



THE UK DRONE USERS SURVEY 2017

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About Drones Direct

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DronesDirect.co.uk is one of the UK's largest online drones retailers, and a specialist division of the BuyItDirect Group, bringing customers the best deals in the UK from all the leading brands at great value prices.



Foreword

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The last few years have seen the popularity of drones soar in the UK while a recent study by Price Waterhouse Cooper (PwC) found that the global market value for this technology could hit £102bn by 2025.

Nearly half of the UK population now own a drone, according to our research, but far from being used just as a leisure activity, drones are now established tools in many sectors including the police and fire service to search and rescue teams.

Even the military are finding uses for drones, while mainstream media organisations regularly use footage obtained by drones when covering major incidents.

This kind of new technology has also become a key focus of the UK Government, which has stated a desire for the UK to become the go-to place for scientists, innovators and tech investors looking to develop the next stage of this type of technology.



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Despite all of these useful applications, drones are still subject to scrutiny and negative headlines over issues of privacy and public safety, as some users remain unsure under what circumstances they can fly drones, and what procedures they should follow.

In this report we will investigate other ways this exciting technology is being used, who is using it and where in Britain the most enthusiastic drone users live.

We will also examine the law and public safety aspects of drone usage and discover if users are fully aware of the steps they should take when operating a drone in public.

Mark Kelly, Marketing Manager at DronesDirect.co.uk



Highlights



- ✓ Most drone users (68%) use their drone for entertainment purposes (e.g. flying in the park etc).
- ✓ 63% use their drone for videography.
- ✓ 60% of drone users cite photography as one of their hobbies.
- ✓ 70% of drone users have used the technology to capture amateur photography and videos.
- ✓ The vast majority (80%) of drone users in the UK are aware of the Dronesafe.uk “Drone Code” rules and regulations.
- ✓ 47% of users say they always abide by the Information Commissioner’s Office guidelines on drone usage.
- ✓ 40% of drone users are aware that their photography and video footage is subject to the Data Protection Act.
- ✓ The majority of drone users (65%) would be willing to have their device electronically registered.
- ✓ 61% of people think the introduction of a drone flying safety exam would increase safe usage.
- ✓ Nearly half of consumers (49%) would use a drone delivery service in the future.

Drone Owners – a user profile

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While the stereotypical view of a technology enthusiast is a young person who would be happier sitting around with a laptop or playing video games than going outdoors, it seems that drone users do not fit into this mould.

In fact, this research has found that drone users are much more likely to fall on the other end of the spectrum, both in terms of age and other interests.

Rather than being up-start youngsters, the majority of drone users in the UK (31%) are aged 55 and over, compared to just one in ten aged 18-24.

Those aged 45-54 are the age group that is next most likely to own a drone (28%) while just 12% of 25-34 year olds own this type of technology.

One in five 35-44 year olds say they own a drone.



Drone Owners – a user profile

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When it comes to other interests, drone users again confound common preconceptions about technology enthusiasts, revealing they are more likely to enjoy the outdoors than sit at home.

The majority of drone users (60%) are also keen photographers, while 45% would rather going hiking or on a walk in their spare time when not using a drone.

While drone racing is a past-time continuing to grow in popularity, it is something just 6% of users in the UK actually do - far behind those that would rather take part in extreme sport (18%) or just go to the gym (16%).

Reading is also a popular past-time for drone users with 27% saying they like to do this in their spare time.

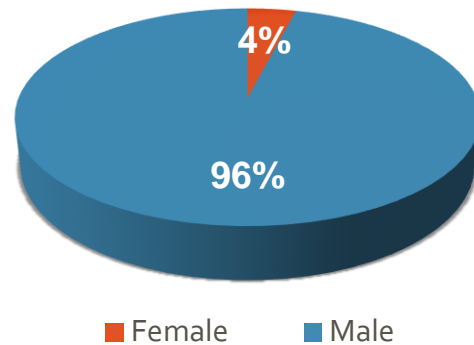
However, gender is one technology based stereotype that drone users fall into, with the vast majority (96%) being male.



