

VPN TEST 2024

VPN Testing and Certification by AV-TEST

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Norton VPN Ultimate



Executive Summary

AV-TEST carried out a comprehensive independent evaluation of Norton VPN Ultimate, version 24.11.9615 for Windows and version 4.5.0.241121145 for Android, in November 2024. The purpose of this assessment was to examine the effectiveness of Norton VPN Ultimate in delivering secure and reliable internet connectivity.

The evaluation was conducted against the backdrop of growing cyber privacy threats and a heightened need for dependable online protection. A series of tests measured various aspects of performance, including connection stability, speed, and encryption strength, as well as the VPN's ability to protect user anonymity during typical real-world usage scenarios. The findings indicate that Norton VPN Ultimate offers a balanced combination of security, privacy features, and sufficient speed for day-to-day online activities such as streaming, torrenting, and general web browsing.

The tests confirmed that Norton VPN Ultimate maintains connection stability with minimal interruptions across Asia, Europe, and the United States. Despite the natural decrease in speed that is typical when routing traffic through an encrypted tunnel, the VPN still managed to deliver download and upload rates suitable for most users, particularly in local connections. Latency increased during overseas connections, yet the effect real-time applications was within acceptable bounds. The use of robust encryption methods in protocols like WireGuard and long-time established protocols like OpenVPN, combined with an additional proprietary protocol referred to as Mimic, ensures that user data remains protected. Norton VPN Ultimate's statement on no-log policy further strengthens its commitment to privacy, and internal tests showed no DNS or IP address leaks.

The service offers essential usability features, including automatic reconnection, support for up to ten devices, and flexible payment methods. A 30-day trial and a 60-day money-back guarantee allow new users to explore the service risk-free. Additionally, the presence of a kill switch function on both Windows and Android ensures that user data is not inadvertently exposed if the VPN connection drops unexpectedly. Although the number of server locations (29 countries) is relatively modest, it still covers several major regions, and testing confirmed that Norton VPN Ultimate could access certain streaming services in the US, albeit with limited support for Netflix in non-US regions.

Meeting all certification criteria, Norton VPN Ultimate has got "Approved" certification badge into the record of previous years certifications:





Virtual Private Networks (VPNs)

Virtual Private Networks, known widely as VPNs, are crucial for enhancing online security and ensuring the privacy of internet users. They establish a protected, encrypted channel for data to traverse the internet, which is a necessity for keeping sensitive information out of the hands of intruders and for concealing users' identities. VPNs act as a shield for secure communication, essential for both personal and corporate use, to prevent unauthorized access to private networks and to keep data confidential.

The primary function of VPNs is to secure data through encryption, making it difficult for cybercriminals to capture and decrypt information in transit. They hide users' IP addresses, which adds a layer of anonymity and shields personal details including user's geo-location. VPNs are also valuable for bypassing regional restrictions on content, which can be advantageous for personal enjoyment and professional tasks. In business scenarios, they enable secure remote network access, allowing employees to work from anywhere without compromising security.

Norton VPN Ultimate

Norton VPN Ultimate, developed by Gen Digital Inc., serves as a comprehensive solution for individuals looking to secure their digital footprint while benefiting from high-speed connections. The product's commitment to a strict no-log policy is a central pillar of its privacy strategy. By refraining from storing or recording any user activities, Norton underscores its dedication to safeguarding personal information. The VPN also supports several protocols, such as WireGuard, OpenVPN, and Mimic on Windows, and WireGuard, IPSec, OpenVPN, and Mimic on Android, enabling users to balance speed with more stringent encryption when needed.

In addition to multi-protocol support, Norton VPN Ultimate offers a selection of subscription plans tailored to various global markets. Payment methods range from credit cards and PayPal to region-specific services like Google Pay, though some options such as bank transfers or cryptocurrency are not currently available. With the ability to cover up to ten devices on a single license, the product is positioned to accommodate households or small teams seeking consistent protection across multiple operating systems and device types.

An important security feature is the kill switch, which prevents data leaks by halting internet traffic in the event of an unexpected VPN disconnection. This mechanism was tested on both Windows and Android and performed reliably, maintaining a zero-second gap that reduces the risk of exposing real IP addresses. While Norton VPN Ultimate does not publicly release a warrant canary or detailed transparency reports, it does provide an extensive set of privacy statements and data processing notices, thereby offering users insight into how data is collected, used, and retained for limited periods of up to 36 months.

