

Good Video Streaming Everyone!

Here at Bigpipe Towers we love statistics, charts, and techy stuff of all kinds. So when Netflix released their stats it was a day of wild celebration. Why? What did we learn? That **NZ has good infrastructure for video streaming** – and it's getting better all the time!

Netflix – who you may have heard of – publishes stats on average speeds that different ISPs get to Netflix servers.

In their own words, this is how they calculate this:

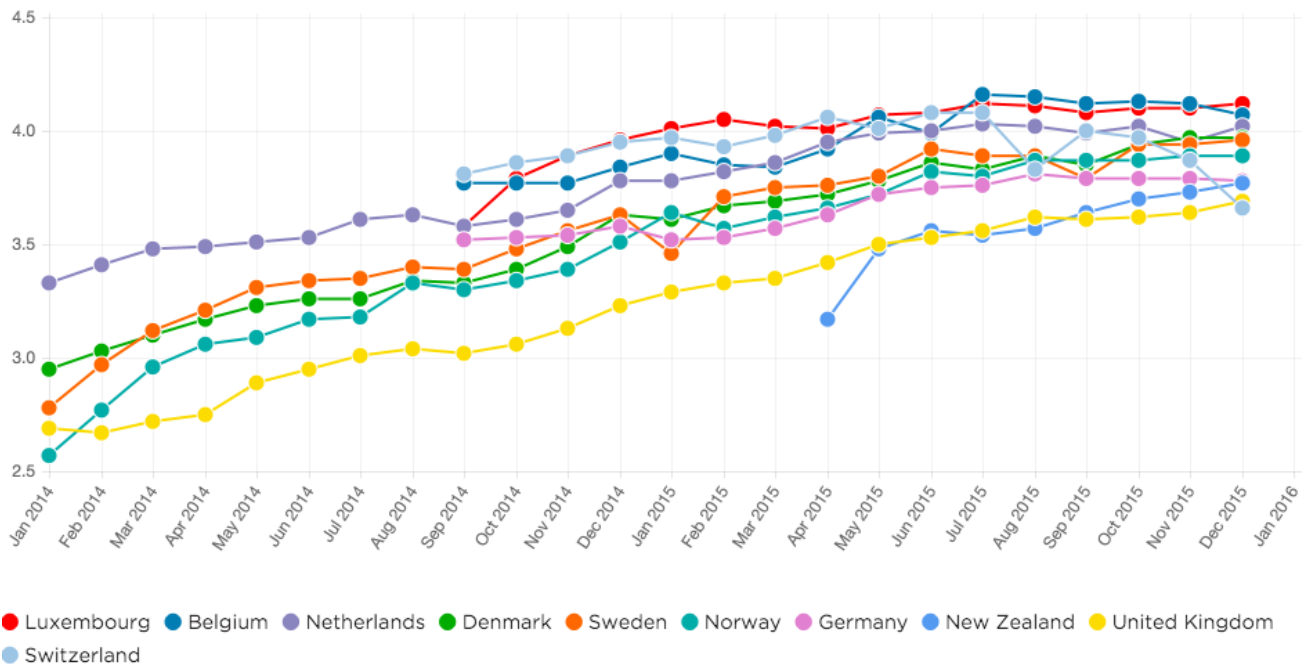
The Netflix ISP Speed Index lists the average prime time bitrate for Netflix content streamed to Netflix members during a particular month. For 'Prime Time', we calculate the average bitrate of Netflix content in megabits per second (Mbps) streamed by Netflix members per ISP. We measure the speed via all available end user devices. For a small number of devices, we cannot calculate the exact bitrates and streaming via cellular networks is exempted from our measurements. The speed indicated in the Netflix ISP Speed Index is not a measure of the maximum throughput or the maximum capacity of an ISP.

Translation: This data, when taken at a national average level, is probably a pretty good representation of overall how good the infrastructure in that country is. And [New Zealand is doing pretty well](#).

So whilst it's *not* very reasonable to compare ISPs in NZ using the data (see bottom section for the reason why), it is **quite** reasonable, we think, to compare NZ with, say, Australia.

So, with that explanation of the data out of the way, how does NZ stack up vs other countries?

We downloaded [the global data](#), and what do you know, **NZ is sitting at joint 7th out of 32 countries** for average throughput! Not bad, eh?



