



Sky Broadband - SamKnows browsing speed consistency study

7th June 2010

Sky commissioned SamKnows (www.samknows.com), an independent company, to study variations in consumers' web browsing speeds.

Between 19 April and 31 May 2010, SamKnows measured 685 independent consumers up to 20/24Mb web browsing speeds on an hourly basis to understand how actual web browsing speeds vary between the four biggest ISPs by market share, which account for over 84% of the broadband market.

In total, SamKnows generated over 320,000 points of reference to understand the average variation in Sky, BT, Virgin Media & Talk Talk's web browsing speeds throughout the day and throughout the week.

SamKnows found that Sky Broadband has the most reliable broadband speeds of any of the four major providers up to 20/24Mb products. In practice, this means that Sky Broadband customers receive a more consistent broadband speed, that varies less throughout the day, than with an up to 20/24Mb package from any major provider.

How the study was conducted

SamKnows recruited a panel of independent consumers covering all of the major ISPs and asked them to connect a broadband measurement unit to their router.

All survey respondents were sent a hardware monitoring unit which they were instructed to connect to their router. Software within this unit performed a range of tests to a set schedule, running over 700 separate tests from each panellist over the course of a month. The software was configured not to run tests when the network is busy with other activities. This avoided compromising results by running tests at a time when bandwidth was being used by other PCs in the household (including those using a wireless connection).

The performance data shown to here are based on 685 up to 20/24Mb Sky, BT, Virgin Media and Talk Talk customers who had a broadband monitoring unit connected to their router in the six weeks from 19 April and 31 May 2010 and provided valid data. The size of the panel ensures that the data is robust and SamKnows' reporting is based on a 95% confidence test, which means that there is a 95% probability that the outcome would be the same if the study was applied to a different set of consumers.

Factors affecting broadband speed

Broadband speeds are affected by a range of factors including the consumer's geographic location, the technology used to deliver broadband and the capacity of the provider's network.

Sam Knows study addressed the **geographical issues** affecting ADSL broadband speeds by normalising its data to offset the effect of different line lengths, so that comparisons could be made on a like-for-like basis and to ensure that the analysis provides a fair comparison of actual performance rather than reflecting geographic differences. SamKnows did not normalise by distance from exchange for Virgin Media, as cable services do not degrade significantly over the length of the line.

Broadband services can also differ depending on the **technology** used to provide the connection and the study therefore compares both ADSL and cable services to ensure that a fair comparison is made between the various technologies used to supply up to 20/24Mb broadband services.

The other main factor affecting broadband speeds is the **capacity of ISPs' networks**, which do not require 'normalisation' or correction to provide a fair basis for comparison between ISPs but may affect an ISPs' ability to provide reliable web browsing and downloading speeds. For example, an ISP may be less able to provide consistent speeds if its network capacity is limited and/or it applies traffic management policies that limit consumers' internet experience at certain times of the day).

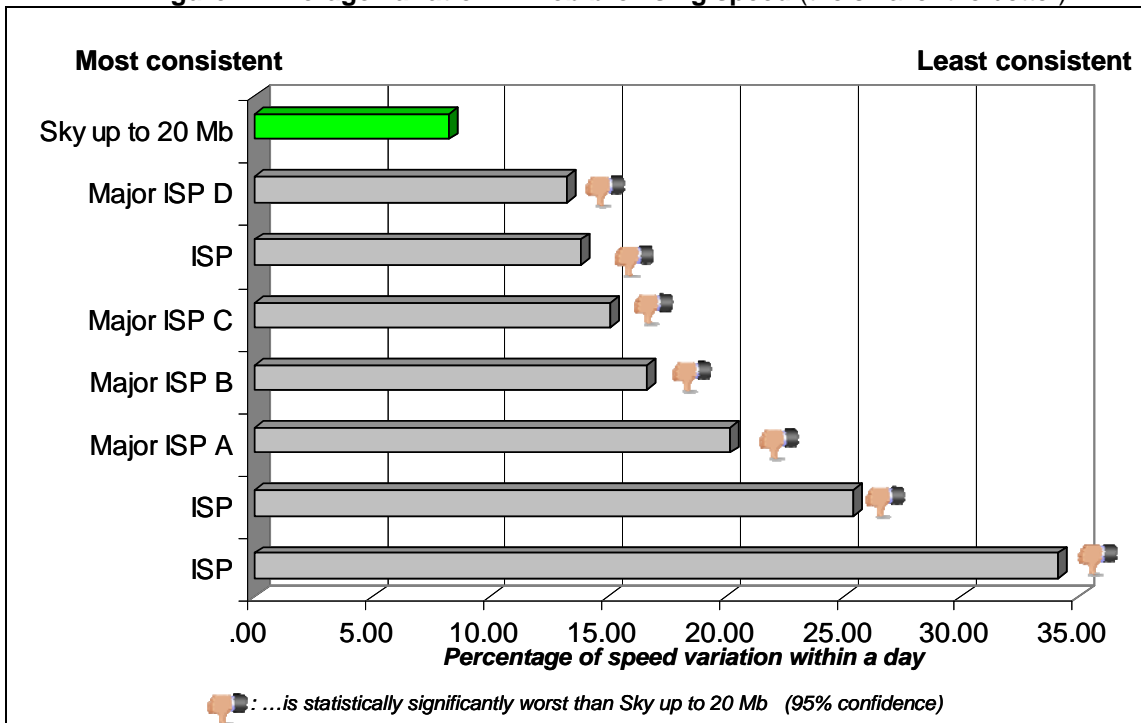
The results

The table below shows the average daily variation in broadband speeds enjoyed by customers of a range of ISPs including Major ISPs A-D, which represent BT's up to 20Mb products, TalkTalk's up to 24Mb products and Virgin Media's up to 20Mb and up to 50 Mb products in no particular order.

The lower the bar on the chart, the lower percentage variation in a consumer's broadband speed during the day.

The results show that Sky Broadband has the most reliable broadband speeds of any of the four major providers up to 20/24Mb products, which means that Sky's up to 20Mb broadband provides a more consistent broadband service, that varies less throughout the day, than with any other major provider.

Figure 1: Average variation in web browsing speed (the smaller the better)



Note: Data collected by SamKnows over a 6 week period, 19/04/10 - 31/05/10 from 685 panellists with "up to 20 Mbps" or more broadband service