Introduction

The primary aim of this report is to examine Norton VPN Ultimate's protective capabilities in practical online scenarios and to determine the extent to which the service fulfils its stated promises of privacy and security. Test environments included Windows 11 and Android 12 systems in multiple geographical regions. These tests accounted for typical user behaviours such as streaming high-definition content, performing large file transfers, and visiting websites that require heightened privacy measures.

Norton VPN Ultimate's support for multiple protocols and device compatibility is meant to offer a convenient user experience, but it is equally important to evaluate whether this convenience is matched by robust encryption, adequate performance, and reliable leak prevention. As global internet usage grows and the number of cyber threats continues to rise, it remains critical for VPN services to maintain consistent protection standards while also delivering acceptable performance levels.

Coverage Assessment

During testing, Norton VPN Ultimate was subjected to a variety of network conditions, including local connections (where the user and VPN servers reside in the same region) and overseas connections (cross-continental links such as Asia–Europe and Asia–US). The tests focused on observing whether connection drops occurred, how quickly the VPN could reconnect, and the extent to which encryption overhead affected data throughput. Throughout local usage, speeds remained sufficiently high to support everyday browsing, streaming in HD, and moderate uploading tasks without significant buffering or delays.

Overseas connections showed a predictable rise in latency, but most real-time activities, such as video conferencing or high-quality streaming, still remained feasible. The difference in performance was largely tied to physical distance and the inherent complexities of routing encrypted data across different continents. Nonetheless, the service showed resilience in maintaining connections, with minimal packet loss or noticeable performance degradations during sustained use.

Quality of Protection Assessment

The security and privacy aspects of Norton VPN Ultimate were evaluated using WireGuard protocol tests. The WireGuard implementation was scrutinized for its ability to mask user traffic. Tests for DNS leaks, IP address leaks, and WebRTC leaks were performed to determine whether user identity could be compromised. In every scenario, the VPN successfully concealed the test system's IP address, with DNS queries also routed through secure tunnels.

The kill switch feature was tested by artificially interrupting network connections and verifying that the user's real IP address did not appear online. Norton VPN Ultimate passed these tests reliably, cutting off traffic instantly and preventing data exposure. The service also supports peer-to-peer activities, and tests confirmed that torrenting tasks did not reveal the user's actual location or ISP. While the product does not include advanced features like Double VPN, it delivers a core set of functionalities that collectively provide a robust baseline of protection.

Test Results of Norton VPN Ultimate

Review of Key Features

The feature set of Norton VPN Ultimate includes automatic reconnection, which was verified by restarting the system and observing that the VPN promptly restored the secure tunnel upon boot. The license model permits up to ten devices, offering a feasible option for small offices or households with multiple PCs and mobile devices. Norton VPN Ultimate's user interface is straightforward, presenting clear status indicators and accessible controls for selecting server locations or configuring split-tunneling.

Although Norton VPN Ultimate's network covers only 29 countries, the tests showed that these server locations are adequately distributed, giving users opportunities to bypass most common geo-restrictions. Streaming tests confirmed the ability to watch content from certain US-based platforms, though Netflix access appeared limited outside the US region. The absence of additional features like advertisement blocking or tracker blocking means that Norton VPN Ultimate focuses more on encryption and user anonymity rather than ad filtering.

Usability

Norton VPN Ultimate emphasizes simplicity, offering a clean interface that requires minimal user intervention. The kill switch operates silently in the background, and the program attempts to reconnect automatically after network interruptions. The 30-day trial and 60-day money-back guarantee reduce the barrier for users interested in testing the service. Split-tunneling on both Windows and Android grants flexibility to route select apps or websites outside the VPN tunnel, which is useful for reducing latency on non-critical services or preserving bandwidth for specific activities.

Security

Security tests included DNS leak detection, IP address leak checks, and kill switch verifications. The product displayed robust security under all tested conditions, ensuring that the local IP address did not surface during WebRTC queries or torrenting. Even when faced with abrupt network changes, the kill switch prevented accidental data exposure by freezing traffic instantly. Norton's no-log policy, which states that the provider does not track, store, or analyze user browsing activity, aligns with industry best practices for privacy protection.