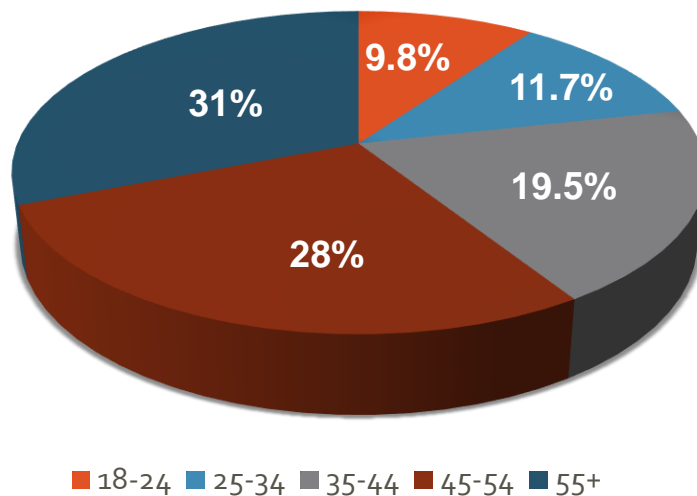
Drone Owners – the stats

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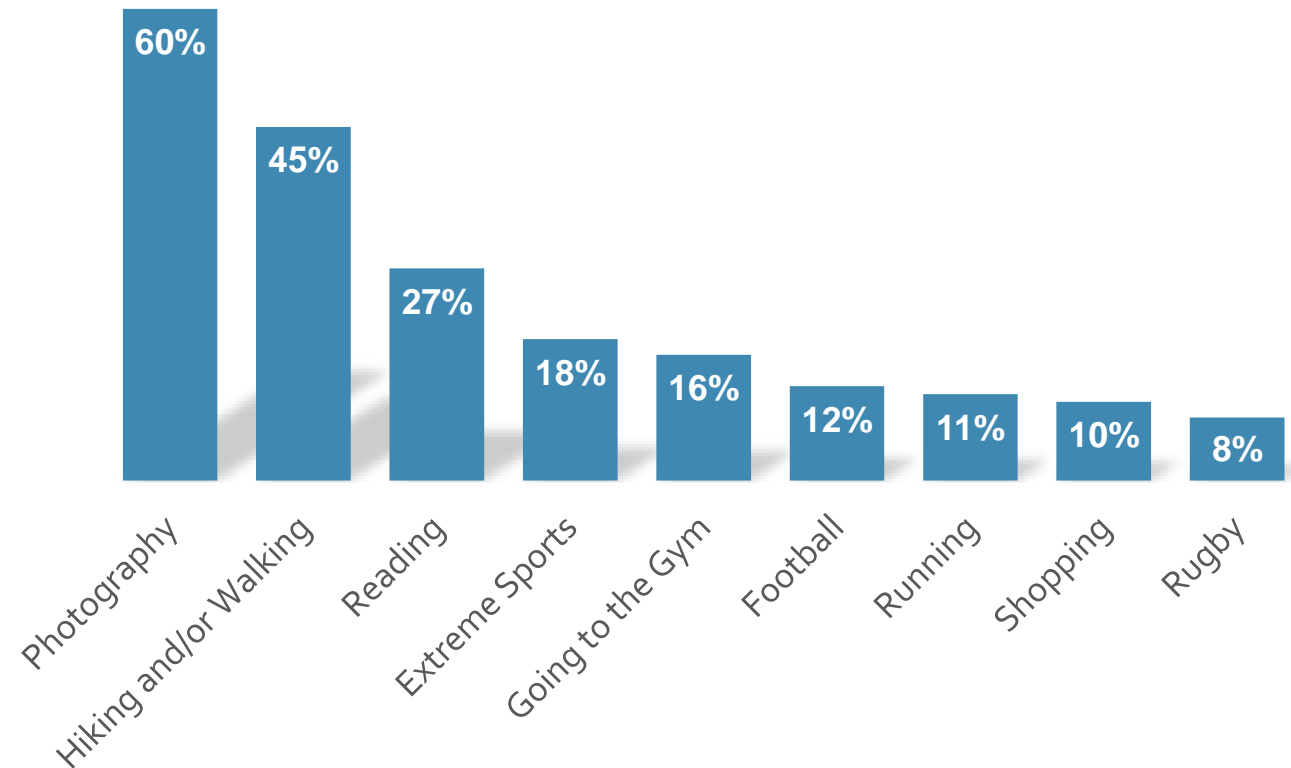
Gender