No measurement of broadband speed is perfect, of course, but what's interesting is that other comparisons (like those from the connection monitoring tools Akamai and Sandvine) often place NZ somewhere near the middle of the pack when it comes to performance, whereas using this metric, we are in the top 25% of countries.

Other notable country rankings:

USA – ranked 19th

Australia – ranked 16th

UK – ranked 8th

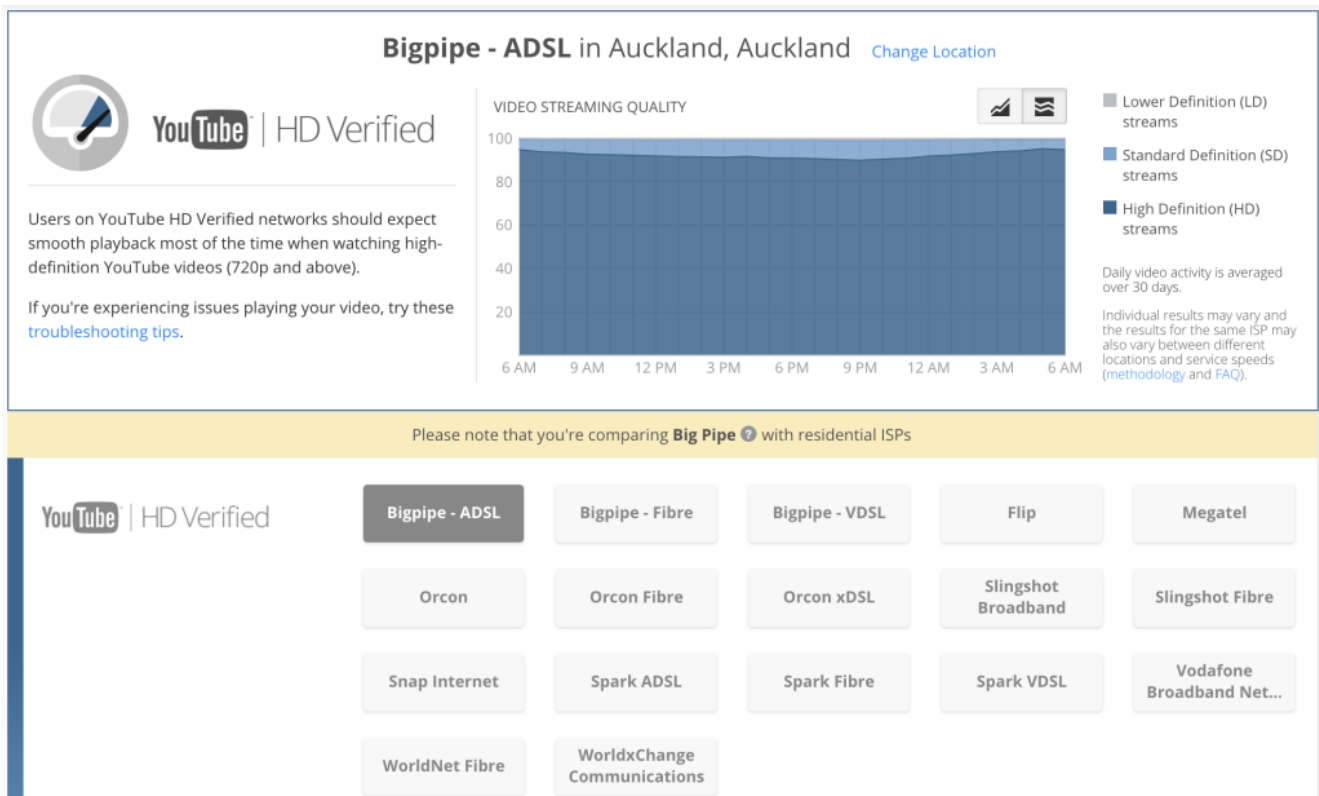
Why this (probably) shouldn't be used to compare ISPs in NZ

For the USA, where different ISPs usually use different underlying infrastructure that they each own and manage

individually, the Netflix rankings are a pretty decent way of comparing how they perform against one another.

However, for NZ, where most ISPs are using the same underlying infrastructure (owned by Chorus for the most part), the differences between the ISPs is mostly reflected in the fact that they will have different proportions of customers on high and low speed plans that generally reflect the infrastructure available in that area.

