Omnibus survey, boosted by the addition of a small ad hoc sample in Northern Ireland. The total sample of 2088 adults is representative of all adults in the UK.

### **Use of the internet (Section 2)**

70% of adults in the UK had used the internet in the past month. Usage of the internet showed a strong negative correlation with age, rising from 31% of those aged 65+ to 91% of those aged 16-24. Those in ABC1 social grades were also more likely to use the internet than those in C2DE grades.

Almost all internet users (95%) had accessed the internet from a home computer. Work was the next most common access location (35%) although, among 16-24 year olds, 36% had accessed it from a school, college or university.

Four out of five internet users accessed the internet either every day or most days. However, on a typical day when the internet was used at all, most people used it for no more than an hour. Most internet use was from a static location, although 12% had used it from mobile phones, and a small proportion other hand-held devices.

By far the most common use of the internet was for email, although online shopping and searching for information were also very common activities. More sophisticated uses included social networking, uploading and downloading files, gaming, and non-email forms of communication such as voice calls and instant messaging.

Depending on the number and type of activities they had done in the last year, internet users were segmented into three groups – basic, mainstream and advanced. These groups were powerful discriminators in the analysis of user attitudes towards the control of internet content.

### **Unintentional exposure to inappropriate or offensive internet content (Section 3)**

Twenty seven per cent of internet users said they had unintentionally seen internet content they considered inappropriate or offensive in the last 12 months. Sexually explicit material was the most commonly mentioned type of material

(17%), followed by offensive language (10%), material hostile to a particular group (7%) and personal insults, bullying or persecution of individuals (6%).

When offensive material had been seen, this was more often on a website than in an email. The type of websites frequently responsible for such material tended to be those including user-generated content such as social networking sites and video sites, although search engine sites were also frequently mentioned.

Those who had seen this type of material were asked how they felt about seeing it (the worst material if they had seen it on more than one occasion). One in five had found the material 'extremely offensive' and a further 38% said it was 'quite offensive'. Smaller proportions were 'not particularly bothered' (27%) or said 'it didn't bother me at all' (12%).

Among those who had seen offensive material, around four in ten had taken some action as a result – most commonly by changing their search engine settings or reporting the offensive material. Those with most knowledge and experience of the internet were the least likely to have taken any action.

#### **Ability of internet users to avoid seeing offensive material (Section 4)**

Four out of five internet users said they were confident in their own ability to use the internet without seeing content they found inappropriate or offensive, although only half of these said they were 'very confident'. The highest levels of confidence were found among those who were most knowledgeable about the internet.

Over two thirds of internet users were aware of the existence of software to filter out spam emails and over half of home internet users said they used this tool at home. Nearly six in ten users were aware of parental control software, although only a quarter of those with children aged 0-15 in the household actually used it at home. A quarter of home internet users employed search engine settings to filter out unwanted material, compared with 45% who claimed to be aware of them. Claimed awareness of child-friendly ISPs and website rating systems was also much higher than actual usage.

Only 25% of users said they would like further information about the tools available, rising to 33% among those who had seen offensive material, 36% among those with children in the household, and 44% among BME respondents. The largest group of people who wanted more information would expect to get this from their Internet Service Provider (ISP).

#### **Attitudes towards control of internet content (Section 5)**

Generally there was a substantial level of support among internet users for measures to control internet content. Around two thirds supported the removal of

website content that many people found offensive, although a similar proportion agreed that there was no need to control internet content which was legal, and people should take responsibility for themselves.

Among the 31% of users who were not opposed to controls, the majority said they would still welcome more control of the internet, even if this meant an increase in cost, a reduction in speed of access and restrictions on their own access to legal material on the internet. When asked who should be responsible for introducing controls, again the most common response was Internet Service Providers.

Of the list of possible measures that could be taken to control internet content in the UK, the most popular among users was an age certification system (52%), followed by a voluntary code of conduct for UK website owners to classify and label their sites (34%). Around one in four supported voluntary codes of conduct for ISPs to block access to certain websites containing offensive material, or for website owners to remove some types of material within a time-frame. A similar proportion supported the screening of all user-generated content online.

If ISPs did agree to block access to websites containing some types of offensive – though legal – material, there was no overall consensus among internet users as to who should decide which sites should be blocked. The largest group (27%) opted for ISPs themselves, followed by the Government (20%) and Ofcom (19%).

# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Survey Background

Usage of the internet both at home and in the workplace has increased steadily in recent years to a point where around seven in ten adults in the UK have used the internet in the previous month, the large majority accessing it at home and most using the internet every day or nearly every day<sup>1</sup>.

The increase in internet usage provides significant benefits both for business and private users in terms of easy access to information, efficient transfer of information between internet users and the ability to transact in a wide variety of ways. It also allows people to keep in contact with friends and to make new social contacts without even leaving the home. The possibilities and benefits of the internet are being discovered at a rapid pace. Along with the positive effects of the new technology, however, increased usage of the internet also increases the range of content, some of which may be undesirable or even harmful, to which users may be unintentionally exposed. The challenge is how to ensure that those who access the internet can use it to its full potential without being exposed to harmful or offensive content.

The issues of content regulation for children, and the risks to which children are exposed when using the internet, are well known. The Byron Review has studied these issues in depth and made recommendations about what the Government, internet service providers, parents and education providers can do to make the internet a safer place for children. This has led to the establishment of the UK Council for Child Internet Safety which brings together over 100 organisations from the public and private sectors working with the Government to deliver the recommendations from the review. Internet software providers have also seen the potential of parental control tools as a selling point and now advertise this as a key part of their service. Parents clearly worry about what their children are exposed to online and many are taking steps to ensure that they make their children's online experience as safe as possible.

Although adults are more capable of screening what they see on the internet and making appropriate decisions about what sites they look at, the internet opens all users up to a diverse range of interest groups with very different opinions and expectations about what they feel is appropriate content, particularly with the increase of user-generated content on the internet.

As a part of the Digital Britain report, which assesses the UK's readiness to exploit the new digital technology in the public and private arena, DCMS is considering the policy for internet content and how to protect citizens whilst ensuring that

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/iahi0808.pdf>

they make the most of what the technology has to offer. The Department therefore commissioned BMRB to carry out research to fill gaps in its understanding of public attitudes towards internet content and to inform discussions about whether there is a need for more protection for adults on the internet or whether the focus can remain on safeguarding children.

## **1.2 Research objectives**

The aim of the research is to deliver an evidence-based view of attitudes towards internet content, and in particular to examine the extent to which *adults* are exposed to content on the internet that they find inappropriate or offensive, and how far they perceive this as a problem. The research will also explore what steps adult internet users already take to minimise or prevent their exposure to this type of content, whether they would welcome further controls to reduce or regulate such material, and if so who they think should take responsibility for this.

