

E-commerce statistics for individuals

Statistics Explained

*Data extracted in January 2021.
Planned article update: January 2022.*

This article takes a closer look at the electronic commerce ([e-commerce](#)) of individuals in the [European Union](#) . It is based on the results of the 2020 Survey on [ICT](#) (information and communication technology) usage in households and by individuals.

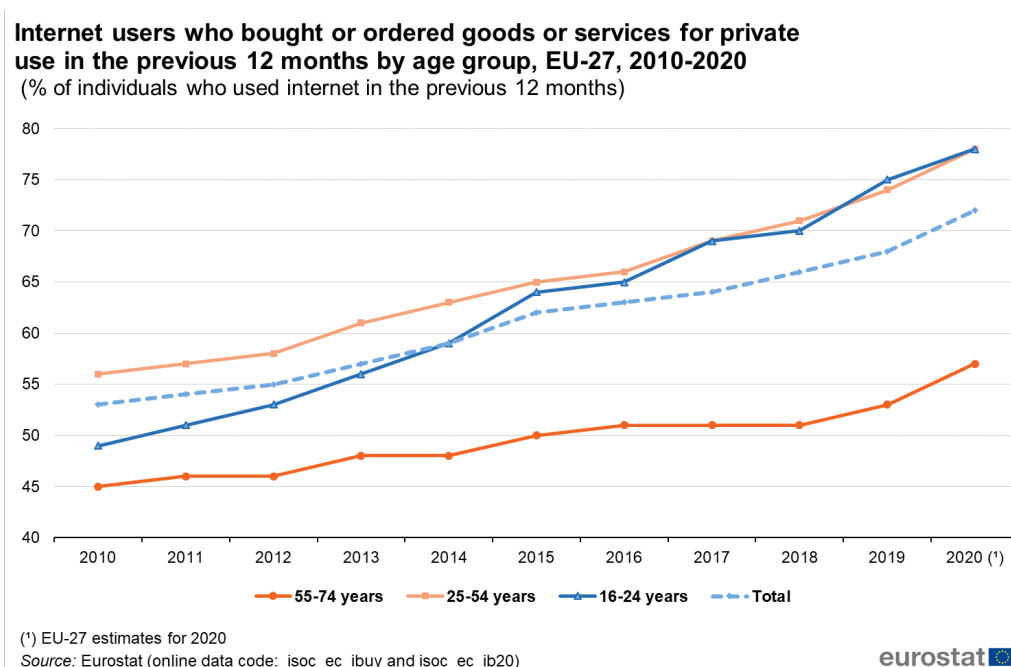


Figure 1: Internet users who bought or ordered goods or services for private use in the previous 12 months by age group, EU-27, 2010-2020 (% of individuals who used internet in the previous 12 months) - Source: Eurostat (isoc_ec_ibuy) and (isoc_ec_ib20)

General overview

In 2020, it is estimated that more than 7 out of 10 internet users from the 12 months prior to the survey (hereafter referred to as "internet users") made online purchases in the same period. Overall, the share of e-shoppers among internet users is growing, with the highest proportions found in the both age groups 16-24 and 25-54 (each 78 %).

The proportion of internet users who shopped online in the 12 months prior to the survey varied considerably across the EU, ranging from 42 % of internet users in Bulgaria to 91 % in the Netherlands. When considering all individuals aged 16-74 in the EU, the share of online shoppers in that group equalled 64%, with Denmark having the highest share (89%), while Bulgaria the lowest (31%).

Internet use and online purchases, 2020

(% of individuals aged 16 to 74)

