Survey points up challenges for a Digital Britain

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Most of those surveyed said the internet could be addictive.

In the wake of Lord Carter's Digital Britain Report, an Oxford survey shows that one of the main challenges will be to change the perceptions of the third of the British population who choose not to use the internet.

The Oxford Internet Survey (OxIS) 2009, published today, shows that while most British internet users (84 per cent) are extremely confident about using new technology and see the internet as central to many activities, over half of non-users of the internet (57 per cent) now distrust new technology more than they did before.

The survey, conducted by the Oxford Internet Institute, questioned 2,000 people in 2009 and found that cost, a lack of access and a lack of interest were the main reasons that led to people deciding to stop using the internet. OxIS 2009 provides a detailed breakdown of where the digital divide lies: twice as many people from higher than lower socio-economic groups use the internet.

Age too has a dramatic impact on digital choices with the proportion of internet users between 25-54 increasing considerably since 2003, but not changing significantly for other age groups. The proportion of retired people going online has inched forward from 30 per cent in 2005 to 34 per cent in 2009.

However, the gap between male and female users has nearly closed with 71 per cent of men and 68 per cent women now using the internet gaps in self-confidence between men and women however remain. 100 per cent of students and 88 per cent of households with children said they had access to the internet.

The 'Digital Britain Report' contains pledges to provide universal access to a broadband connection, but according to Principal Investigator of OxIS 2009 Professor William Dutton, the main challenge is to persuade those who choose to exclude themselves. 'Digital Britain is heavily focused on government investment in infrastructures and pilot projects, supported in part by a tax on fixed copper lines and a governmental 'Digital Delivery Agency. The OxIS 2009 survey indicates that the major issues are neither infrastructures nor innovation. The key concerns are the attitudes and beliefs of individuals uninterested in the internet,' he said.

OII Research Fellow, Dr Ellen Helsper, said: 'While we have known about a digital divide in Britain for some time, this survey gives insight into how we might tackle the problem more efficiently. It is the only

comprehensive survey of this type, providing detailed information about attitudes that different groups in society have towards the internet and why.'

Provided by Oxford University ([news](#) : [web](#))