## **1.3 Methodology**

The survey 'Digital Britain: Attitudes to Internet Content' was carried out by BMRB's Social Research Division in March 2009. BMRB interviewed a representative sample of 2088 adults across the UK between March 12<sup>th</sup> and March 18<sup>th</sup> 2009. Respondents were interviewed face to face in their own homes, with those in Great Britain being interviewed as part of BMRB's Omnibus survey.

Because the Omnibus survey only covers Great Britain, an ad hoc sample of adults in Northern Ireland was added to achieve a representative sample of UK adults.

The data on which this report is based are weighted to ensure that demographic profiles match those for all adults in the United Kingdom aged 16 or over.

Further details of the survey methodology are included in Appendix B.

## 2 Use of the internet among the UK population

In this section of the report we look at who within in the UK population is using the internet and who is not. Reasons given for non-use of the internet are also examined. The questions of how, when and where the majority of the UK population who do access the internet are using it are all discussed in some detail. A segmentation of internet users is also presented.

### 2.1 Who uses the internet and who does not

For the purposes of this study, an internet user was defined as someone who has used the internet in the past month, excluding those whose only use has been for email from a work computer<sup>2</sup>.

The survey shows that 70% of the UK population had used the internet in the past month. Table 2a displays the demographics of users and non-users:

**Table 2a Whether have used the internet in the past month**

	All adults	Men	Women	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	ABC1	C2DE
Base (unwtd)	2088	946	1142	241	311	365	360	293	518	1019	1069
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	70	74	66	91	87	83	75	60	31	81	57
No	30	26	34	9	13	17	25	40	69	19	43

Non-users of the internet tended to be female (34% vs. 26% of men) and were also more likely to be in the older age groups: 40% of individuals aged 55-64 were non users as were 69% of those aged 65+. By contrast, only 9% of people aged 16-24 were non-users. As well as significant differences between gender and age groups, those in socio-economic group ABC1 were far more likely to have used the internet in the past month than those in the C2DE group.

There was also a marked regional variation - people living in the south of England (London, the South East or the South West) were using the internet in much greater proportions than people in other parts of the country. Just one in five southerners (22%) was a non-user of the internet compared 35% of individuals in Yorkshire and the Humber, 36% in the North West of England, 37% in Scotland and 39% in Wales. Adults living in households with children were far more likely

<sup>2</sup> Longer timescales than one month were considered for the purposes of this project, but other data show that very few people who use the internet at all use it less than once a month.

to be internet users than those in childless households – 82% of people with a child aged 0-15 at home had used in the internet in the past month compared to 64% of adults who did not live in a household with a child of this age.

## **2.2 Barriers to use of the internet**

Barriers to using the internet for non-users were captured as part of the study. Importantly, respondents were asked to give their own reasons for not using the internet rather being prompted with a list of possible answers. Two key reasons for not using the internet emerged: *'I don't have a computer'* was given as a reason by 38% of respondents, although the question related to use of the internet in general and not specifically at home. The fact is that the vast majority of internet users (95%) do go online on a computer at home, so lacking a computer is a real barrier to use. *'I have no need for it/not interested in it'* was an equally important reason for non-use, with 37% of people spontaneously mentioning this.

The expense of internet access was not a major barrier - only 4% of non-users gave this as a reason. Nor were specific worries about what could happen when using the internet such as online fraud, identity theft or seeing offensive content important reasons for non-use. Just 1% of adults interviewed who had children aged 0-15 in the household said that worries over their children seeing something offensive online prevented them from using the internet - and less than 1% of adults cited the possibility of seeing offensive content themselves as a barrier to use.

Had respondents been asked directly whether offensive content was a barrier for them, these proportions might have been higher. However, this issue is by no means top-of-mind for people when it comes to considering whether or not to use the internet.

## **2.3 How, where and how much the internet is accessed**

The internet is accessed using a variety of technologies and from a range of locations. But overwhelmingly the internet is accessed from a home computer – 95% of internet users had accessed the internet at home on a computer in the past month. Out of the home, work was the most common location for use (35% of users). Ten per cent of all users had used the internet at school, college or university, although this rose to 36% among those aged 16-24. Just 4% of users had accessed the internet in a public place such as an internet café, a library or a bar.

Static ways of accessing the internet remain by far the most common but a significant minority of users had accessed the internet 'on the go'. Mobile phones provided the most commonly used form of 'on the go' access, used by 12% in the

past month. Three per cent of users had accessed the internet from a Blackberry and 2% from a palmtop or a PDA.

Those people who do use the internet tend to do so very frequently. It seems that once people have internet access it quickly becomes an indispensable part of daily life. In fact, 64% of all internet users log on every day and an additional 17% use the internet 'most days'. Just 3% of current users say they use the internet less than once a week.

For the purposes of this report 'high frequency' users of the internet have been classed as people using every day. 'Medium frequency users' use the internet most days or 2 or 3 times a week, while 'low frequency users' users are using it once a week or less.

Users were asked for how long, as well as how frequently, they used the internet. On a typical day when the internet is used at all, most people (48%) said they had used it for up to an hour. The modal response to this question was '30 minutes to an hour', the answer selected by 27% of users, while 21% tended to use for less than half an hour. Therefore, for the typical user, internet use tends to be frequent but for fairly short periods of time. However, not all conform to this pattern - 14% of users say that on an average day of using the internet they log on for four hours or more.

For the purposes of this report 'heavy' users of the internet have been classed as people using the internet for 3 and a half hours or more on a typical day when the internet is used at all. 'Medium' users use the internet for over an hour but less than three and a half hours per day, while 'light' users are using it for up to an hour per day. Heavy users are often men (70% vs. 51% of all internet users) and aged under 35 (54% vs. 40% of all internet users).

## **2.4 What the internet is used for**

Internet users were asked to select, from a list of possible activities, those they had done online in the past year.

By far the most common use of the internet was for email, with four fifths of internet users having used email in the past 12 months. Shopping online is now also a mainstream activity, with well over half of internet users having done this in the past year. Using the internet to find information – be it about activities, interests, products or services - is also a common activity for internet users.

The more niche online activities, carried out by those who are more engaged with digital technology and more skilled in using it were: social networking; downloading and uploading files including TV programmes, music and films; gaming; and non-email forms of communication such as voice calls and instant messaging. All of the latter were done by 40% or fewer internet users.

There was a strong correlation between frequency and weight of internet use and the range of activities in which users participated. Those who used the internet every day, or used it for several hours at a time, were the most likely to use it for a wide range of activities, including the more niche activities.

## **2.5 Segmentation of internet users**

The information regarding the number and type of activities internet users had done online in the past year was used to devise a simple segmentation of internet users. The segmentation was designed to reflect respondents' level of engagement with the internet and their sophistication in the use of online tools.

