



Refreshing broadband

You told us you wanted more up-to-date information about broadband, so we've increased our survey's frequency

A CLOSER LOOK AT 'FREE' BROADBAND

Should you take up one of the latest 'free' broadband deals?

In our report 'Online for free', November 2006, p23, we focused on the 'free' broadband bundles from Sky, Orange and TalkTalk. At the time, we couldn't provide satisfaction data for Sky as its service had only just been launched, so we were eager to see how it fared in our latest survey. The results revealed that, compared with our Best Buys, you don't go a bundle on these new packages. Just 21 per cent of Orange customers, 22 per cent of TalkTalk customers and 20 per cent of Sky Broadband customers say they are very satisfied with their service.

Until now, our survey of broadband services has always been an annual affair. But you've told us that sometimes our ratings seem out of date. Which is hardly surprising when internet service providers (ISPs) regularly get taken over and so-called 'free' broadband packages keep being launched by TV and phone companies. So in response to your feedback, we've decided to run our survey twice a year. This is the first of our six-monthly updates – the full results will be in the March issue of *Computing Which?*.

Our last report (see August 2006, p20) awarded Global, Waitrose and Zen Internet Best Buy status, which meant at least 70 per cent of members said they were very satisfied with their overall service. Reassuringly, all three have retained their position. And while Zen received only an average value-for-money rating, its new, cheaper package – 8000 Lite – may improve future

results. Disappointingly, no other services have reached Best Buy status – and, ranked according to how many people were 'very satisfied' with their ISP, well-known providers BT, AOL and NTL came only 17th, 22nd and 24th respectively out of 28 entrants. Across the board, a meagre one third of broadband customers are very satisfied with their providers.

So what are our Best Buys getting right and where are the others going wrong? Well, all three Best Buys received top ratings for customer service. For example, overall only 16 per cent of people rated their ISP's customer service as very good, but for Waitrose alone this figure rises to 71 per cent. Clearly most ISPs could do better in this area, particularly since regulator Ofcom is making it easier for customers to switch services. So unless ISPs want to start losing customers, they need to improve – then we might see a few more Best Buys in our next update in August.

Contacts

Global
0870 909 8100
www.globalnet.co.uk

Ofcom
020 7981 3000
www.ofcom.org.uk

Orange
0800 079 2000
www.orange.co.uk

Sky
0870 551 5515
www.sky.com

TalkTalk
0800 049 1212
www.talktalk.co.uk

Waitrose
0800 980 0018
www.waitrose.com

Zen Internet
0845 058 9000
www.zenbroadband.com

BROADBAND ISPs	PACKAGE DETAILS					WHICH? SURVEY PERFORMANCE			VERY SATISFIED (%)
	PACKAGE	MONTHLY COST (£)	DOWNLOAD SPEED (Mbps)	DOWNLOAD LIMIT (GB)	CONTRACT LENGTH (mth)	VALUE FOR MONEY	CUSTOMER SERVICE	RELIABILITY OF CONNECTION	
1 GLOBAL (35)	Max	20	8	5	12	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	77
2 WAITROSE (184)	Broadband	19	8	5	12	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	76
3 ZEN INTERNET (106)	8000 Lite	18	8	2	1	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	74

USING THE TABLE

The table shows the cheapest package from each Best Buy ISP that is 0.5Mbps or faster. Based on our survey, Best Buys have more than 70 per cent very satisfied customers. Number of

customers surveyed for each ISP is in brackets. The more stars the better.

Package details

Monthly cost Cheapest available package to the nearest £1, excluding any short-term offers.

Download speed The maximum download speed achievable. This can vary, depending on your distance from the exchange and the number of people sharing your connection (called the contention ratio).

Download limit The maximum amount of data you can download each month. An average family is unlikely to download more than 5GB a month – the equivalent of over a thousand, good-quality music tracks.

GET MORE INFO

FREE website access

Details of more than 100 broadband packages are updated monthly at our members-only website. Visit www.which.co.uk/broadband

OUR RESEARCH

In our November 2006 online survey, 12,302 members told us how satisfied they were with their ISP and how they felt about switching.