Privacy

Norton VPN Ultimate's stated privacy policy clarifies that personal data is retained only for billing, network diagnostics, and service improvements, and that no record is made of the user's browsing habits. The data that is collected is stored for a maximum of 36 months, with claims that it is safeguarded using recognized security standards. The product's protocols—WireGuard, OpenVPN, Mimic, and IPSec on Android—provide robust encryption, although specific cipher details were not exhaustively documented in the test references.

Transparency

While Norton VPN Ultimate does not issue regular transparency reports or maintain a warrant canary, it does publish privacy notices and terms of service documents on its official website. These documents detail data processing practices, corporate structure, and points of contact for data protection offices, especially relevant in GDPR jurisdictions. Users interested in more extensive technical or legal insights may find these statements helpful.

Service Accessibility

Support is accessible through multiple channels, including chat, forums, and direct contact options, enabling users to resolve configuration or connectivity questions. The VPN's server network spans Asia, Europe, and the Americas, ensuring that the majority of global users can find a relatively nearby server location. Although the total count of 29 countries is smaller than some competitors' offerings, the distribution proved sufficient for everyday scenarios like bypassing regional restrictions or connecting to US-based streaming platforms.

Review of Key Performances

This analysis evaluates Norton VPN Ultimate's performance factors that affect how well it works for users. We tested file transfer speeds and connection delays, comparing these to baseline measurements.

Our baseline speed tests show what's possible with the test setup, not typical home internet speeds. We used fast network connections and good hardware to make sure we could see the VPN's true speed limits. If your internet is slower than our test setup, it won't change how the VPN performs unless your speed drops below what the VPN can handle.

Norton VPN Ultimate was tested in real-world conditions for file transfers. Testing showed how the VPN performed compared to non-VPN connections on high-speed networks. For local connections (where VPN servers were in the same region), download speeds dropped to 5% of the baseline (650 Mbps vs 12,037 Mbps reference), while upload speeds fell to 18% (1,535 Mbps vs 8,587 Mbps reference). Connection delay increased by 157% (3.47ms vs 1.35ms reference).

For overseas connections (connecting across continents), performance decreased more significantly. Download speeds dropped to 4% of the baseline (444 Mbps vs 12,037 Mbps reference), and upload speeds fell to 3% (270 Mbps vs 8,587 Mbps reference). Connection delay increased by 140 times (189.91ms vs 1.35ms reference). Despite these reductions, the connection remained fast enough for streaming and torrenting, though with some wait times. Video calls were still possible but with a noticeable delay.

Local Performances

Local connections were more forgiving in terms of both speed and latency, and users primarily seeking to hide their IP or maintain privacy while conducting regular online tasks in the same region should encounter minimal slowdowns. Video streaming in high definition, file downloading, and casual gaming were all supported adequately, indicating that Norton VPN Ultimate can serve as a reliable daily privacy tool.

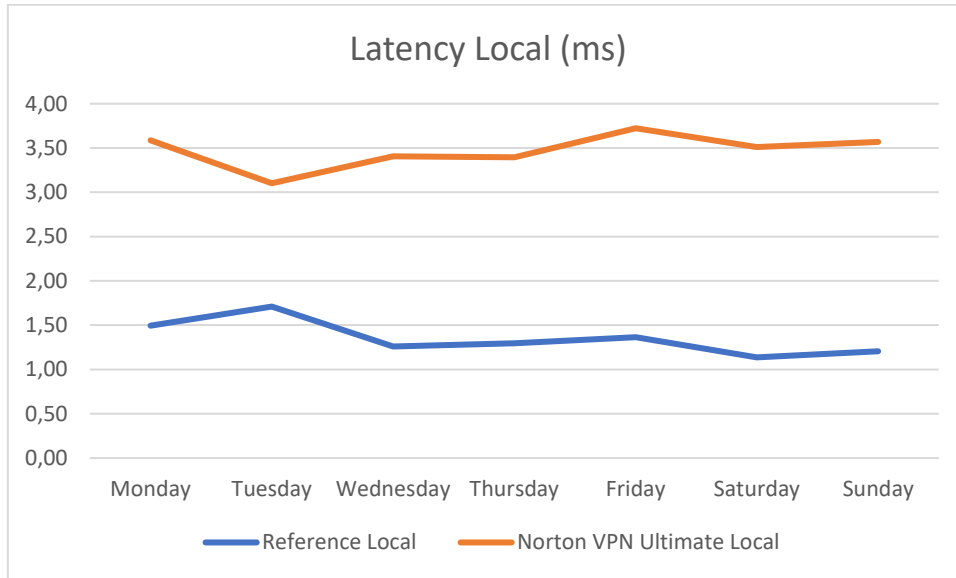


Figure 1: Local Latency - Norton VPN Ultimate vs. Reference. Presents an analysis of latency performance in a local geographical context, comparing Norton VPN Ultimate with the reference measures.