Three segments were created: basic internet users (65% of the total), mainstream users (24%) and advanced users (11%). Respondents' allocation to a segment depended on the number and type of different activities they had done online in the past year [see Appendix A for further explanation of the segmentation]. Table 2b shows the proportion of each segment engaged in each activity:

**Table 2b Activities for which the internet has been used in the past 12 months by segment**

	<b>All internet users</b>	<b>Segment 1 Basic users</b>	<b>Segment 2 Mainstream users</b>	<b>Segment 3 Advanced users</b>
Base (unwtd)	1339	904	308	127
	%	%	%	%
Using email	78	68	96	98
To shop online	59	45	81	93
To get information about a particular activity or interest	56	41	81	93
To compare prices	49	35	70	87
To visit the site of a particular product or service	49	34	71	88
To book tickets, flights or accommodation	47	32	72	83
For social networking e.g. on Facebook, Twitter or Myspace	40	25	63	82
To watch videos on YouTube	37	19	60	97
To buy something at an online auction, e.g. eBay	36	25	50	74
For instant messaging	32	19	46	80
To upload photographs (e.g. to flickr)	30	18	42	76
To watch TV programmes after they've been broadcast (e.g. on iplayer)	29	13	52	81
To download music (whether paid for or free)	28	9	52	90
To listen to the radio	23	9	35	79
To play games online	22	10	38	59
To make internet voice calls (e.g. using VoIP or Skype)	14	5	21	54
To upload videos (e.g. to YouTube)	13	4	18	59
To download films or film trailers	13	3	18	64
To manage or maintain my own website	12	4	20	44
For adult entertainment*	5	2	4	24

\*This activity was not included in the segmentation calculation

Those in the first segment, of basic internet users, are using the internet in a functional way - predominantly to send and receive email. Many in this group have shopped online and used the internet to look up information about an activity or interest. For some this information seeking has included price comparisons.

Those in the second segment, of mainstream users, are also doing these things but in larger numbers: 96% have used email in the past year, 81% have shopped online and 70% have compared prices. What differentiates the second, mainstream, group is that a much higher proportion are using the internet not just functionally but for entertainment and socialising too: 63% have visited a social networking site in the past year and 60% have watched videos on YouTube. For the majority of this group the internet is trusted for a wide range of information and commercial needs, such as booking travel or accommodation, or looking at sites for particular products or services.

Those in the final, most sophisticated, advanced segment are doing everything the other two groups are doing, but with the addition of generating their own content (through uploading photographs and videos to the likes of Flickr and YouTube), playing games online, listening to the radio and even managing or maintaining their own websites. It is also interesting to note that one in four of this group use the internet for 'adult entertainment', compared with only 2% of basic and 4% of mainstream users.

The demographic profile of each segment is shown in Table 2c below:

**Table 2c Demographic Profile of Internet User Segments**

	<b>All internet users</b>	<b>Segment 1 Basic users</b>	<b>Segment 2 Mainstream users</b>	<b>Segment 3 Advanced users</b>
Base (unwtd)	1339	904	308	127
	%	%	%	%
Men	51	48	49	76
Women	49	52	51	24
16-24	20	17	23	30
25-34	20	17	25	24
35-44	22	22	20	24
45-54	17	18	16	18
55-64	13	15	10	4
65+	9	11	6	0
AB	30	27	36	35
C1	34	32	36	38
C2	19	19	19	19
DE	10	22	9	8
Heavy Internet Users	18	12	22	46
Medium Internet Users	34	31	41	37
Light Internet Users	48	57	37	17
High frequency users	64	54	78	94
Medium frequency Users	27	34	18	5
Low frequency users	9	13	4	1

Basic internet users tend to be older than users in the other two groups (44% v 29% aged 45 or over). Respondents in this group are also more likely to be in the DE socio-economic group than other users (22% v 9%). Advanced users of the internet also have a distinctive profile – young, male and ABC1.

The analysis in the table also demonstrates a strong correlation between the segmentation of internet users and both frequency and weight of internet use. Among advanced internet users, 94% were high frequency users and 46% were heavy users of the internet – those in other segments were less likely to use the internet so often or for such long periods.

Later sections of the report describe the differences between these segmentation groups in their attitudes towards controlling internet content.

## 2.6 Self-definition of internet knowledge and skills

In addition to recording which activities people were doing online, respondents were also asked to rate their own knowledge and skills when using the internet by selecting one of three statements that best described them: *'I am not very knowledgeable about the internet and I just use its basic tools'*, *'I am quite knowledgeable about the internet and use a number of online tools'* and *'I am highly knowledgeable about the internet and use its most advanced tools'*. Just over half of internet users (51%) felt that they belonged to the middle group, 27% felt that they were not very knowledgeable and just used basic tools, while the smallest group (22%) consisted of those who believed themselves to be highly knowledgeable and using the internet's most advanced tools.

Broadly, the segmentation devised by BMRB tallied with users' own view of their sophistication in using the internet, although there was not a complete match.

**Table 2d Cross tabulation of internet user segmentation and self assessment of knowledge of the internet**

	All internet users	Basic users	Mainstream users	Advanced users
Base (unwtd)	1339	904	308	127
	%	%	%	%
I am not very knowledgeable about the internet and I just use its basic tools	27	37	11	3
I am quite knowledgeable about the internet and use a number of online tools	51	50	60	39
I am highly knowledgeable about the internet and use its most advanced tools	22	13	29	58

Among the first segment of basic users 37% thought they were 'not very knowledgeable' and using only the internet's basic tools. However, 50% in the

basic segment said they were 'quite knowledgeable' and using a number of online tools while 13% even claimed to be 'highly knowledgeable' and using the internet's most advanced tools. This does mean that a surprisingly high proportion of people in the basic users group considered themselves to be at least quite knowledgeable.

By contrast with basic users, in the third segment of advanced users the majority (58%) claimed to be highly knowledgeable about the internet and to use its most advanced tools, 39% said they were quite knowledgeable and used a number of online tools and just 3% in this segment felt they were 'not very knowledgeable' and used just basic tools.

### 3 Experience of Offensive Content on the Internet

In this section, we examine internet users' experience of unintentionally seeing something on the internet which they found inappropriate or offensive. We also discuss the level of offence caused and what action internet users have taken in response to such incidents.

#### 3.1 Proportion of people who have seen something offensive on the internet unintentionally

All internet users were asked whether they had, in the last 12 months, '*unintentionally seen any words or images on the internet which you did not want to see and which you personally found inappropriate or offensive*'. The wording of the question reflected the highly subjective nature of the subject matter. Responses can be found in Table 3a.