Put another way: if an ISP has a lot of customers on ADSL (slower) and few on fibre (faster) their average speed (and ranking) will tend to be lower. At Bigpipe, a pretty high proportion of our customers are on ADSL connections – and we know for a fact that our ADSL connections do extremely well with streaming video, in the scheme of things. For instance, YouTube also collects data on streaming speed over time, but it presents data segmented by connection type as well as ISP – and, excellently, Bigpipe ADSL is HD-verified!



If the Netflix data was also segmented by connection type – the average streaming speed for each ISP on ADSL, VDSL or

fibre – then it would get *really* interesting, because it'd tell you exactly how well each ISP performs at the connection level.

But because it's an average of all connection types, the differences between the ISPs *doesn't* really tell you that one ISP in NZ is 'better' or 'worse' than the other, it's just down to the underlying technology their customers have, and how that mix changes over time. So at any given house, based on this data, you *cannot* say that one ISP will perform better than another for Netflix assuming you are not changing technology at the same time.

For example, Snap (now 2Degrees) was also one of the first ISPs to launch UFB and VDSL, and has experienced a lot growth since then. So it's pretty likely to have a very high proportion of customers on these higher speed plans, using quite modern modems with decent wifi, which will skew their average throughput to Netflix up a fair bit.

Spark, on the other hand, being the incumbent, has a very high proportion of the 'rural' market – meaning most of the customers who live with ADSL1 will be with Spark, and quite a lot of them will have very old modems with poor wifi that they got when they first got broadband 5+ years ago. This will skew their average down a bit. Nothing to do with Spark as an ISP, just the nature of the customer technology mix.

Most ISPs have improved their average speed over the past few months. This likely reflects the change in their customer base as the nationwide fibre rollout progresses and more and more people get UFB and VDSL (and also better modems) which brings the average speed up (as well as a one-off adjustment for putting in caching etc).



Finally, when comparing ISPs, note that the speed difference between best and worst isn't really *that* much anyway (3.92Mbps

for 2Degrees at rank 1 vs 3.47 for Trustpower at bottom rank – a fair bit below the next ‘worst’ at 3.70).



We reckon these rankings are a good indication of New Zealand’s improving internet situation – and that it’s getting better all the time.

Your thoughts? Let us know in the comments!

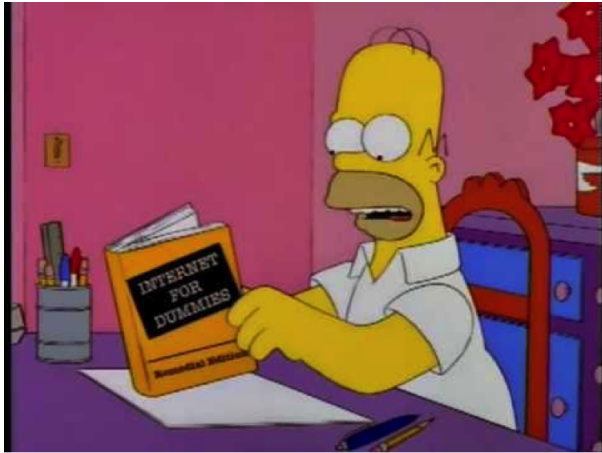
Other ISPs hate them! The FIVE CRAZY FACTS that Bigpipe competitors don’t want you to know!

We heard you like clickbait, so we put some clickbait in your clickbait so you can get baited while you click.

1. Bigpipe is pretty much the opposite of the Hotel California.

With Bigpipe, you can check out any time you like. Unlike other ISPs, you can leave us any time you like too. We don’t lock you in to long-term contracts. In fact, we don’t lock you in to *any*-term contracts. You sign up, you pay your monthly bill and as long as you keep doing that, you’re with us. But if you’re not happy, or if you’re going on your OE, or if

randomly changing ISPs for no particular reason is your inexplicable hobby, you can leave. Any time you like, for any reason. We don't judge.



2. If you don't love us, we fail. (Literally.)

Other ISPs keep you in a relationship with them by locking you in, which is actually kind of an unsettling metaphor if you think about it. If you don't like their service, you pay them to leave. That's not good for customers, so we do the opposite. Since you can leave Bigpipe any time, we make sure that our customers are happy. We have to, even if we didn't want to (we do want to.) This means providing the best internet (we were rated #1 in NZ webpage download speed by independent ISP monitor TrueNet right from when we launched) and great customer service. The only thing that keeps you with us is your love, and the only thing you'll pay to leave is nothing at all.