Age



Other hobbies of drone users



The regional drone capital of the UK

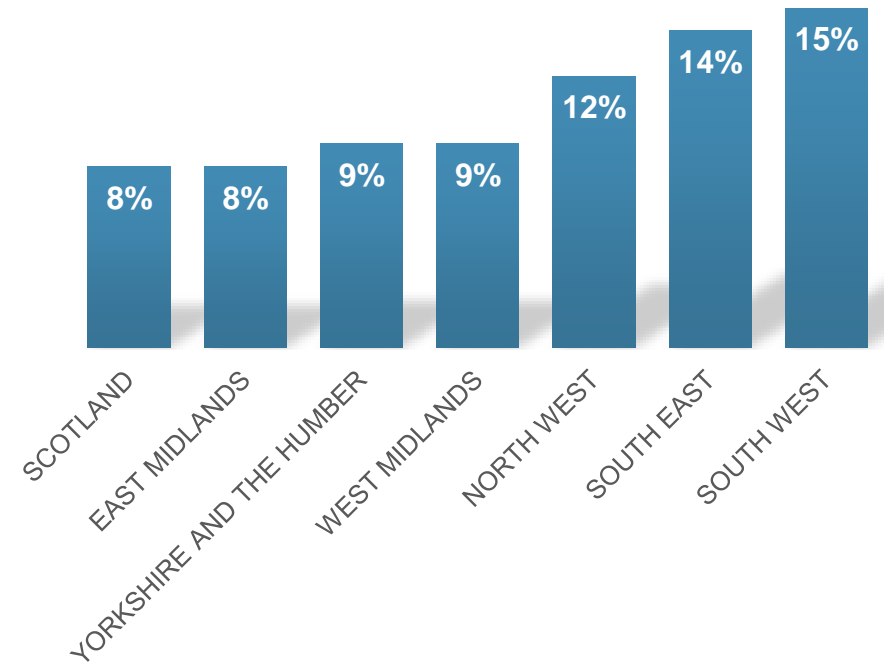


Drone users are more likely to be found in the South West of England than anywhere else in the country, with 15% of drone users living in that part of the country.

This is followed closely by those who live in the South East (14%) and those in the North West (12%).

A significant number of drone users can also be found in the East Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber (9%), as well as in Scotland (8%) and the East Midlands (8%).

Regions with the highest proportions of drone users

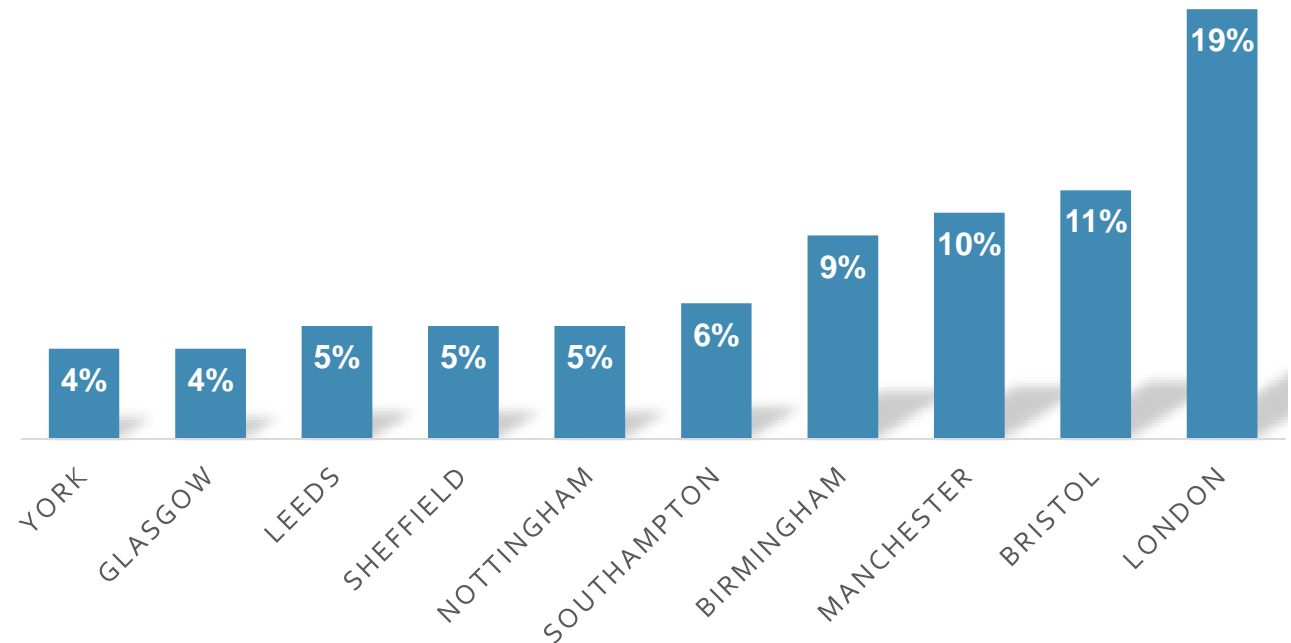


When it comes to the UK city with the highest number of drone users, London is by far the most popular destination with 19% of users living in the country's capital.