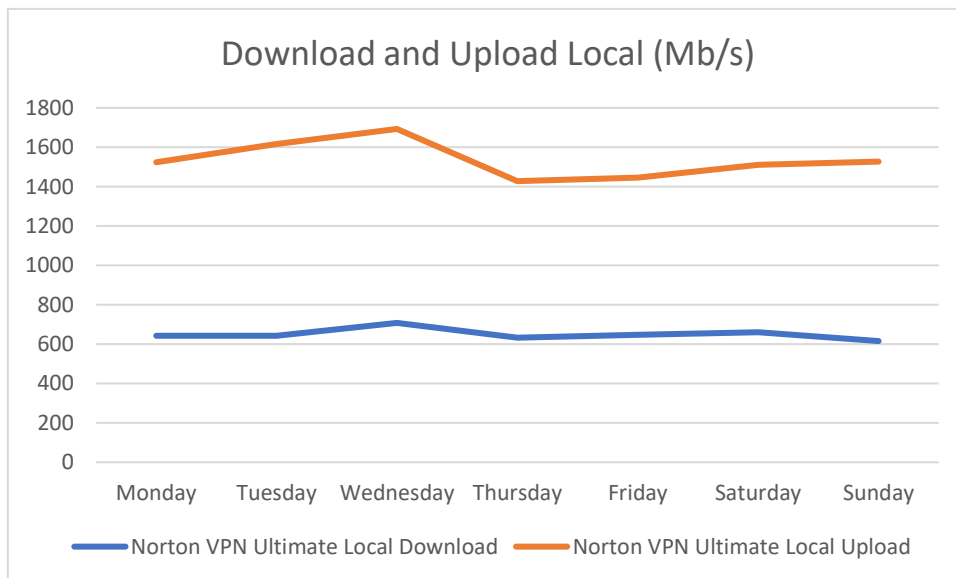


Figure 2: Local Upload and Download Speeds - Showcases the upload and download speeds achieved with Norton VPN Ultimate in a local geographical context.

Overseas Performances

Norton VPN Ultimate performance overseas shows commendable results in streaming and torrenting when compared to the unencrypted reference and even when compared to the local VPN connection. Streaming, as evidenced by dropped frames, was slightly better in Asia, while the EU and US saw some minor decrease, not enough to significantly affect the user experience. Torrent download speeds are close to the reference in the EU and the US, indicating marginal differences, while Asia experienced a more noticeable decrease. However, latency across all regions was nearly identical to the unencrypted reference, highlighting the VPN's adeptness at maintaining speed with minimal delay during data transmission.

While crossing continents always introduces greater latency, Norton VPN Ultimate handled long-distance connections with reasonable stability. The throughput reductions did not prevent typical usage, although users might notice slower file transfers and somewhat increased buffering times. In these tests, kill switch protection remained active and did not inadvertently disconnect users once the VPN tunnel stabilized, suggesting that the service is equipped to maintain secure overseas links for extended durations.