3. We don't provide phone access to Crowded House's greatest hits.

EVERYWHERE YOU GO – *your call is important to us. You are number 39 in the queue* – ALWAYS TAKE THE WEATHER WITH YOU. No-one likes calling customer support, so we made it so you don't have to. We've ditched the call centre, which means you get faster, better-quality service without being tied to a singing tech support line that – occasionally – features a clueless overseas outsourced operator. If your broadband goes down, email us from your mobile phone, and we'll get our entirely New Zealand-based support team – I can literally see them from my desk, hi guys – straight on to it. It's a much better use of your time than sitting on hold with tech support. And if the situation demands it, we'll be happy to give you a ring.



4. NO CAPS. Also, no crap.

Other ISPs bundle their broadband offerings with bloatware, like unnecessary phone lines, unwanted calling packages, and useless modems. Bigpipe does broadband. That's it. Just really, really good broadband. This means we can keep our prices low, and make our ADSL, VDSL and fibre offerings the fastest available. There are no data caps and we don't throttle you. You get to choose your own modem / router. You get to choose if we're good enough to stick with. You choo choo choose.



5. We don't use annoying clickbait headlines and numbered-list blog-posts.

Unless the irony is just too good to pass up.



Oh hi, I didn't see you there. (The reason I didn't see you is because you

are at a computer, and I am at another computer in a completely different place, so it would be kind of weird if I could see you. Try not to think too hard about it, I'm not.) I'm Josh Drummond, the new marketing coordinator at Bigpipe. I wrote the preceding blog post as part of the job interview process. Either the rest of the Bigpipe People liked it, or they didn't read it, because I got the job. I felt like it'd be a shame not to make use of my parody of horrible clickbait articles making heavy use of The Simpsons memes, so now you get to read it too.

Bigpipe's Big Guide to improving your broadband.

By The Bigpipe People
@BigpipeNZ

At Bigpipe, we do everything we can to make your broadband experience as good as it can be, but we thought it would be a good idea to share some tips on the things you can do in your own home to help you improve your own broadband experience.

Choosing the fastest possible broadband plan in your area so you can get the most out of what is available to you. with Bigpipe, our 100Mbps UFB plan is only \$79, that's the same price as our most popular ADSL2 plan. To check what broadband technology is available in your area, use the address checker on our site (link to homepage) to see what plans are available at your address. If you can get UFB at your place, we highly recommend going for that.

UFB Starter	UFB Pro	UFB Elite
\$79 /month	\$99 /month	\$129 /month
ENTRY LEVEL UFB The next step from VDSL	MOST POPULAR Fastest download speed. Best plan for most people.	SUPER SPEEDS Fastest download speed you can get, with upload speed to match. A plan for people who live the internet.
100 Mbps DOWNLOAD 20 Mbps UPLOAD	200 Mbps DOWNLOAD 20 Mbps UPLOAD	200 Mbps DOWNLOAD 200 Mbps UPLOAD
UNLIMITED DATA LEAVE ANYTIME ONLINE SUPPORT <small>Available in parts of NZ</small>	UNLIMITED DATA LEAVE ANYTIME ONLINE SUPPORT <small>Available in parts of NZ</small>	UNLIMITED DATA LEAVE ANYTIME ONLINE SUPPORT <small>Available in parts of NZ</small>

Bigpipe's UFB plans, available in Auckland and Wellington.

Pick a decent router, this small piece of equipment is essential in contributing to your home's broadband experience, especially if you have lot of devices accessing the net at the same time. You wouldn't buy a new 64" LED TV and place it onto an old, wonky and unsuitable TV stand, so why have broadband and use a really cheap router? Ensuring that you have a decent router with updated firmware will optimise your Bigpipe broadband experience. The expected lifespan of a cheap router is 1-3 years whereas if you invest a little more, you can expect your router to last you 5+ years. Bigpipe recommends the [Netcomm NF8AC](#) as this router is suitable for all broadband plans including UFB all the way up to 1Gb speeds, so you're really investing yourself in the broadband of the future.



The Netcomm NF8AC router

If you have ADSL or VDSL, ensure that your home wiring is in order for optimum broadband connectivity in your home. Older homes especially often have wiring not optimised for delivering good broadband. Over time, wiring in your home can corrode or get damaged, this corrosion seriously inhibits the maximum speeds that you can obtain from your connection. If you notice that your internet sometimes slows down and can cut off from time to time, we recommend you get a technician to have a look at your internal wiring and fit a 'master filter' to bypass any bad wiring. As your ISP, Bigpipe can organise this for you, although there is a cost of around \$200.