This proportion is well ahead of second placed Bristol, which is home to 11% of the UK's drone flying population.

Manchester (10%) and Birmingham (9%) are also popular cities for drone users to live.

Cities with the highest number of drone users



How are drones being used?

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By far the biggest uses for drones in the UK is for entertainment and media purposes, particularly for photography and video.

Most users, 68%, use their drone for general entertainment use, like flying it in the park.

This is just ahead of those who use a drone for videography (63%) and still photography (61%).

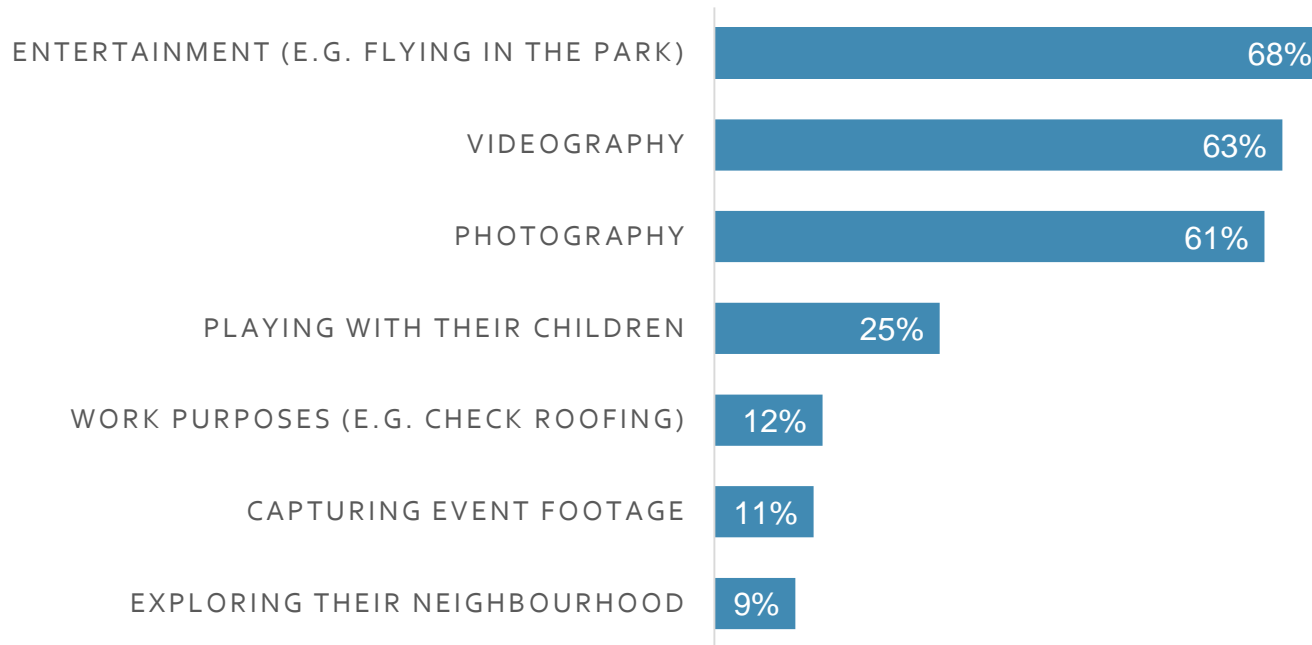
For a quarter of users (25%) drones are used as a means of enjoying time with family and flying the devices with their children.

A significant number of people also use their drones for work purposes like scoping out roofs (12%) and more than one in 10 use their drone to capture footage of events like football matches or skateboarding events.

How are drones being used?



What are drone owners using their device for?



Even for those owners who don't use their drones for the above purposes, many would consider doing so in the future.

For instance, 71% of drone owners would consider using one for photography and 70% would think of using one for shooting videos.