**Table 3a Proportion of internet users who had seen inappropriate or offensive content on the internet in the last 12 months**

	All internet users	Light users	Medium users	Heavy users	Basic users	Main-stream users	Advanced users
Base (unwtd)	1339	656	455	226	904	308	127
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Sexually explicit material	17	13	17	28	13	22	34
Offensive language	10	5	10	23	6	13	25
Material hostile to a particular group	7	4	7	14	3	8	23
Personal insults, bullying or persecution of individuals	6	2	6	14	3	8	18
Violent material	5	3	5	12	3	7	16
Other	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
Seen any inappropriate or offensive material	27	20	27	45	21	33	48

The majority (71%) of internet users said they had not seen anything unintentionally in the past year which they found offensive or inappropriate, and a further 2% were unable to say. Among the 27% who had seen offensive material, 'sexually explicit material' was the most commonly mentioned, seen by 17% of all internet users. 'Offensive language e.g. obscenities, swearing,

blasphemy' was mentioned by 10% of users. 'Material hostile to a particular group e.g. those of a particular gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability' was cited by 7%, 'personal insults, bullying or persecution of individuals e.g. via social network sites' by 6% and 'violent material' by 5%.

The frequency with which internet users had seen something online which they found inappropriate or offensive varied according to how much they used the internet. Among those who had seen offensive material at all, 35% said they saw it once a week or more often, 17% saw it less than once a week but at least once a month, 34% had seen it less often and 14% didn't know or couldn't remember. For heavy users who had seen offensive material, the proportion seeing it once a week or more rose to 44%, but it fell to 30% among light users.

Offensive material (the worst type, if seen on more than one occasion) had more often been seen on a website (65%) than in an email (21%), while 13% couldn't remember where they'd seen it. The type of websites where such material had been seen included social networking websites (20%), search engine sites<sup>3</sup> (19%) and video sites such as YouTube (15%). Material on chatrooms or blogs was cited by 4% in each case.

Predictably, the more an individual used the internet, the higher the chances that they had seen something which they found inappropriate or offensive online. 31% of high frequency users (using the internet every day) had done so, compared with 21% of medium frequency users (using most days or 2 to 3 times per week) and 18% of light users (less often). Similarly, offensive material had been seen by 45% of heavy users (using for 3.5 hours or more on a typical day) compared with 27% of medium users (1-3.5 hours per day) and 20% of light users (less than an hour per day). Likewise there were differences between the segments of internet users: 21% of basic users had seen something inappropriate or offensive which they hadn't meant to see, but this rose to 33% among mainstream users and 48% among advanced users. As well as advanced users' generally heavier use of the internet, their more frequent use of 'adult entertainment' sites may be a relevant factor here.

Among internet users, more men than women had seen something they found offensive online (31% compared with 23%). This could be linked to men's heavier use of the internet - having more opportunity to come across such material - or to the sites they had accessed. Fewer people in the older age groups also said they had seen something offensive; only 18% of people aged 55 or above said that they had. As the older age groups were much lighter users of

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<sup>3</sup> Survey respondents were not provided with a definition of search engines, as this is a commonly used term which most people would be likely to understand without difficulty. It was assumed that respondents would take 'search engine' to refer to websites such as Google and Ask, which can be used as either as web pages or tool bars and which provide links to other web pages following a key word search. However, the term was not actually defined within the survey.

the internet than average, this may explain their lack of exposure to offensive content. People from a BME group were more likely to have seen something online which they found offensive than white people (46% vs. 24%). This may be related to cultural norms as well as their marginally heavier use of the internet. Presence of children was not a differentiator on this question and nor were there any notable differences between regions.

Many people who had seen offensive material in the past year had seen more than one type: Among people who had seen offensive sexually explicit material on the internet, a third had also seen bad language and a fifth had also seen offensive violent material. Sexually explicit material was the most common type to cause offence: 41% of those who had seen more than one type of offensive material said that in their view the sexually explicit material they had seen was the worst.

### **3.2 Responses to seeing something offensive on the internet unintentionally**

Adult internet users in the UK who had unintentionally seen something online which they deemed inappropriate or offensive were asked to say how they felt about the worst type of material they had seen. Nineteen per cent had found the worst content they had seen 'extremely offensive', and 38% had found it 'quite offensive'. However, 27% weren't 'particularly bothered' and 12% said 'it didn't bother me at all'.

The type of offensive material most commonly seen on the internet was sexually explicit material. On unintentionally seeing such material, 19% were 'extremely offended' and an additional 33% 'quite offended'. Again, respondents were being asked about their response to the worst offensive content they had seen. Base sizes for the responses of internet users to other categories of offensive material on the internet are too small to draw any firm conclusions. However, it does seem that violent material was more likely to cause extreme offence to people.

There were also some differences among demographic sub groups: overall, women and those from a BME group had stronger feelings about seeing offensive content than men or white people. There was no pattern by age group, but people with children in their household were more offended: 33% of people with a child aged 0-9 were 'extremely offended' by seeing the worst material, falling to 14% of people who did not have a child that age in their household.

Among those who had seen inappropriate or offensive content online, the majority (57%) did nothing as a result. About four in ten had taken some action, most commonly changing their preferences when using a search engine (8%), reporting the offensive content (6%), or installing protective software (4%) because of seeing something offensive. Those adults with children aged under 16

in the household reacted to seeing something offensive online slightly more often than childless adults.

There was little evidence to suggest that offensive content online was preventing people from using the internet at all, nor that it was restricting use among users. Only 4% of people claimed that they had stopped visiting sites they would otherwise go to as a result of having seen something which they considered inappropriate or offensive while using the internet. Table 3b shows how internet users in general and the user segments had reacted to seeing offensive content:

**Table 3b Reaction to seeing inappropriate or offensive content on the internet in the last 12 months**

	All internet users	Segment 1 Basic users	Segment 2 Mainstream users	Segment 3 Advanced users
Base (unwtd) Internet users who have seen something offensive in past 12 months	361	195	103	63
	%	%	%	%
Did nothing	57	55	57	65
Changed my preferences when using a search engine to filter out this type of material	8	9	10	5
Reported offensive material – e.g. to website owner/chatroom moderator	6	6	2	11
Installed software to filter out spam email	4	6	4	2
Stopped visiting certain sites	4	5	5	1
Deleted it	4	3	4	4
Closed the page/site/email	3	2	6	3
Changed my privacy settings to restrict access to my details e.g. on a social network site	2	3	5	2
Reported offensive material to IT department/network administrator/school/college	1	3	2	-
Blocked it/the sender	1	1	2	2
Requested that offensive material be taken down from the website or chatroom	1	1	1	3

Interestingly, those with most knowledge and experience of the internet were least likely to react to seeing something offensive online by installing protective software or changing their settings, probably because many were already using these protective tools. They were, however, more likely than other users to report the offending material to a website owner or chatroom moderator.

65% of advanced users did nothing, compared with 57% of mainstream and 55% of basic users. However, the advanced group does include a high proportion of younger people and men - the demographic groups which were the least likely to feel 'extremely offended' by seeing such content online.

## 4 Attitudes towards regulation of the internet

In this section we will look at how confident internet users feel about their own ability to avoid seeing content they find inappropriate or offensive. We will also explore awareness and use of the various tools which can help prevent internet users being unintentionally exposed to this type of content.