	Proportion of individuals who:	
	Used internet within the last 12 months	Purchased online within the last 12 months
EU-27 ⁽¹⁾	89	64
Belgium	92	73
Bulgaria	74	31
Czechia	89	72
Denmark	99	89
Germany	95	83
Estonia	90	68
Ireland	92	74
Greece	79	46
Spain	93	63
France ⁽²⁾	91	70
Croatia	80	55
Italy ⁽²⁾	78	38
Cyprus	91	47
Latvia	90	56
Lithuania	84	54
Luxembourg	99	79
Hungary	86	60
Malta	87	63
Netherlands	95	87
Austria	89	66
Poland	85	61
Portugal	79	45
Romania	85	38
Slovenia	88	63
Slovakia	91	62
Finland	97	76
Sweden	97	84
Iceland	99	83
Norway	98	85
Switzerland ⁽²⁾	97	80
United Kingdom	98	90
Montenegro	79	23
North Macedonia ⁽²⁾	82	29
Serbia	79	38
Turkey	78	33
Bosnia and Herzegovina	74	28
Kosovo*	97	46

⁽¹⁾ estimates

⁽²⁾ 2019

(*) This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Source: Eurostat (online data codes: isoc_ci_ifp_iu and isoc_ec_ib20)

eurostat 

Table 1: Internet use and online purchases, 2020 (% of individuals aged 16 to 74) - Source: Eurostat (isoc_ci_ifp_iu) and (isoc_ec_ib20)

The most popular purchases online related to goods in the EU in the 3 months prior to the survey were clothes (including sport clothing), shoes or accessories (64 % of e-buyers), top one among all age groups, followed by deliveries from restaurants, fast-food chains, catering services (29 %), furniture, home accessories or gardening product (28 %) and cosmetics, beauty or wellness products as well as printed books, magazines or newspapers (both 27 %).

In terms of frequency, the highest proportion of e-shoppers made purchases in the three months prior to the survey three to five times (35 %), while 34 % did so once or twice. In terms of amount spent, the highest proportion of e-buyers (46 %) bought goods or services for a total of between EUR 100 to EUR 499. Furthermore, 30 % of e-buyers made purchases from sellers in other EU countries.

E-shopping: biggest increase among young internet users

E-shopping growing steadily, with the biggest increase among young internet users .

Online shopping is very popular in the EU. The proportion of individuals aged 16-74 having shopped on-

line in the 12 months prior to the 2020 survey stood at 64 % (Table 1). Consumers appreciate the convenience of being able to shop anytime anywhere, having access to a broader range of products, comparing prices and sharing their opinion on goods with other consumers.

In the 12 months prior to the survey, 89 % of individuals aged 16 to 74 in the EU had used the internet, 72 % of whom had bought or ordered goods or services for private use. Online purchases by internet users increased by 19 percentage points compared with 2010 (Figure 1).

Those aged 25-54 had the highest share of online shoppers among internet users up to 2018, being joined by the youngest age group (16-24) in 2017. The 16-24 age group overtook the EU average level, surpassing the level of the 25-54 year age group in 2019. In 2020, the two age groups have reached the same level. E-commerce picked up over the 2010-2020 period among all age groups, with individuals aged 16-24 showing the biggest increase (29 percentage points). Over eight in ten internet users in the Netherlands (91 %), Denmark (90 %), Germany (87 %), Sweden (86 %) and Ireland (81 %) had bought or ordered goods or services over the internet in the 12 months prior to the survey (Figure 2). On the other hand, fewer than 50 % had shopped online in Bulgaria (42 %) and Romania (45 %). The largest increases (20 percentage points or more) between 2015 and 2020 were recorded in Romania, Czechia, Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia, Lithuania and Cyprus.