A master filter

Don't allow your neighbours to piggyback off your network. This is important, if you don't have a secured password on your home network you open yourself up to people leeching your connection, or, worse, using it for illegal purposes for which you might get the blame! Most routers come with the wifi connection already secured with a default password, but if your doesn't just follow the manual to make sure you turn it on and set a secure password.



Members of the public leeching off of Apple's free Wi-Fi outside one of their stores.

Placement of your router around your home is very important.

If you have your router placed in an unsuitable location in your home, you're instantly limiting your broadband speed capabilities. It is also best to keep your router away from any electrical devices in your home that could interfere with the Wi-Fi frequencies that your router omits. When placing your router somewhere in your home, think about the most central place, or the place closest to where you want to be using the internet the most. The fewer walls/floors between your device and the router-the better! Here's an example of how poor router placement in the corner of the house inhibits wifi signal strength.

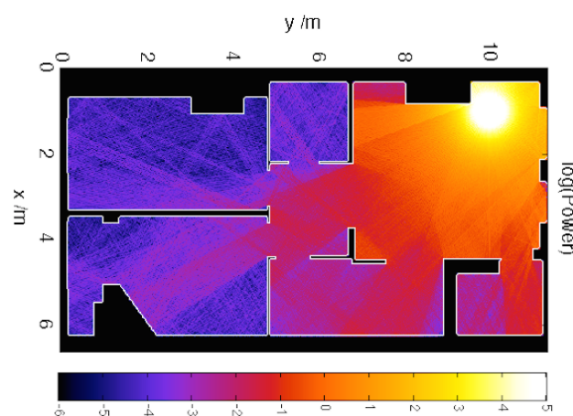


Diagram showing the Wi-Fi signal around the home and

how the infrastructure of
your home inhibits the
signals strength from room
to room.

Also, if you find your Wi-Fi speeds are much lower than expected, it could be your neighbours Wi-Fi interfering. Try logging into your router and changing the Wi-Fi channel to see if that improves things. Try channels 1, 6 or 11 for the best chance of avoiding interference.

Choose an ISP that doesn't throttle your speeds. Some ISP's throttling their customers speeds to keep their costs down. This occurs during peak usage times on their networks (usually between 4pm and 10pm). Bigpipe believe in providing enough bandwidth for all our customers to use, all the time, so we don't throttle our customers speeds and we've got the evidence to prove it. We're the top performing download ISP in New Zealand during peak times. See our performance as tested in the [TrueNet report](#).

Manage your auto-updates and see when your devices are scheduled to update their own software. You don't want to get home in the evenings ready to stream your favourite series online and to then realise that your laptop needs to update a million programs at once. Also, ensuring that other devices around your home aren't running programs in the background will help you to ensure that only the devices you're using are what is connected to your network.

Spread your traffic. If you have housemates who do a lot of downloading, try and get them to do it overnight or when other people aren't trying to use the internet. Sharing is caring.

Follow us on Twitter @BigpipeNZ

Kiwis need a better deal on internet

By Simon Moutter

Chorus' latest half-year financial report shows it spent just \$28 million on copper network capital expenditure, less than a tenth of the \$297 million spent on fibre capex.

The Commerce Commission will shortly make a decision that will have a big impact on how much we all pay to use the internet or landline.

It will be setting charges that internet service providers (such as Spark, Vodafone and Slingshot) are required to pay the monopoly access provider (Chorus) for internet and landline connections over the copper network.

The stakes are high: a change of just \$1 per month per line in charges translates into \$100 million of value over the five-year regulatory period, and the commission is proposing to increase the key wholesale access charge for a copper line by \$5 a month.

That's a transfer of half a billion dollars from internet and landline customers to Chorus.

If you're among the 90 per cent of New Zealanders who rely on the old copper network for their internet or landline access, then around half what you pay in your monthly bill to your service provider already ends up with Chorus.

So, the Commerce Commission has a major influence on the price you pay.

As happens too often in complicated regulatory processes, the voice of the consumer has not been heard much in this process.

That's why Spark New Zealand launched our BeCounted campaign.

We wanted to explain to New Zealanders what makes up the cost of accessing the internet and to give them an easy way of sending a submission.