### 4.1 Confidence in own ability to avoid seeing inappropriate content

All internet users were asked: *'How confident are you that you are able to use the internet without seeing content that you personally find inappropriate or offensive?'* taking their answer from a five-point scale:

**Table 4a How confident able to use internet without seeing inappropriate or offensive content**

	All internet users	Men	Women	Seen offensive material	Not seen offensive material
Base (unwtd)	1339	633	706	414	925
	%	%	%	%	%
Very confident	41	48	34	30	46
Quite confident	41	37	45	42	41
Neither confident nor unconfident	10	7	12	14	8
Not very confident	6	5	7	10	5
Not at all confident	2	2	2	4	1
TOTAL CONFIDENT	82	85	79	72	87

Overall, 82% of users claimed to be confident that they could avoid seeing offensive content on the internet, although only 41% were 'very' confident about this. Women were less confident than men, and those who had seen offensive content in the last 12 months were less confident that they could avoid it in the future than those who had not seen material of this nature. Confidence was also related positively to the frequency and duration of internet usage and to the level of both claimed and actual expertise - 57% of those who claimed to be very knowledgeable and 50% of those in the Advanced user group said they were 'very confident'. There was little difference in confidence by age group, social grade or level of education.

## 4.2 Awareness and usage of tools to help prevent seeing inappropriate or offensive internet content

Internet users were asked which, if any, tools to help prevent users seeing inappropriate or offensive content they knew about before the interview. Those internet users who were aware of any tools were then asked which they personally used at home.

**Table 4b: Tools which people can use to help prevent seeing inappropriate or offensive content**

	<b>All internet users</b>	<b>Home internet users aware of any tools</b>
Base (unwtd)	1339	1122
	%	%
	<b>Knew about this tool before</b>	<b>Use this tool at home</b>
Software to filter out spam email	69	54
Parental control software	59	16
Search engine filter settings	45	25
Child friendly Internet Service Providers	36	8
Website rating systems	30	15
Anti-virus systems (spontaneous)	*	1
Other answers	1	1
None of these	8	12
Don't know	3	12

Over two thirds of all internet users were aware of the existence of software to filter out spam emails and over half of home internet users said they used this tool at home. Nearly six in ten users were aware of parental control software, reflecting the publicity that has been given to this tool in recent years. However, only 26% of users with children under 15 in the household actually used this type of software.

Although 45% of internet users claimed to be aware of the existence of search engine settings such as Safesearch, which can filter out certain types of unwanted material, only one in four home internet users were using these settings at home. Similarly, claimed awareness of child-friendly ISPs and website rating systems

was much higher than actual home usage. Interestingly, men were much more likely than women to be aware of the existence of search engine settings (53% v. 36%) and also to say they used this tool (31% v. 19%); although for other tools men and women gave similar responses.

Awareness of all the tools was consistently higher among certain groups: ABC1s, compared with lower social grades; those educated to degree level; white respondents; high frequency and heavy internet users; and those claiming to be highly knowledgeable and/or in the advanced segmentation group for internet activities. However, there were few differences between social, racial and educational groups in actual usage - only those with high levels of internet usage or expertise were generally more likely to say they used the tools.

### **4.3 Whether internet users would like more information about tools they can use to avoid seeing inappropriate or offensive content**

All internet users were asked whether they would like to have more information about the tools that people can use to help them avoid seeing inappropriate or offensive content on the internet. Perhaps surprisingly, in view of the generally low level of usage of most of the tools, only 25% of users said that they would like more information. This proportion was higher among BME respondents (44%) and among those with children in the household (36% with children 0-15 and 38% with children 0-9). It was also, as might be expected, higher among users who had seen offensive material in the last 12 months (33%), especially those who had seen content which was sexually explicit, violent or hostile to specific groups in society (38%). Users in the Advanced segmentation group and those who claimed to be most knowledgeable about the internet were the least likely to say they would like more information (17%), which may be because they are already well aware of them.

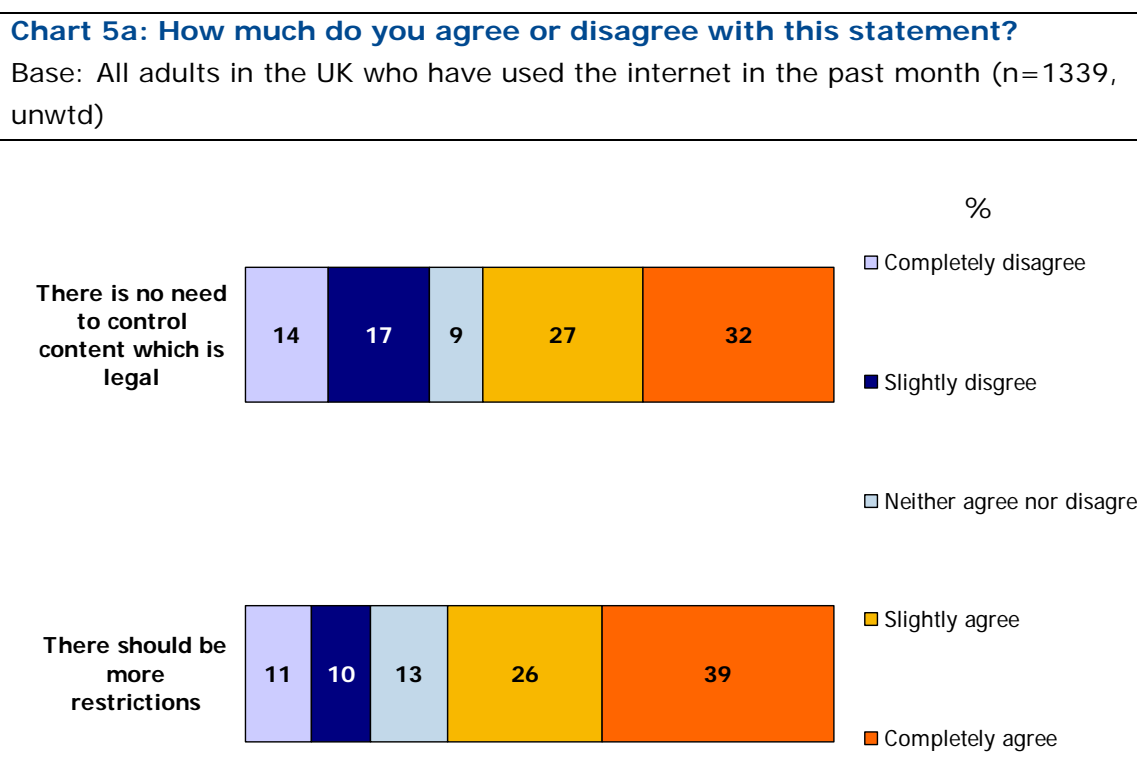
Those who would welcome more information about these tools were also asked who they would expect to provide it. By far the most common response was my Internet Service Provider (56%), followed by the Government (28%), software providers (18%), search engines (15%) and computer retailers (12%). A small proportion of respondents mentioned an industry body (9%), my computer manufacturer (8%) or Ofcom (6%). There was little variation in responses to this question across the various sub-groups.