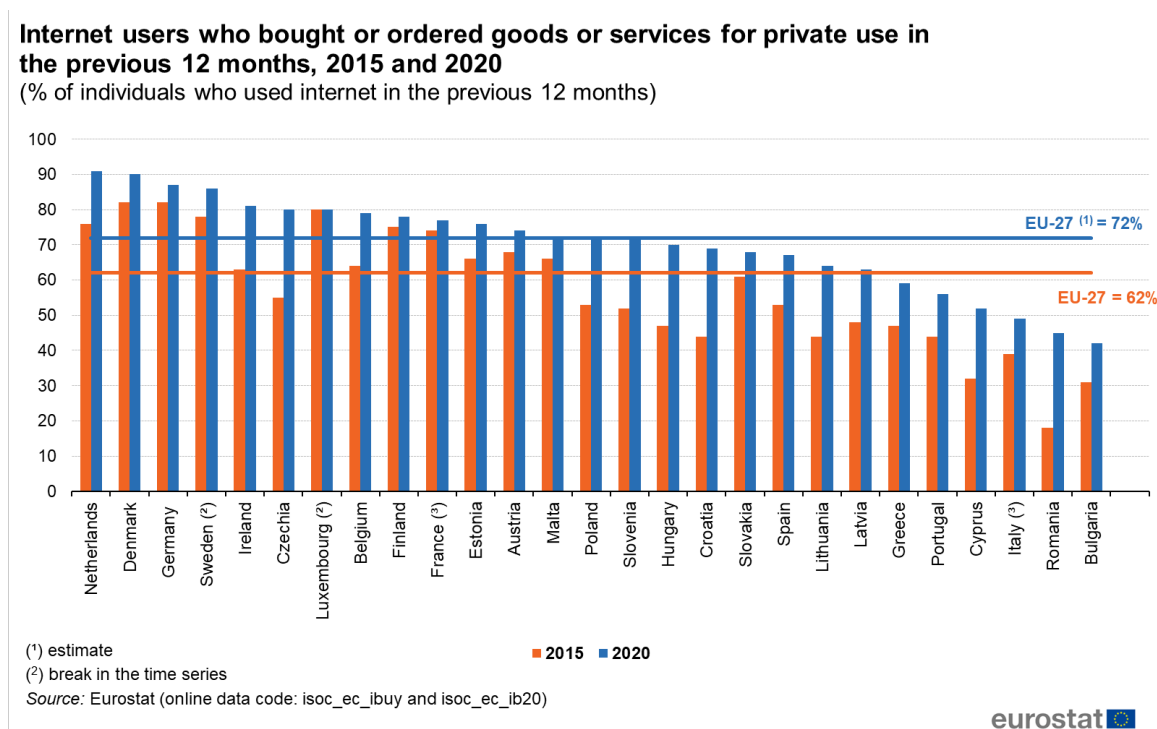


Figure 2: Internet users who bought or ordered goods or services for private use in the previous 12 months, 2015 and 2020 (% of individuals who used internet in the previous 12 months) - Source: Eurostat (isoc_ec_ibuy) and (isoc_ec_ib20)

Gender, age, level of education and employment situation all affect e-commerce activity (Figure 3). For men, the share of online shoppers among internet users was slightly higher than for women (73 % and 71 %, respectively), while people aged 25-34 are more active e-shoppers (84 % of internet users) than other age groups. The proportion of internet users with a higher level of education shopping online (more than eight in ten) is 33 percentage points greater than that of internet users with lower education. Employees and the self-employed (78 % of internet users) as well as students (77 %) shop online far more than unemployed (61 %) or retired/inactive people (55 %).

Internet users who bought or ordered goods or services for private use in the previous 12 months, EU-27⁽¹⁾, 2020

(% of individuals who used internet in the previous 12 months)