To date, more than 50,000 people have visited the website and sent in submissions. This has greatly exceeded our most optimistic expectations and shows how important better value access to the internet is to New Zealanders.

Until late last year, the commission said it would set the Chorus charges about \$10 a month lower than previously.

This would have been a great outcome for consumers, and it prompted a price war among service providers in anticipation of the new charges taking effect.

The result was cheaper, faster plans, heaps more data (including new unlimited data plans), great discounts on associated services and investment in new services such as Lightbox.

However, in December last year the commission surprised everyone by backtracking on its previous position and proposing charges go back up by about \$5 a month – and refusing to rule out backdating the new charges when they finally come into effect later this year.

What's more, it said this \$5 increase would also apply to basic landline connections that did not have internet access. In response, Spark and most other service providers recently had to increase their prices by a few dollars to pass this on.

Our analysis shows the commission's proposed wholesale charges are almost 80 per cent higher than the median of comparable countries and 60 per cent higher than the next highest country

(Germany).

That works out at up to \$180 more a year for every internet and landline customer.

On the flip side, it's important to remember that as a country we are already paying Chorus to replace its copper network with a fibre network, through the Government's UFB and rural broadband initiatives.

These subsidies should actually mean that Chorus needs less funding to run its legacy copper network than its peers in comparable countries, which are operating and replacing their networks without taxpayer subsidies.

By way of illustration, Chorus' latest half-year financial report shows it spent just \$28 million on copper network capital expenditure, less than a tenth of the \$297 million spent on fibre capex.

We strongly believe the onus should be on the commission to explain why, in terms that ordinary consumers can understand, New Zealanders should pay more. Unfortunately, it has so far avoided doing so.

We accept this is a complex process, but it boils down to whether the Commerce Commission is prepared to act in the best interests of consumers and ensure Chorus monopoly charges are not way out of line with the rest of the world.

Simon Moutter is the managing director of Spark New Zealand.

Follow us on Twitter @BigpipeNZ

UFB, coming in like a storm!

By Felix Lee

Most of you should by now have heard of the ultra-fast broadband project or more commonly known as UFB. If you haven't it's the government's plan to bring superfast fibre internet to all the towns and cities in New Zealand. This means almost everyone living in this country would be able to access world leading internet by 2020. There are a few exciting recent developments which I will share here.

Build progress

The latest figures as at March 31 shows that UFB network is 46% complete, it has been rolled out to more than 618,000 users. This means the project is actually ahead of schedule and on budget which is pretty impressive.

Gigabit speeds

You can get gigabit UFB right now if you live in the central North Island, or Dunedin. Other areas are set to get it soon. Whangarei should get it this month, and Christchurch would be later this year. The rest of the country though, is covered by Chorus. Bigpipe currently have UFB in Auckland and Wellington. Chorus have said that they would roll it out nationwide within three years, but this could be sooner. We're on track to become one of the first countries to have gigabit available nationwide!

Just imagine the possibilities we can do with this; SuperHD TV, 3D printing, virtual presence, fully automated security and lighting systems all controlled by your phone via the internet. It'll also be a boost to the economy, we can export our technology all around the world and don't have to rely on selling milk powder any longer.

And there's no need to worry fibre will run out of capacity any time soon. You can put up to 96 different colours of lasers down a single fibre, each colour can support 100Gbps, and each house gets two strands of fibre. That's crazy amounts of bandwidth, and should last us a few decades at least.

Consents for UFB

One of the problems with getting UFB installed is that if you live down a shared driveway, you will need consent of everyone who share that driveway before you can have fibre connected. If one of your neighbours don't agree, then sorry you're not getting fibre. The government is currently looking at changing the law to make this easier. All the affected owners are notified of a pending install, and if they don't object then Chorus can go ahead. This should make the process easier and faster.

Another tricky and time consuming consents type is multi dwelling units such as apartments, townhouses or duplex's. Also known as MDU's, a number of consents are required for installation to occur. Body corporations, building managers, legal owners and agencies are all contributors to the consents process. The reason why this takes so long is due to gathering the consents and having everyone on the same page. Without all consents gained, Chorus cannot proceed with installations.

Although this is rare, most people, to include those tricky building corps are fully aware that UFB is the next generation of broadband in NZ. As copper lines begin to feel the strain, UFB is the only way forward.