## 5 Attitudes towards control of internet content

In this section we report the views expressed by internet users on imposing some control on the content of the internet, which measures they would like to see introduced, and who they feel should be responsible.

### 5.1 Attitudes towards the control of internet content

Statements about the control of internet content were read out, in a random order, and internet users were asked to say how much they agreed or disagreed with each statement, using a five-point scale. The responses are displayed in the chart below.



Generally there was a substantial level of support among users for measures to control internet content. Sixty-five per cent agreed, 39% 'completely', with a restrictive approach involving the removal of offensive content: *'There should be more restrictions on what is available on the internet – content that many people find offensive should be removed'*. However, a similar proportion, 60% overall and 32% 'completely', agreed that *'There is no need to control internet content which is legal – people should take responsibility themselves for avoiding material they find offensive or inappropriate'*.

On the face of it, there seems to be some contradiction here between the widespread approval expressed for the removal of content which is offensive to many and the level of agreement with the second statement, which implies that

no such controls should be applied. People may well, of course, hold contradictory views about the difficult issue of control v. individual freedom, particularly when faced with a topic about which they may not have thought about very deeply up to that point.

An additional possible explanation for this seeming paradox is that while many people don't like the fact that there are offensive words and pictures on the internet and would prefer that such content was not there, nor do they like the idea of placing actual legal restrictions on the internet. So some individuals may hold the somewhat contradictory view that they'd like to get rid of offensive words and images from the internet - but without subjecting the internet to legal controls.

Those most in favour of restrictions on internet content tended to be the people with least knowledge and experience of the internet: women, older age groups, lower social grades, and lower levels of educational achievement. There was however very little difference in the responses to these questions between those who had and had not recently seen offensive material themselves.

**Table 4c Attitudes towards control of internet content - % who agree with statement**

	<b>All internet users</b>	<b>Basic users</b>	<b>Mainstream users</b>	<b>Advanced users</b>
Base (unwtd)	1339	904	308	127
	%	%	%	%
There should be more restrictions on what is available on the internet – content that many people find offensive should be removed	65	73	56	39
There is no need to control internet content which is legal – people should take responsibility themselves for avoiding material they find offensive or inappropriate	60	56	63	72

## **5.2 Whether views are influenced by impact of controls on own use of internet**

All internet users except those who had agreed there was no need to control legal internet content at the previous question were asked if they would welcome more restrictions on internet content, even if this had consequences for their own use of the internet.

Among the 31% of users who were not opposed to controls, the majority indicated that they would still welcome more control of the internet 'even if this increased the cost and reduced the speed of access' when they themselves used

the internet (62%) and 'even if it restricted their own access to certain types of material which are perfectly legal' (65%). Again it was basic users and those who were least knowledgeable and confident about using the internet who were most in favour of introducing controls, even if this meant an increase in cost, reduced speed of access and restrictions on their own access to legal material on the internet.

### 5.3 Who should be responsible for more control over internet content

All internet users were asked to say, if there were to be more control over internet content, who they thought should be responsible for this. There was a wide range of suggestions made. The response most frequently given – by 37% - was Internet Service Providers, followed by the Government (23%), website managers (15%), Ofcom (11%), website users when they generate content (10%), an industry body (9%) and the police (6%).

### 5.4 Which measures would like to see introduced

Internet users were then prompted with five different measures that might be contemplated if there were to be more control over internet content in the UK, and asked which, if any, they would like to see introduced. Overall responses are shown in Table 4d, together with the responses for each of the internet use segmentation groups.

**Table 4d Which measures would like to see introduced**

	<b>All internet users</b>	<b>Basic users</b>	<b>Mainstream users</b>	<b>Advanced users</b>
Base (unwtd)	1339	904	308	126
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
An age certification system for UK websites similar to that used for films or video games	52	49	56	57
A voluntary code of conduct for UK website owners, by which they agree to classify and label content of their website	34	31	40	39
A voluntary code of conduct for UK internet service providers, by which they agree to block access to websites which contain some types of offensive material, even if they are legal	28	29	32	17
A voluntary code of conduct for UK website owners, by which they agree to remove some types of offensive material within a time-frame	28	27	30	30
All user generated content screened	27	30	25	12

before being put online to prevent offensive or inappropriate content appearing on UK websites				
None of these	<1	<1	<1	<1

Over half of all internet users would support an age certification system for UK websites, similar to that used for films or video games, while a third would be in favour of a voluntary code by which UK website owners agreed to classify and label the content of their website. A slightly lower proportion – just over a quarter – would welcome each of the other three measures suggested: a voluntary code for UK ISPs, by which they agree to block access to websites which contain some types of offensive material, even if they are legal ; a voluntary code for UK website owners, by which they agree to remove some types of offensive material within a certain time-frame; and all user generated content being screened before being put online to prevent inappropriate or offensive content appearing on UK websites. Less than 1% of respondents were in favour of none of these measures.

There were very few variations in response by sub-group, including by whether or not offensive material had actually been seen. However, on two of the measures – the blocking of websites with offensive material by ISPs, and the screening of user-generated content before it is released – users with advanced skills and knowledge of the internet were much less supportive than other users.

### 5.5 Who should be responsible for deciding which websites to block

The final question in the survey asked: *'If internet service providers were to block access to websites which contain some types of offensive material even if they are legal, who do you think should decide which sites should be blocked?'*

As with the previous question about who should be responsible for control over internet content, a wide range of responses was received. There was no clear favourite but, again, the answer most frequently given was Internet Service Providers (27%). Second in line was again the Government (20%), closely followed by Ofcom (19%), website users who generate content (16%), website managers (12%), an industry body (12%), and the police (10%).



## **Appendix A      Explanation of segmentation**

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BMRB's existing Internet Monitor report was used as a starting point for the segmentation. The Internet Monitor report provided statistics showing the proportion of internet users carrying out various activities online, allowing us to distinguish between activities done online which are carried out by a high proportion of internet users and those which can be considered more specialist, thus setting apart more sophisticated internet users. Points were allocated for each different activity a respondent had done on the internet in the past year. Most activities carried one point but the activities which are attributed to more sophisticated users carried 2 points. The distribution of points was in the range of 0-24, and so three segments were created: 0-8 points [basic users], 9-16 [mainstream users] and 17-24 [advanced users]. Naturally this led to a segmentation resulting in a high number of internet users in the first segment of least advanced users, a slightly smaller second group of mainstream users and a small minority of users in the third, highly advanced, group. The only adjustment made to the segmentation which fell out naturally was that the smallest group of most sophisticated internet users was expanded slightly to provide a large enough base size for analysis. This did not change the character or profile of this segment.