More than one in five (22%) would also consider flying a drone with their children as a family bonding exercise.

Drones for photography and video

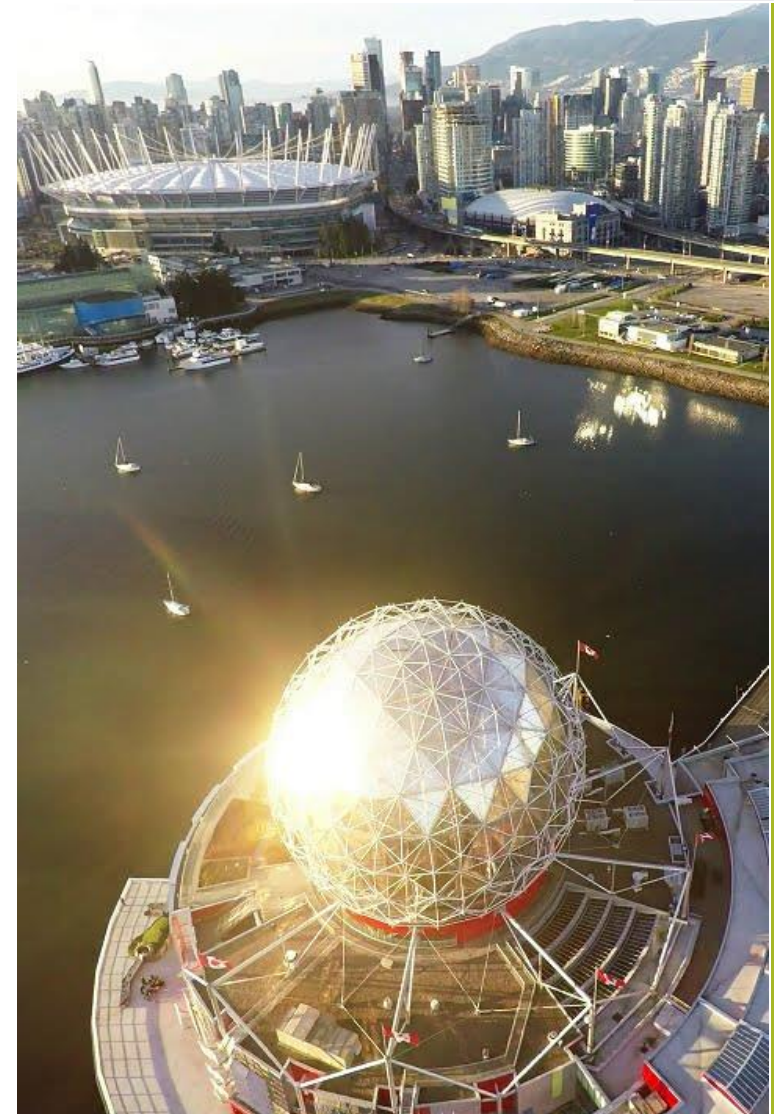
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Drones have revolutionised the areas of photography and video with amateurs and professionals alike now able to obtain images they couldn't have come close to capturing years ago.

Even media outlets have increasingly seen the benefits of these devices for capturing still and moving images and it is now standard to see footage of unfolding major news events captured using a drone.

This data backs up the trend of drone photography with 61% of owners saying they use their drone for this purpose, while 63% use them to capture video.

And it seems drones offer more than just the opportunity to take images and videos from different angles and elevations, with 30% of videographers believing owning a drone has made them better at taking videos and 27% thinking it has made them a better photographer.



Drones for photography and video

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It is not just amateur enthusiasts who are eager to get the most out of drones, with nearly one in 10 professional photographers and videographers (9%) having used a drone for their work in the past.

In fact, 90% of drone owners say they have used their drone for work or professional purposes in the past.

Of those who have used their drone for professional purposes most (21%) work in the creative and photographic industries, following by the 15% who work in the information and communication industries.

9% of owners used their drones while working in marketing and the utility sectors while some (6%) used their drones for work in manufacturing, professional services and education.



Investing in drones as a hobby

Drone users are happy to invest in their hobby and while most (12%) are planning to spend between £300 - £500 on their next drone, one in 10 are prepared to spend as much as £1,100.

Another 10% say they would expect to spend between £150 and £300 on a drone in the future.

