

● UK FIBRE GUIDE · JUNE 2026

HEAD-TO-HEAD

Monday, 8 June 2026

# FTTP vs Virgin Cable: which is *better?*

Full fibre against Virgin Media's cable. They look similar on download speed, but they differ where it counts, and one of them is quietly being replaced by the other.

**1,130**

**CABLE GIG1 DOWNLOAD**

*Mbps, fast on cable*

**52**

**CABLE GIG1 UPLOAD**

*Mbps, the weak spot*

**2028**

**VIRGIN GOES FULL FIBRE**

*Cable being replaced*

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## SECTION 01 · THE TWO TECHNOLOGIES

# Two ways to reach your home

## IN SHORT

Both bring fibre most of the way, then differ at the final stretch. **Virgin's cable runs fibre to a street box, then coaxial copper into your home**, using a technology called DOCSIS. **Full fibre runs fibre all the way**, with no copper at all. That last stretch is what sets them apart.

## How each one works

	VIRGIN CABLE	FULL FIBRE (FTTP)
<b>Final run</b>	Coaxial copper	Fibre, all the way
<b>Technology</b>	DOCSIS 3.1 (HFC)	Full fibre (PON)
<b>Top download</b>	Up to ~1.1Gbps	Up to 1.8Gbps, or 2Gbps
<b>Upload</b>	Low, asymmetric	High, often symmetric
<b>Where</b>	Cable towns and cities	Increasingly everywhere

*Virgin's cable network reaches a little over half of UK homes, mostly in towns and cities. Full fibre now reaches 82% of homes and is still climbing, from Openreach and a host of newer networks.*

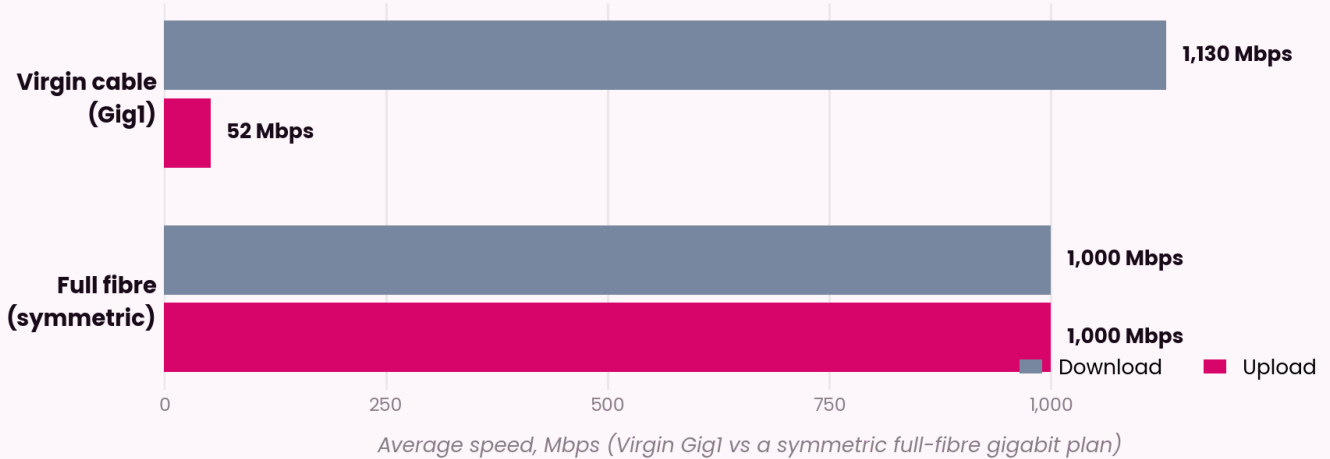
## THE PLOT TWIST

Virgin is itself becoming a full fibre provider. Its newest 2Gbps tier already runs on full fibre, not cable, and it is converting its whole network to full fibre over the next few years. So in many ways this is a comparison between today's cable and where everything is heading.

## SECTION 02 · SPEED

# The upload gap

On download, the two are close, and cable's fastest tier is even a touch quicker than a typical Openreach gigabit line. The real difference is **upload**, and it is a big one.



Download against upload, Virgin's Gig1 cable plan versus a symmetric full-fibre gigabit plan. Cable gives plenty of download but little upload; full fibre can match the two.

Virgin's cable is built to send data down to you far faster than it sends data back up. Even on the top Gig1 plan, upload is only around 52 Mbps. Full fibre can offer upload that matches the download, which is exactly what video calls, cloud backups, big file sharing and working from home need.