## Appendix B

### Methodology

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BMRB interviewed 2,088 adults between March 12<sup>th</sup> and March 18<sup>th</sup> 2009. Respondents in Great Britain were interviewed as part of BMRB's face-to-face omnibus survey. Omnibus surveys are carried out on a continuous basis by BMRB and each omnibus questionnaire consists of a number of surveys on different topics submitted by a variety of clients. A typical omnibus interview lasts for an hour in total. Although the omnibus survey covers those aged 15 or over, for this particular project 15 year-olds were not asked the survey questions because the project's objective was to explore the attitudes of those aged 16 or over (as opposed to children) to internet content.

BMRB's omnibus survey sample is fully representative of the GB population thanks to its random location sampling technique. This is a single-stage sample design, taking as its universe Sample Units, a bespoke amalgamation of Output Areas (OA's – the basic building block used for output from the 2001 Census) in Great Britain. Sample Units have an average size of 300 households. OA's are grouped into Sample Units within ward and taking account of their ACORN characteristics.

Quotas are applied requiring a certain number of interviews among men working full time and women working full time or part time. Quotas are also set for the following age groups: 15-34, 35-54, 55+.

Our random location sampling differs from conventional quota sampling in that the choice of location is taken from the hands of the interviewer. Instead of being given an area to work in, interviewers are provided with street lists with specific addresses. The use of ACORN strata ensures that all area types are correctly represented, making social class quotas unnecessary. The quota controls used are designed to correct for the variation in 'likelihood of being at home' between the different groups.

The omnibus survey covers only the British population, so for this survey an ad hoc boost of individuals in Northern Ireland was added to achieve a representative sample of UK adults.

The omnibus data are weighted to ensure that demographic profiles match those for all adults in United Kingdom aged 15 or over. A rim weighting technique is used in which target profiles are set for eight separate demographic variables. The computer system then allocates a weight to each individual such that the overall composition of the sample is balanced in terms of the targets set.

The actual weights applied thus vary slightly between surveys; precise figures for specific cases are available from BMRB if required.

**Target Weights Applied:**

<b>Sex 1:</b>	%
Men	48.60
Women without children	32.60
Women with children	18.80

<b>Sex 2:</b>	%
Men working full time	25.06
Men not working full time	23.54
Women working at all	23.12
Women not working at all	28.28

<b>Age</b>	Men%	Women%
15 - 24	8.28	7.86
25 - 34	7.75	7.80
35 - 44	9.09	9.27
45 - 54	7.91	8.08
55 - 64	7.08	7.36
65+	8.48	11.04

<b>Social Grade</b>	Men%	Women%
AB	13.56	12.64
C1	13.25	15.65
C2	11.11	9.71
D	7.41	8.25
E	3.27	5.15

<b>Standard Region</b>	%
Scotland	8.42
North West	10.47
North	5.09
Yorks/Humber	8.45
East Midlands	7.19
East Anglia	3.85
South East	18.97
Greater London	12.49
South West	8.57
Wales	4.91
West Midlands	8.82
Northern Ireland	2.77

*(Source of profile data: BMRB Target Group Index, 2007 and NRS, 2007)*

## Appendix C

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### Questions asked of all omnibus study participants for demographic classification purposes

#### **SEX:**

ASK 'PLEASE CODE THE SEX OF THE PERSON YOU ARE ABOUT TO INTERVIEW'

RESP SP       'Male' /  
                  'Female'

#### DISPLAY

'My questionnaire is made up of a number of different sections covering a wide range of topics. Some of the sections are more relevant to particular age groups. So, to avoid wasting your time, I'd like to start by asking your age last birthday'

ASK 'TYPE IN THE RESPONDENTS AGE(The respondent must be aged 15 or over)

ASK 'RESPONDENTS AGE WAS NOT GIVEN.

PLEASE ESTIMATE AGE GROUP AND CODE BELOW'

RESP SP       '15-19'  
                  '20-24'  
                  '25-34'  
                  '35-44'  
                  '45-54'  
                  '55-64'  
                  '65 or over'

ASK: 'Thinking about all the items bought from supermarkets and food shops for your household, which best describes the extent you personally select which items are bought?'

'All or almost all of what is bought'/  
'More than half'/  
'About half'/  
'Less than half'/  
'A tenth or less'/  
'None or almost none of what is bought'

### **SURVEY SECTIONS NORMALLY PLACED HERE**

DISPLAY 'For classification purposes, I now need to ask some questions about yourself'

#### **NO PPLE**

ASK 'How many people are there living in this household, including yourself?(INTERVIEWER: If more than code 10 people code 10)'

RESP NUM 1 TO 10 DK

#### **MLWORK**

DEFINE

'Full-time (30+ hours)'  
'Part-time (8-29 hours)'  
'Part-time (Under 8 hrs)'

'Retired from full time job'  
'Other'

**MLREL**  
DEFINE

'Husband/Wife/Partner'  
'Step) Mother/Father'  
'Mother/Father-in-law'  
'Grand-mother/father'  
'Sister/Brother'  
'Sister/Brother-in-law'  
'Son/Daughter'  
'Son/Daughter-in-law'  
'Grand-son/daughter'  
'Nephew/Niece'  
'Other relative'  
'Non-relative'

**MPERS**  
DEFINE

'Respondent'  
'2nd Person'  
'3rd Person'  
'4th Person'  
'5th Person'  
'6th Person'  
'7th Person'  
'8th Person'  
'9th Person'  
'10th Person'

**THHGD5**  
DISPLAY

Who is the person in the household who is mainly responsible for the household shopping and cooking?

**MARRY**

ASK Which of these describes you?

'Single' /  
'Married/Living as a couple' /  
'Widowed' /  
'Divorced' /  
'Separated' DK

**ENG**

ASK Are you engaged or planning to get married?

RESP SP 'Yes' /  
'No' NULL

COMMENT \*\* IF: All who married/Living as a couple \*\*

IF ( MARRY = 'Married/Living as a couple' ) {

**LONGMAR**

ASK How long is it since you were first married or first living as a couple?

RESP SP 'Less than 1 year'  
'1-4 years'  
'5-9 years'  
'10-19 years'  
'20 years or more' NULL

**TERMED**

ASK At what age did you finish your full time education?

LCLASS1 DEFINE

'Up to 10'  
'11-12'  
'13-14'  
'15'  
'16'  
'17'  
'18'  
'19'  
'20'  
'21'  
'22'  
'23'  
'24 or more'  
'Still Studying'

**HIGHED**

ASK What is the highest level of education which you have achieved?

'No formal schooling/incomplete primary education'  
'Primary education completed'  
'A few years of secondary education'  
'Completed secondary education'  
'High school education completed'  
'Further qualification (between high school and university)'  
'University degree (Bachelors/Masters)'  
'Doctorate level or professional equivalent'  
'Still Studying'

**CAR**

ASK Do you (or does anyone else in your household) have a car or van which is used for PRIVATE motoring?

'Yes'  
'No' DK

**livacca**

ASK I would just like to code whether you live in ...

resp sp 'House/Bungalow'  
'Flat/Maisonette'

**TENTEN**

ASK Which one of these statements applies to your home?