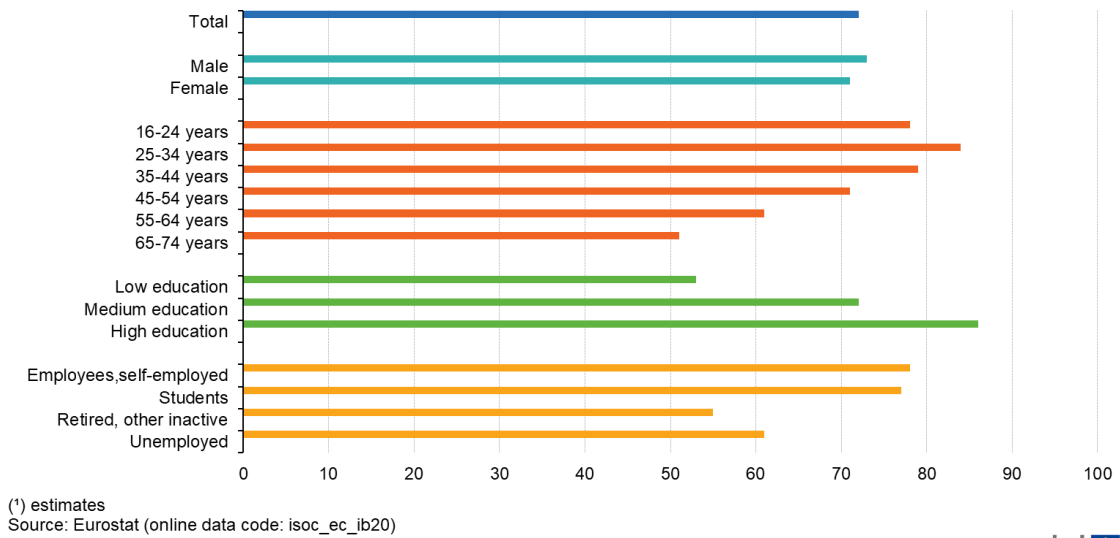


Figure 3: Internet users who bought or ordered goods or services for private use in the previous 12 months, EU-27(1), 2020 (% of individuals who used internet in the previous 12 months) - Source: Eurostat (isoc_ec_ib20)

Most popular online purchases

Figure 4 shows that in the three months prior to the survey, most purchases of goods involved clothes (including sport clothing), shoes or accessories (64 % of e-buyers), deliveries from restaurants, fast-food chains, catering services (29 %), furniture, home accessories or gardening products (28 %), cosmetics, beauty or wellness products (27 %), with at the same level, printed books, magazines or newspapers (27 %) followed by computers, tablets, mobile phones or accessories (26 %) .

Online purchases of goods, EU-27⁽¹⁾, 2020

(% of individuals who bought or ordered goods or services over the internet for private use in the previous 3 months)

