



Mobiles In The UK

As in most places around the world, mobiles are an essential part of everyday life. Just over 55 million people in a population of around 66 million own a phone, 90% of whom own smartphones. Given the spread of ownership of these mobiles, only around 2% of households live without a mobile phone. Considering the commercial mobile phone was only invented in the 1980's, that's an astonishing number.

In terms of phones, the most popular by far is the Apple iPhone. Around 50% of British mobile owners have an Apple phone. Second in line is Samsung with a market share of almost 29% and third is Huawei with around 7% of the market. Smaller companies, such as Motorola, Google Pixel and Nokia help make up the remaining market share.

In the UK, there are two popular options for mobile phones. You can go on contract or buy your phone outright and a SIM only plan. When choosing your SIM or contract provider, it's really important to consider which is the right one for you. Signal strength varies in different areas across the country and you may find absolutely no signal with one provider but excellent reception with another.

There are only four main networks in the UK: EE, O2, Three and Vodafone. There are numerous other service providers, called Mobile Virtual Network Operators (MVNOs) that "piggyback" off the big four networks. For example, BT Mobile, Virgin Mobile and Plusnet use the EE network while Tesco Mobile and Sky Mobile use O2. The most popular network is EE with around 22% of the market and they also have the highest coverage across the UK.

When going on contract, you can choose to sign with different service providers. These will include a phone as well as various benefits, such as call minutes, a special home and international call rate and an amount of data. You pay a monthly fee to receive all these benefits and tend to be fixed for 12 or 24 months. At the end of your contract you can easily upgrade or change plans. Alternatively, you can buy

a phone outright and select a SIM-only plan, which is a lot cheaper monthly although you'll need to pay the full cost of the phone.

One of the most essential services with a mobile network is the amount of data you have and its speed. You will often hear the terms “3G”, “4G” and “5G” where the G simply stands for “generation”. The increase in numbers represents the evolution of access to the Internet on your mobile. The UK is fairly well connected with around 83% of the country having access to 4G. Since 2019 the world has been working towards 5G and this is slowly being rolled out with only 8% of the UK population having access to this at the time of writing.