RESP SP 'Owned with a mortgage/loan'  
'Owned outright'  
'Rented from the Council'

'Rented from someone else'  
'Rent-free from the council'  
'Rent-free from someone else' NULL

**LONGLIV**

ASK

How long have you (or your household) been living in this home?

RESP SP      'Less than a year'  
                 '1-4 years'  
                 '5-9 years'  
                 '10-19 years'  
                 '20 years or more' NULL

ASK    Which member of your household would you say is the Chief Income Earner, that is the person with the largest income whether from employment, pensions, state benefits, investments or any other sources?

**SG1**

ASK    COLLECT OCCUPATION DETAILS OF RESPONDENT

What type of firm or organisation do you work for? (DESCRIBE TYPE OF FIRM INCLUDING WHAT THE FIRM OR ORGANISATION MAKES OR DOES)'

**SG2**

ASK    What job do you do?

**SG7**

ASK    Does (*chief income earner*).have a paid job full or part-time?

**SG8**

ASK    Please tell me which of these describe you (*chief income earner*). Just read out the letter.

'A.Retired gets pension from previous job'  
'B.Unemployed 2 months or less'  
'C.Sick - still receiving pay or statutory pay from job'  
'D.Widow receiving pension from husband''s previous job'  
'E.Divorced/separated receiving maintenance from ex-husband'  
'F.Full-time student'  
'G.Not working - with private means'  
'H.Unemployed more than 2 months'  
'I.Only receive income support' /  
'J.Receiving state pension only' ref dk

**SG9**

ASK    'NOW COLLECT DETAILS OF. What type of firm or organisation interviewee (*chief income earner*) works for? DESCRIBE TYPE OF FIRM INCLUDING WHAT THE FIRM OR ORGANISATION MAKES OR DOES.'

**SG10**

ASK    What job do you (*does this person*) do?

**ciese**

ASK Are you (*is this person*) an employee or self employed?

**SG11**

ASK Do you (*does this person*) have any position, rank or grade in the organisation (ie responsible for the work of other people)?

PROMPT AS APPROPRIATE : Foreman, Sergeant, Office Manager, Executive Officer etc.'

**SG11C**

ASK 'TYPE IN DETAILS OF POSITION/RANK/GRADE'

**SG12**

ASK Roughly how many people work at your (*work at this person's*) work place including yourself (*themselves*)?

**SG13**

ASK For how many people are you (*is this person*) responsible?

**SG14**

ASK Do you (*does this person*) have any qualifications relating to this job?

PROMPT AS APPROPRIATE : Apprenticeship, professional qualifications, university degrees, diplomas etc.'

**INTERNET**

ASK 'Have you personally used any electronic online services such as the Internet within the last month? This might have been for any activity; for example communicating with others, obtaining information, playing games or performing transactions.

This includes using the internet through any device (e.g. computer, mobile phone, PDA, television).

If your only activity is that you have used email from a work computer that does not allow you to visit web-sites, please answer "No- e-mail from a work computer only".

**ONLINE**

ASK 'Which of these have you personally used in the last month?'

RESP MP 'Internet at work' /  
'Internet at school/college/university' /  
'Internet in a cafe, bar or library' /  
'Internet at home on a computer' /  
'Internet at home on a game console' /  
'Internet on a mobile phone (e.g. WAP)' /  
'Internet on a palmtop or Personal Digital Assistant (PDA)'/  
'Internet through TV'/  
'Internet from a friend's or relatives house'/  
'Internet from an Internet Kiosk' /  
'Internet from somewhere else' NULL DK

## Appendix D Statistical Confidence Limits

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Statistical confidence in the data is calculated in terms of a standard error which would relate to a survey result if it had been derived from a strict random sample, together with a design effect (the design factor squared) which relates statistical accuracy to the survey methods used.

### Design Factor

The design factor varies, even within one survey, according to the statistic being considered, and so only an estimate for general use can be given here. For face-to-face surveys, the size of the design factor depends on the degree of clustering in the sample. This in turn depends on the unweighted size of the sample or subgroup, and the number of weeks over which data were collected:

#### Unweighted Sample Size

	250	500	750	1,000	1,500	2,000	3,000	4,000	5,000	6,000
<u>Weeks</u>										
1	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.3				
2	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.3		
3	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.3

Subgroups of all adults in a geographic region are an exception to this pattern; in this case the design factor is the same as for the total sample.

### Standard Error

Once the design effect has been obtained from the squared Design Factor, it may be used to calculate the effective sample size:

$$\text{Effective sample size} = \frac{\text{Actual sample size}}{\text{Design Effect}}$$

The standard error for a percentage p is then calculated as:

$$\sqrt{\frac{p \times (100-p)}{\text{Effective sample size}}}$$

The 95% confidence interval for a percentage is  $\pm 2$  times the standard error. To test whether the difference between two percentages p and q, based on

effective sample sizes of m and n, is significant, calculate:

$$\pm 2 \sqrt{\frac{p \times (100-p)}{m} + \frac{q \times (100-q)}{n}}$$

The actual difference observed should only be considered significant with 95% confidence if it exceeds the result of this formula.

### **Accuracy of results at 95% level**

Classical probability theory allows us to quote margins of error ('the 95% confidence interval') for each statistic. Strictly speaking, these margins of error are only applicable to samples compiled using random methods.

The sample design for this survey is a hybrid form in which census output areas are sampled using random methods but the sampling of individuals within these areas does not rely on random methods. Consequently, the use of confidence intervals with samples of this type rests upon two key assumptions:

- (1) samples compiled using this hybrid form will exhibit the same variance as those produced by random methods;
- (2) the sampling methods employed *within* each census output area will produce samples that are as representative as those produced by random methods.

Assumption (1) is reasonable and testable. Assumption (2) may be reasonable but it is impossible to determine *how* reasonable for any one survey.

These assumptions should be borne in mind when using the table overleaf.

## UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE SIZE

*(For total sample or sub-groups but not regional sub samples conducted over a single week)*

		2,000	1,500	1,000	750	500	300	200	100
<b>Percentage of respondents</b>	<b>Design Factor</b>	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
10%		±2	±2	±2	±2	±3	±3	±4	±6
20%		±2	±2	±3	±3	±4	±5	±6	±8
25%		±2	±3	±3	±3	±4	±5	±6	±8
40%		±3	±3	±3	±4	±5	±6	±7	±10
50%		±3	±3	±4	±4	±5	±6	±7	±10
60%		±3	±3	±3	±4	±5	±6	±7	±10
75%		±2	±3	±3	±3	±4	±5	±6	±8
80%		±2	±2	±3	±3	±4	±5	±6	±8
90%		±2	±2	±2	±2	±3	±3	±4	±6

For example, if 20% of a total sample of 1,000 adults said they do something, you can be 95% certain that the figure for the population lies between 17% and 23%.