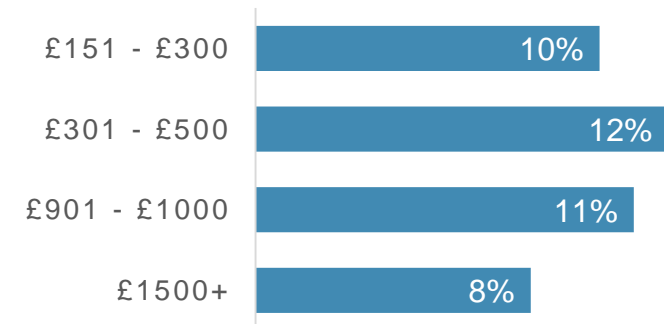
When it comes to monthly spend on their hobby, the majority of drone users (60%) would expect to spend as much as £99 a month.

More than one in 10 (12%) say they would spend between £100 and £200 on a monthly basis to enjoy their hobby.

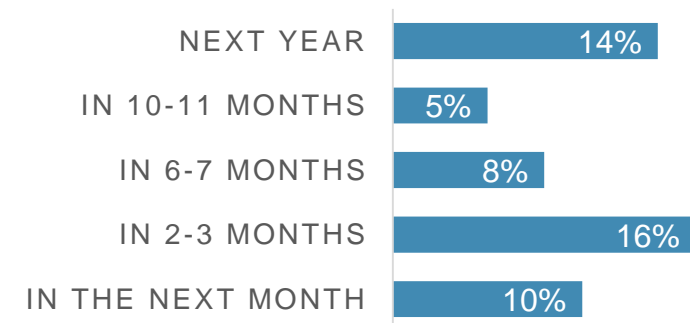
More than half of drone users (54%) own just the one drone, while nearly a quarter (24%) own two of the devices. Nearly one in 10 (9%) own three drones but very few people own more than that, with just 5% owning four.

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How much do drone users plan to spend on their next device?



When do drone users plan to replace their current drone?



Getting the most out of a drone

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Most drone users (24%) are active with their flying hobby and use their drone every week.

A large number of users (14%) can't even wait that long before flying again and use their drone at least once every 3-4 days and nearly one in ten (9%) use it every 1-2 days.

Even among those who fly their drone less regularly than this, not many go more than a fortnight before using their drone and 13% have it back in the air every two weeks.

There are, however, a group of users who clearly see drone flying as more of a treat – or just don't have the time to do it on a regular basis – and say that they use their drone less than once a month.



Getting the most out of a drone

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Drone flying as a social exercise is also popular with many users and nearly 10% attend a club for drone enthusiasts, while nearly 5% have entered their drone into an amateur racing tournament with friends.

When it comes to where people like to fly their drones, most (41%) are content enough to just fly at home or on their own property while 30% say they prefer to fly their drone at a park or other public place.

8% would fly their drone on or inside a friend's property.

While technology in general is often thought of as isolating and anti-social, drones are clearly more suited to being used in social situations and can be a good way of getting people together.



Drones, the law and public safety



There is never a shortage of headlines that would make you believe that all drone pilots regularly disregard health and safety and have no regard for privacy when it comes to where and how they fly their drones.

However, these stats have revealed the opposite to be true and that drone owners are by and large responsible, and know how to operate their devices safely.

Nearly all of drone users (98%) are aware of the rules and regulations set out by the Civil Aviation Authority on the operation of drones while many are also aware of the wider guidelines.

43% of drone owners in the UK say they are familiar with the Information Commissioner's Office guidelines on drone usage and 47% say they always abide by those rules when operating their drone.