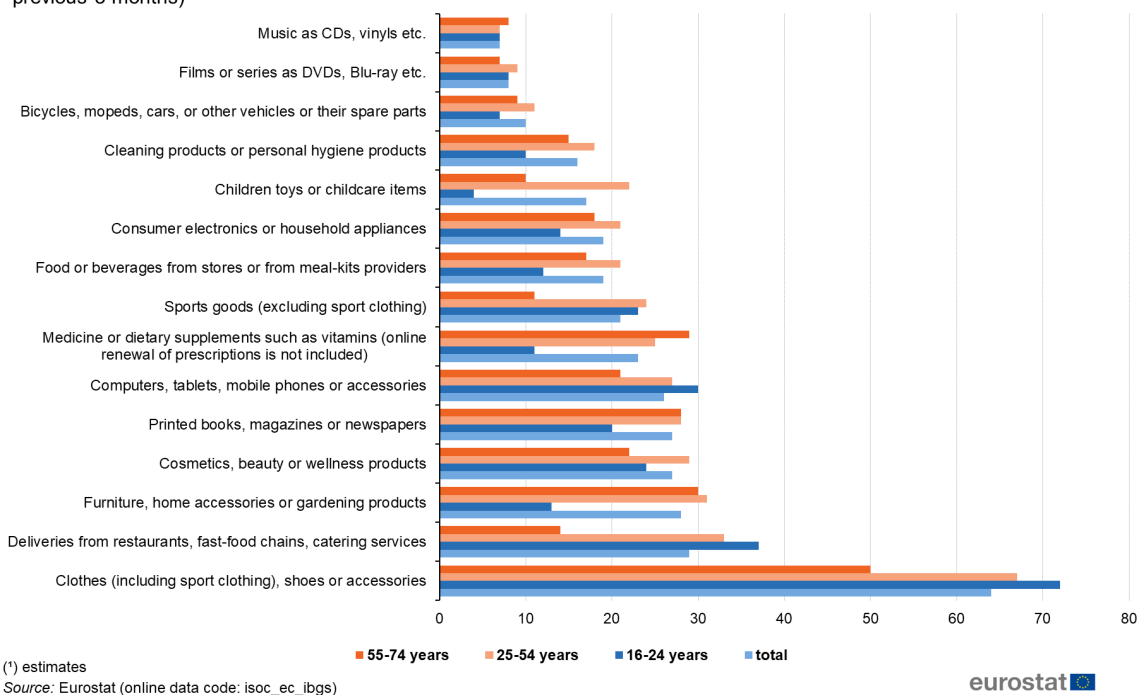


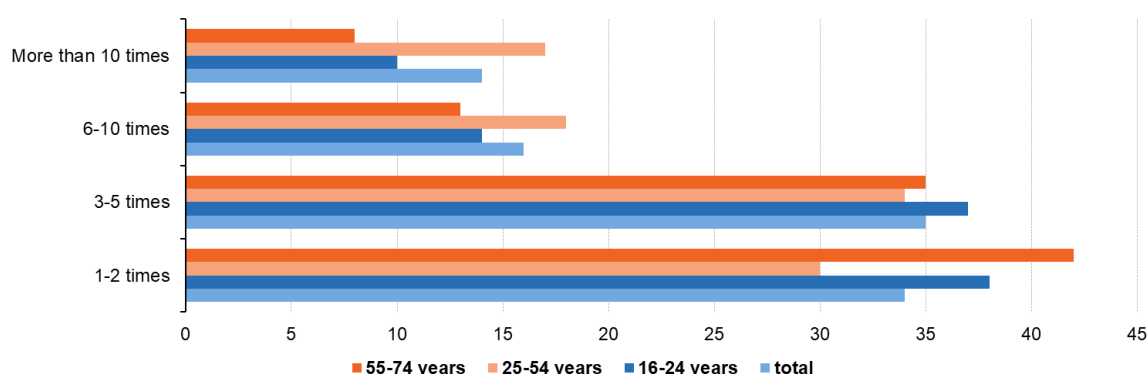
Figure 4: Online purchases of goods, EU-27(1), 2020 (% of individuals who bought or ordered goods or services over the internet for private use in the previous 3 months) - Source: Eurostat (isoc_ec_ibgs)

The 16-24 age-group had the highest proportions of e-shoppers purchasing clothes (including sport clothing), shoes or accessories (72 %), deliveries from restaurants, fast-food chains, catering services (37 %), computers, tablets, mobile phones or accessories (30 %), cosmetics, beauty or wellness products (24 %) and sports goods (excluding sport clothing) (23 %). People aged 25-54 were buying clothes (including sport clothing), shoes or accessories (67 %), deliveries from restaurants, fast-food chains, catering services (33 %), furniture, home accessories or gardening products (31 %), cosmetics, beauty or wellness products (29 %) and printed books, magazines or newspapers (28 %). The older (55-74) age group was also buying clothes (including sport clothing), shoes or accessories (50 %), furniture, home accessories or gardening products (30 %), medicine or dietary supplements such as vitamins (29 %), printed books, magazines or newspapers (28 %) and cosmetics, beauty or wellness products (22 %).

About 35 % of e-shoppers had in the three months prior to the survey bought goods or services for private use three to five times and 34 % of e-shoppers had done so once or twice. The proportion of e-shoppers who had made online purchases over 10 times was the lowest, at 14 % (Figure 5).

Number of times people shopped online, EU-27⁽¹⁾, 2020

(% of individuals who bought or ordered goods or services over the internet for private use in the previous 3 months)



(¹) estimates

Source: Eurostat (online data code: isoc_ec_ib20)

