

BCC: Businesses across the UK hobbled by mobile 'not-spots'

Today the BCC releases the results of its digital survey on mobile connectivity.

12 May 2017

Businesses in all parts of the UK, particularly rural areas, are experiencing full or partial 'not-spots' in their mobile coverage according to the results of a survey released today (Friday) by the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC).

The survey of over 1,400 businesses, found that 70% of firms experience mobile 'non-spots', areas of no mobile coverage by any operator, or 'partial not-spots', where there is some coverage but not from all networks, in their local area.

The findings show the proportion of companies based in rural areas which report such issues (91%) is considerably higher than those in inner cities (56%).

The results also show that 29% of businesses have unreliable mobile internet connections, with the figure rising to 54% in rural areas. The survey found that a considerable proportion of UK businesses are not accessing the highest connection speed, with only 42% of businesses reporting a 4G connection.

Other key findings of the survey are:

- 6% of companies still typically obtain a 2G connection and 25% a 3G connection
- Inner city firms (54%) are more likely to have 4G than those based in rural areas (25%)
- Big businesses are more likely to report 4G connections (57% of businesses with more than 500 employees) than their smaller counterparts (41% with 1-4 employees)

Dr Adam Marshall, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce, said:

"All across the country businesspeople complain about patchy mobile coverage and unreliable internet connections in their local areas. Time and again, I hear from frustrated businesspeople who can't use their mobiles or access the internet when they need to – basic requirements for companies to work on the move, trade online, and connect with customers and suppliers.

"Rural businesses are particularly affected by poor mobile coverage and connectivity, but our research shows that 'not-spots' are prevalent across the UK. It's incredible to hear that in this day and age there are even places in the City of London where businesses can't get reliable coverage.

“Some of the solutions are obvious. Relaxing planning laws to allow for taller masts would be a quick win for the next government to help improve mobile coverage.

“As the regulator, Ofcom must do more to hold providers to account for the services advertised to business customers, and put in place remedies that are as strong for business users as they are for individual consumers. According to their rules, virtually all UK premises must receive 4G signal by the end of the year, but the results of our research suggest that we’re a long way off achieving that target.

“It’s clear that the UK is lagging in the delivery of access to a world-class digital infrastructure. While there have been welcome announcements to roll out 5G in the future, it’s clear that getting all businesses access to 4G first remains a top priority. The Chamber Network’s election manifesto specifically calls for these issues to be rectified, and for the next government to provide all businesses with super-fast and reliable broadband and mobile connectivity to boost confidence and productivity.”

Ends

Notes to editors:

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) surveyed 1,465 business people from all regions of the UK online in January 2017 to understand how businesses rate the overall reliability of their broadband connections, and how a more reliable connection could help their businesses. Of the businesses surveyed, 96% were SMEs, 22% operate in the manufacturing sector, and 78% operate in the services sector.

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) sits at the heart of a powerful network of 52 Accredited Chambers of Commerce across the UK, representing thousands of businesses of all sizes and within all sectors. Our Global Business Network connects exporters with nearly 40 markets around the world. For more information, visit: www.britishchambers.org.uk

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