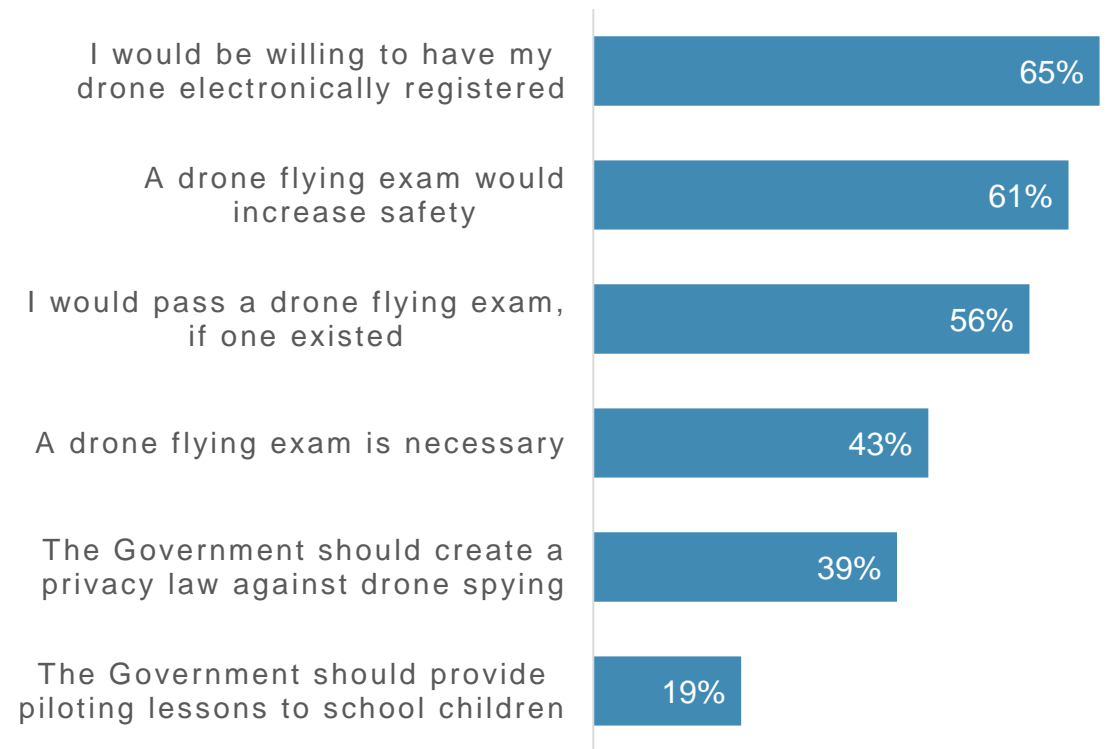
While there is a significant number of drone users who are happy with the current regulations surrounding drone usage (18%), nearly a third (32%) say they think that government regulations should be relaxed to open the sky up more for drones.

Introducing a drone flying exam would also increase safety according to 61% of owners, although 22% of flyers think this would be unnecessary.

The vast majority of users (65%) also say they would be willing to have their drone electronically registered to make it easier to identify the owner, and only 13% are against this idea.

Privacy also remains a big issue when it comes to drones, although just 39% of people think a drone specific privacy law should be created by the Government.

Opinions on drone regulations



Drones as a service tool

While drones are predominantly favoured by those in the entertainment, leisure and media industries, they are also proving increasingly popular as a customer service tool, especially when it comes to home delivery.

Major companies like Google are already experimenting with projects to use drones to deliver products around the UK, and this data suggests that many customers would be open to the idea of receiving goods in this way.

Indeed 49% of consumers say they would use a drone delivery service if it was offered to them, while just 35% say they would have no interest in doing so.

When it comes to the reasons people wouldn't use a drone for this type of service, not surprisingly fear of items being lost (22%) or stolen (25%) are major concerns, although surprisingly few people actually have these concerns.

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Drones as a service tool



Also a worry is that any parcel delivered via a drone may be damaged in transit, although again it is a minority of consumers (22%) who have this worry.

Even more people, 51%, would use a drone repair service if it was made available, and novel ideas for drones are proving popular with much of the population.

One in 10 people would buy an umbrella drone to keep them dry during wet weather – which would work by using the GPS tracking on their smartphone – or would even consider buying a drone specifically to play with their pets.

These stats go a long way to demonstrate the potential that drone technology has beyond current uses.

Conclusion



It is clear from this research that drone users defy the stereotype of the typical technology enthusiast and, far from preferring their own company and taking part in solo activities, are much more likely to engage with groups and be more social and physically active.

Drone owners are much more likely to enjoy their hobby with other people and even take part in organised tournaments. They are also more likely to be creative with their other interests and many drone owners are also amateur - and in some cases even professional - photographers and videographers.

And, despite the headlines, drone users are by and large responsible with their technology and are informed with the rules and regulations of using drones near built up areas or airports, and are clear on the privacy issues associated with flying drones over public and private areas.

More business sectors are also seeing the benefits of these devices, particularly in the media and industries that require birds-eye views of areas, like in trades and the emergency services. Consumers are also becoming more confident with the idea of drones for deliveries and customer services.