eurostat 

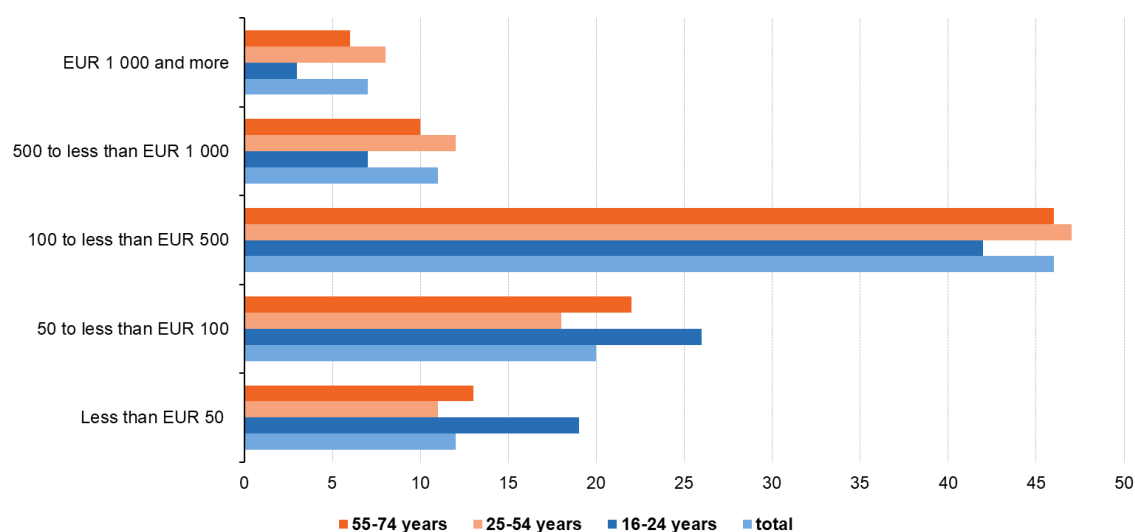
Figure 5: Number of times people shopped online, EU-27(1), 2020 (% of individuals who bought or ordered goods or services over the internet for private use in the previous 3 months) - Source: Eurostat (isoc_ec_ib20)

The largest proportion of people buying online once or twice is found among those aged 55-74 (42 %). The youngest age group (16-24) was the larger age group to shop three to five times (37 %), but tends to shop more online one to two times (38 %). People aged 25-54 stand out as making more frequent purchases: 18 % of e-shoppers in this age group bought online six to ten times in the three months prior to the survey and another 17 % did so even more often.

Over four in ten e-shoppers said they had spent between EUR 100 and EUR 499 for their online purchases in the three months prior to the survey. The youngest age group (16-24) led in online purchases worth less than EUR 100. The individuals aged 25-54 led in the online purchases worth between EUR 100 and EUR 499 (47 %), between EUR 500 and EUR 999 (12 %) and over EUR 1000 (8 %). Purchases worth EUR 500 or more were less popular with all age groups (Figure 6).

Money spent on online shopping, EU-27⁽¹⁾, 2020

(% of individuals who bought or ordered goods or services over the internet for private use in the previous 3 months)



(¹) estimates

Source: Eurostat (online data code: isoc_ec_ibm)

eurostat

Figure 6: Money spent on online shopping, EU-27(1), 2020 (% of individuals who bought or ordered goods or services over the internet for private use in the previous 3 months) - Source: Eurostat (isoc_ec_ibm)

Purchasing online and problems encountered (2019 survey)

71 % of e-buyers reported having no problem when purchasing online

More than seven e-buyers out of ten reported that they did not encounter any problem when buying or ordering goods or services in the 12 months prior to the survey. The problems encountered most often by EU online shoppers were related to slower delivery than had been indicated at the time of making the purchase (17 %). Some 8 % had problems in the form of technical failure of a website while ordering or paying, 8 % had received wrong or damaged goods or services, 5 % found it difficult to make complaints and seek redress after a complain, 4 % had difficulties in finding information on guarantees and other legal rights and again 4 % were confronted with foreign retailers not selling to customers in their country. About 3 % of online shoppers in each case were confronted with final costs higher than indicated and with problems with fraud (e.g. no goods or services received at all, misuse of credit card details) (Figure 7).

Problems encountered when buying over the internet, EU-27, 2019

(% of individuals who bought or ordered goods or services over the internet for private use in the previous 12 months)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: isoc_ec_iprb)

eurostat

Figure 7: Problems encountered when buying over the internet, EU-27, 2019 (% of individuals who bought or ordered goods or services over the internet for private use in the previous 12 months) - Source: Eurostat (isoc_ec_iprb)