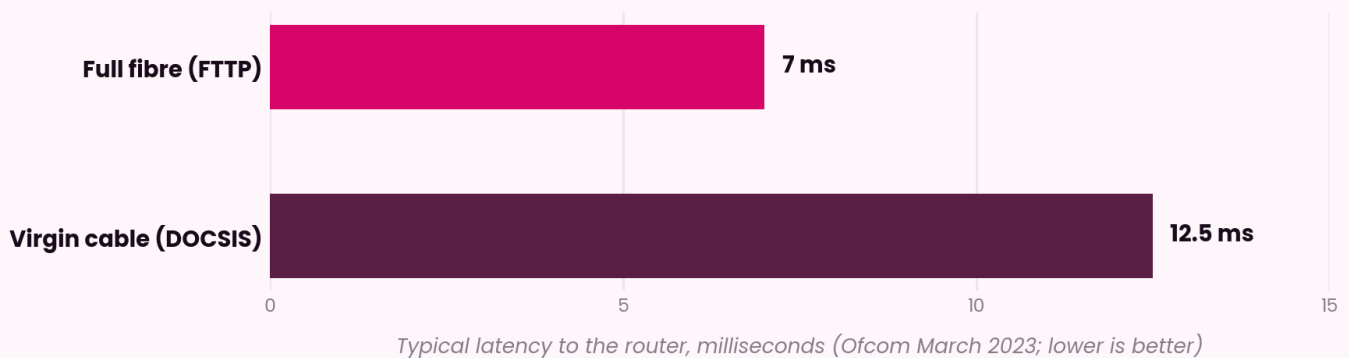
## WHEN THE UPLOAD GAP MATTERS

If you only stream, browse and download, cable's modest upload will rarely trouble you. But if your household does a lot of video calling, uploads large files, games competitively or runs cameras and backups, full fibre's stronger upload makes a real, daily difference.

## SECTION 03 · STEADINESS AND THE FUTURE

## Reliability, and what is next

Beyond speed, full fibre tends to be the steadier connection, and the gap shows most in latency, the small delay that matters for calls and gaming.



Typical latency to the router, Ofcom March 2023 data (the most recent published; that report has since been paused). Full fibre is a little lower and tends to hold steadier.

- ✓ **Reliability.** Fibre is immune to the electrical interference and corrosion that can affect copper and coaxial lines, so faults tend to be rarer.
- ✓ **Peak times.** Both share capacity locally, but full fibre generally has more headroom, so it is less prone to slowing in the busy evening hours.
- ✓ **The direction of travel.** Cable's DOCSIS technology is being retired. Rather than upgrade the coaxial network again, Virgin is converting it to full fibre, aiming to finish by 2028.

In other words, the two technologies are converging. Virgin's future, like everyone else's, is full fibre, so choosing full fibre today is choosing where the whole market is going.

## SECTION 04 · THE VERDICT

# So which should you pick?

There is no single winner, because it depends on what your home does and what is available at your address. Here is the honest split.

CHOOSE CABLE WHEN	CHOOSE FULL FIBRE WHEN
You want the cheapest fast download in a cable area	You need strong or symmetric upload
Cable is widely available where you live	You want the most consistent connection
High upload is not a priority	You want more providers and easy switching

**IN A SENTENCE**

For the cheapest fast download in a cable town, Virgin is hard to beat today. For upload, consistency, choice and future-proofing, full fibre wins, and it is where Virgin itself is heading.

**• SEE WHAT REACHES YOU**

## Compare cable and full fibre at your address.

The right answer depends on your postcode. See which networks and deals reach your home, side by side.

[Compare live deals at your postcode →](#)

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## SECTION · REFERENCES

# References and sources



Written by **Dr Alex J. Martin-Smith** (CMgr, MBA, LL.M, DBA), Lead Editor. Reviewed by **Adrian James**.  
Published 8 June 2026, next review within 90 days. Every figure is sourced below and logged in our public corrections process.

Every figure in this guide is backed by a publicly verifiable source, listed in APA 7th edition format. Speeds are providers' published average figures; the network upgrade plans are the operators' own stated targets.

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**REMEMBER**

Cable and full fibre are close on download but far apart on upload, and full fibre is where the whole market, Virgin included, is heading. Check what reaches your address at [broadbandswitch.uk/compare](https://broadbandswitch.uk/compare).

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