

## Who shops online?

### Background

The following information is taken from the **Canny Consumers? Are consumers standing up for their rights?** research published by the Consumer Council in August 2012. To see the full report visit:

<http://www.consumercouncil.org.uk/publications/>

### **Online shopping in Northern Ireland**

1 in 3 (37 per cent) of NI consumers now shop online at least once a month. This represents a 21 per cent increase since 2007 and a 32 per cent increase since 2003.

Levels of online shopping are likely to have risen as a result of increased ownership of online applications (e.g. computers, tablets, Smartphone's etc), as well as greater levels of internet access.

### **UK Online Shoppers**

The report found that eight in ten UK internet users (79 per cent) said they had ordered goods or services online in 2010, higher than any other European country.

Source: <http://media.ofcom.org.uk/2011/12/14/uk-consumers-are-a-nation-of-online-shoppers/>

Groceries are the third most popular category bought online, after travel and books.

Source: <http://www.nielsen.com/uk/en/insights/press-room/2012/three-quarters-of-uk-consumers-use-the-internet-for-grocery-shop.html>

### **Broadband take-up:**

Overall, 69 per cent of homes in Northern Ireland have a broadband connection (fixed or mobile), compared to a UK average of 76 per cent.

Less than half (44 per cent) of over 55's in Northern Ireland had access to broadband services, compared to the equivalent UK average of 59 per cent.

Source: Ofcom (2<sup>nd</sup> July 2013), Communications Market Report: Northern Ireland

Since 2008, broadband connection in NI has risen from 52 per cent, making NI second only to England among the UK nations for broadband take-up.

Source: 2011 Communications Report for Northern Ireland, Ofcom

***By age:***

Levels of shopping online in 2011, were highest amongst those aged 25-34 (58 per cent)

21 per cent of 45-54 year olds shop online

26 per cent of 55-64 year olds shop online

Levels of online shopping were lowest amongst older people aged 65+ (10 per cent)

82 per cent of 65+ year olds do not shop online at all

***By income:***

Those living on a higher income (56 per cent) shop online at least once a month.

24 per cent of those with lower household incomes shop online.

64 per cent of consumers suggested that since the economic downturn they have changed their consumer purchasing behaviour. The vast majority (9 in 10) suggested that they now make greater effort to compare prices before making a big or important purchase.

***By location:***

Previous research conducted by the Consumer Council in 2010 showed that many rural consumers were disadvantaged due to lack of internet access. However this latest research shows there are as many rural (14 per cent) consumers shopping online as there were urban (13 per cent). This might be an indication of the improved broadband network which has received significant investment.

***Why shop online?***

61 per cent of online shoppers mention convenience as the main reason for shopping online.

Over half (54 per cent) mention online prices as a benefit.

About a third say the range of choice available is the main reason for shopping online.

Interestingly, the reason for online shopping's benefits according to gender. 66 per cent of women mention convenience as a major benefit compared to 57 per cent of men.

In contrast, 59 per cent of men mentioned price as the greatest benefit compared to 48 per cent of women.

1 in 10 consumers check previous customer feedback before making a purchase.

9 in 10 consumers now make a greater effort to compare prices before making a big or important purchase.

### ***Problems shopping online***

Internet users in Northern Ireland are more likely than all UK users to have suffered a negative experience online in the past 12 months (80 per cent vs. 66 per cent).

Source: Ofcom, UK Report, July 2012.

### ***Consumer Rights and Advice***

41 per cent of consumers use the internet as a mean of sourcing general consumer rights advice.

There has been a slight decrease in the number of consumers who feel very or fairly well informed about their consumer rights compared to four years ago (52 per cent in 2011 compared to 63 per cent in 2007).

22 per cent of survey respondents would not know where to go for expert consumer advice, if they had a problem with a goods or services they'd bought.

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### **Curriculum Links:**

(GCSE) Effective Consumer – Barriers that prevent individuals + Distance Selling Regulations 2000

(GCSE) What influences shopping? factors that influence + evaluate shopping options (internet)

(GCSE) Task option 1 – Investigate the use of the internet as a method of shopping for families