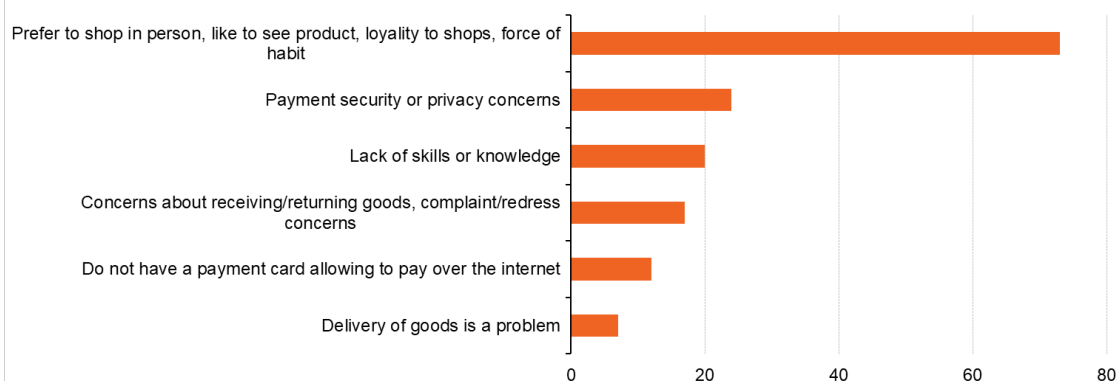
Main reason for not buying online (2019 survey)

The main reason for not buying online is that people prefer to shop in person

Figure 8 shows that the main reason given for not making purchases online in the 12 months prior to the survey was a preference for shopping in person in order to be able to see the products before purchasing them, out of loyalty to shops or by force of habit (73 %). Other, much less reported factors were worries as to privacy or the security when paying online (24 %), people believing that they lacked the necessary skills or knowledge to make online purchases (20 %), concerns about receiving or returning goods (17 %), and not having a suitable payment card (12 %). Very few of those who had not made online purchases considered that the delivery of goods would be a problem (7 %).

Reasons for not buying over the internet, EU-27, 2019

(% of individuals who did not buy or order goods or services over the internet for private use in the previous 12 months)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: isoc_ec_inb)

eurostat

Figure 8: Reasons for not buying over the internet, EU-27, 2019 (% of individuals who did not buy or order goods or services over the internet for private use in the previous 12 months) - Source: Eurostat (isoc_ec_inb)

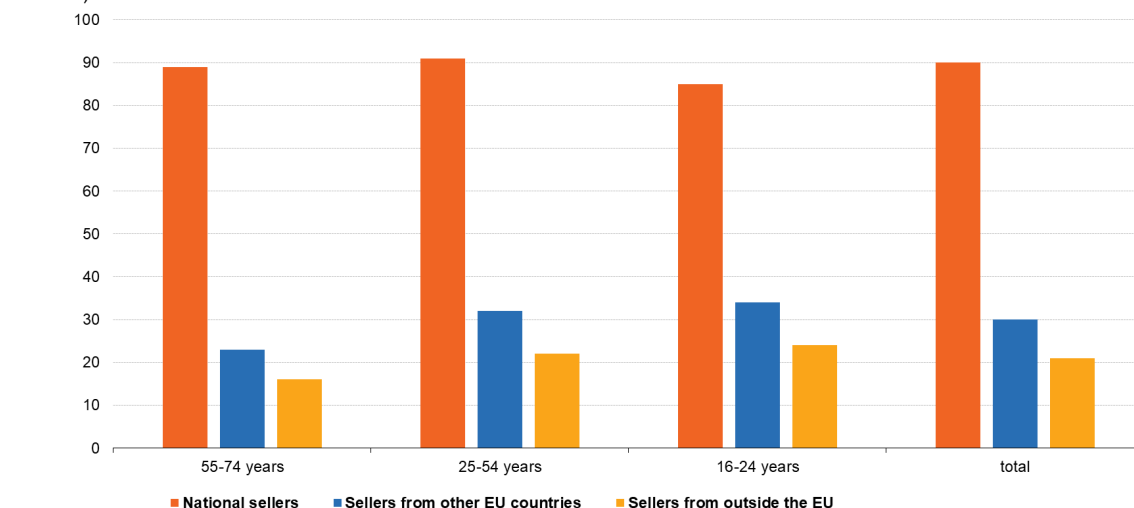
E-shopping from other EU countries

30 % of online shoppers bought or ordered goods from sellers in other EU countries

Cross-border online purchases can be an indicator of the smooth functioning of the single market for e-commerce and the extent to which consumers make use of wider choices and lower prices. A large majority of e-shoppers in the 3 months prior to the survey made online purchases of goods from sellers in their own country: 90 %. The 16-24 age-group had the highest proportions of e-shoppers purchasing from sellers from other EU countries (34 %) and sellers from outside the EU (24 %). The age groups 25-54 and 55-74 are more keen to buy goods online from national sellers, 91 % and 89 % respectively.