UFB expansion

The coverage of UFB has recently been expanded from 75% to 80% of the population, so this means every town with a population exceeding a few thousand will be covered by UFB. The exact list of towns this cover would be announced later this year. The expanded UFB would be pretty similar to the existing UFB

rollout, the main difference is that users may have the option of choosing to connect using G.fast. This is where the fibre is connected to the kerb of each house, then the existing copper cabling is used to connect the rest of the way in. This means there's no need to dig up the driveway to install the fibre, should save a big of hassle.

Us Kiwi's are all collectively contributing \$1.5 billion to the UFB project as taxpayers, so if it is rolled out to your place, get it! Remember to check out Bigpipe's amazing no-term-contract unlimited UFB plans! Check your address [here](#). We now cover Wellington in addition to Auckland, and we hope to be cover the rest of the country soon!

Follow us on Twitter @BigpipeNZ

How willing are you to go 'naked' with your broadband options?

Why are kiwis so attached to their landlines when there are options for having naked broadband, a term used to refer to having broadband that does not need a landline?

Globally the shift towards getting 'naked' is growing in momentum. More and more, people are willing to shed their landline and reap the benefits and freedom of 'naked' broadband.

Here in New Zealand around [15 percent of households](#) have

already ditched the traditional landline and have moved onto 'naked' broadband. Although that number is climbing (up from just eight percent in 2006) – when this is compared to countries such as the USA where 40 percent of households don't have a landline – the number of Kiwis still shelling out their hard earned dollars to use an old fashioned home phone system is still staggeringly high.

Mobile phones have effectively replaced and surpassed landlines both in convenience and functionality. Using a mobile makes sense. It's always with you, you can make or receive a call from virtually anywhere in the country, you get a handy contacts list built into the phone, and extra features like caller ID and call waiting are usually free.

Why the attachment?

So why are so many Kiwis still clinging to their landlines? Do they really love receiving cold calls from telemarketers, market research agencies, and scammers? Not likely.

As with the adoption of many technologies, it comes down to perception lagging behind reality. A lot of people assume that you *must* buy a landline with your broadband package. They also assume that the cost of mobile calling is more expensive than landline calling – so they keep their landline because that's what they've always done.

Both of those assumptions used to be true, not anymore.

Today, most ISPs have a 'naked' broadband option. 'Naked' simply means broadband that doesn't require a landline. Depending on usage, you could save anything from \$10 to \$50 per month on your plan, simply by ditching a landline you probably rarely use.

Why ISPs still sell you landline

Many ISPs don't promote this, they'd rather sell you the

landline as well as the broadband.

As for the cost of making calls, that too has changed. The mobile market has become increasingly competitive in the last few years, and especially so in the last few months. Back in 2009, \$50 would get you around 100 minutes of mobile calling.

Right now, you can get unlimited calls for less than \$50 per month with Skinny mobile (and that includes unlimited SMS and a hefty 4G of data to boot). Spark and 2Degrees offer similar plans.

Or if, like me, you don't really do a lot of talking, preferring free services like Facebook, WhatsApp or email to keep in touch, then you can get smaller amounts like 100 minutes for less than \$10. Simply by making small adjustments to your plans, and embracing technology such as Skype for international calls, a saving of \$30 or more per month is very likely.

The beauty of choice

The changes in the telco landscape that give Kiwis the choice to make super cheap mobile calls are relatively new, which explains why we are lagging behind the US in terms of 'naked' broadband uptake. However, with these cost effective and competitive plans now well and truly in place, I believe we are on the tipping point of seeing a huge increase in the number of Kiwis who want to get 'naked'.

We saw this trend coming. Every other ISP has some kind of home phone calling option they try and sell you. Bigpipe doesn't. We only do 'naked'.

We focus only on the broadband, and nothing else. By selling only 'naked', we avoid a lot of the complexity that comes with selling voice services. Our customer's bills are the same every month – simplicity underpins our 'naked' offering.

Some of the benefits of getting naked broadband include no

landline required and flexibility, with various levels of investment aligned to varying upload download speeds.

The results speak for themselves. As reported in the latest [Truenet report](#) Bigpipe performs strongly against all the big players in the market.

Ultra-Fast 'naked' broadband is the next generation of broadband that Kiwis now have access to. So why not give it a go? Get 'naked', who knows, you may be surprised by how much you enjoy it.

Oliver Smith is the head of Bigpipe Broadband, a sub-brand of Spark, which offers naked unlimited broadband plans.



Oliver Smith