

Staying offline could cost you £440 a year

PEOPLE who do not use the internet pay an average £440 a year extra for goods and services, according to a study.

Eight million Britons living in "digital exclusion" lose out to banks and utility firms which offer online discounts.

Campaigners accuse companies of "profiteering" from those who don't have the skills or cannot afford to be online.

Judith Donovan, the chairman of Keep Me Posted, the pressure group which conducted the survey, said: "BT charges me about £6 per quarter to receive a paper bill and it only costs about 35p to produce it. It is not only penalising people who do not manage their account online, it is

then making a profit from them. It is pretty appalling."

Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS) has raised concern that moves towards an online benefits system could mean some people are not getting money to which they are entitled.

The Government aims to get 80 per cent of claims completed online by 2017, but a survey of 1,200 CAS clients who claim benefits found that 76 per cent said they would struggle to apply online.

More than eight million adults in the UK have no online access, according to the independent Centre for Economics and Business Research. Of those, 5.6 million are aged 65 or older.