National and cross-border purchases of goods by e-shoppers, EU-27 ⁽¹⁾, 2020

(% of individuals who bought or ordered goods over the internet for private use in the previous 3 months)



⁽¹⁾ estimates

Source: Eurostat (online data code: isoc_ec_ibos)

eurostat

Figure 9: National and cross-border purchases of goods by e-shoppers, EU-27 ⁽¹⁾, 2020 (% of individuals who bought or ordered goods over the internet for private use in the previous 3 months) - Source: Eurostat (isoc_ec_ibos)

Data sources

The data in this article are based on the results of annual surveys on ICT usage in households and by individuals. Data for 2020 were aggregated from micro data transmitted by all Member States (except France and Italy) and some non-EU countries (Iceland, Norway, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, Kosovo* and Bosnia and Herzegovina). The rate for the EU-27 in 2020 is estimated, calculated as a weighted average of national results. Data are available on the Eurostat website (see link below). Researchers can apply for access to the micro data.

The 2020 survey results are based on responses from a total of 109 983 households in the EU-27 having at least one person aged 16-74, and 139 073 individuals in the EU-27 aged 16-74. Individuals were asked about the last time they used the internet, how often they used it, internet activities, activities linked to the Internet of Things, certain aspects of the collaborative economy, activities related to e-government, e-commerce and about privacy and protection of data together with trust, security, privacy and smartphone security.

Most countries collected data in the first half of 2020. The results above refer to individuals' experiences during the last 3 months or 12 months prior to the survey. In 2020, the reference period for the questions on the e-commerce activities, frequency of online shopping, amounts spent and origin of sellers was the three months prior to the survey. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the timing of these reference periods vary across countries.

Levels of education are defined according to [ISCED](#) -2011 as follows: high (tertiary, ISCED 5, 6, 7 or 8); medium (upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary, ISCED 3 or 4); low (at most lower secondary, ISCED 0, 1 or 2).

Source data for tables and graphs

- [E-commerce statistics for individuals - graphs and tables](#)

Context

The findings of this survey are used for monitoring several EU policies, in particular the [Digital Agenda](#) , which is one of the pillars of the Europe 2020 strategy (which sets objectives for the growth of the European Union by 2020). The Digital Agenda proposes to better exploit the potential of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in order to foster innovation, economic growth and progress. One of its main objectives is the completion of the [Digital Single Market](#) , in which the free movement of persons, services and capital is ensured and where the individuals and businesses can seamlessly access and exercise online activities under conditions of fair competition, and a high level of consumer and personal data protection, irrespective of their nationality or place of residence. The completion of the Digital Single Market is currently one of the political priorities of the European Commission. It covers three areas: promoting better online access to goods and services across Europe; designing an optimal environment for digital networks and services to develop; ensuring that the European economy and industry takes full advantage of the digital economy as a potential driver for growth.

At the end of 2015 the European Commission published a framework called Monitoring the Digital Economy and Society 2016–2021. This document describes the main policy developments and outlines the main data requirements to monitor European digital policies, information and communication technologies as well as their impact on the economy and society in the period 2016–2021. It reviews existing data sources and lists new areas and data sources to be made use of in the future.

**This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.*

See also

- [All articles on Digital economy and society](#)

Publications

- [Digital economy & society in the EU](#)
- [Other publications on digital economy and society](#)

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Legislation

- [Digital economy and society legislation](#)

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- [Digital Agenda](#)
- [Digital Agenda Scoreboard reports](#)
- [Digital Single Market](#)