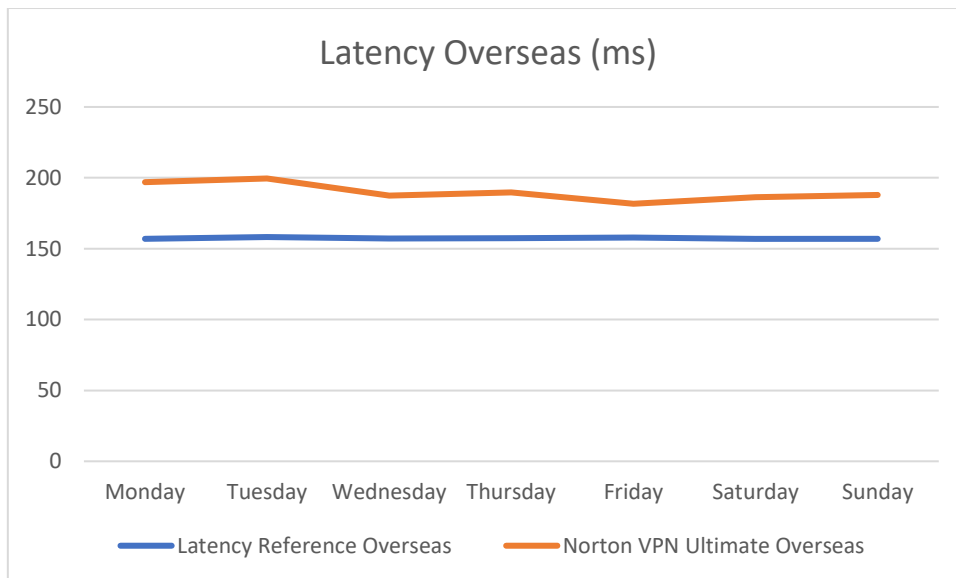


Figure 3: Overseas Latency - Norton VPN Ultimate vs. Reference. Analyzes latency performance in overseas geographical contexts, comparing Norton VPN Ultimate with the reference measures.

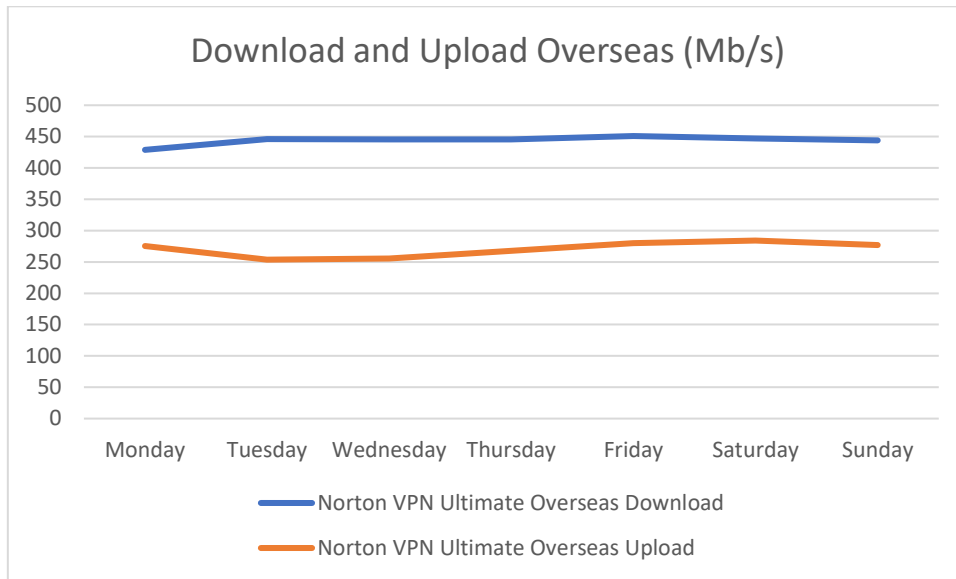


Figure 4: Overseas Upload and Download Speeds - Showcases the upload and download speeds achieved with Norton VPN Ultimate in an overseas geographical context.

Overall

Norton VPN Ultimate performed at a level that is consistent with other leading VPN providers in terms of stability, security, and speed. It offers a no-logging approach, multiple protocol support, and a well-functioning kill switch across Windows and Android platforms. Although its network of 29 countries is modest, it still addresses the main needs of users seeking to circumvent basic geo-blocks and protect their privacy online. Speed reductions, while inevitable, did not substantially degrade the user experience, especially for routine activities like streaming and browsing.

Test Results Summary

Throughout the testing process, Norton VPN Ultimate proved to be a dependable solution for protecting user anonymity and securing digital communications. Its kill switch was highly responsive, preventing accidental leaks of real IP addresses in the event of sudden disconnections. DNS leak tests confirmed that the service properly routed queries through its encrypted tunnels, and torrenting tests indicated that the VPN effectively masked the user's location.

From a privacy standpoint, Norton VPN Ultimate's strict no-log policy aligns with user expectations for anonymity, and the data collection that does occur is limited to billing and diagnostic purposes, with no explicit logging of browsing content. In terms of performance, Norton VPN Ultimate did experience notable reductions compared to the non-VPN reference, but these were within the range typically observed for encrypted tunnels. Local usage remained particularly strong, while overseas connections introduced increased latency and slower transfer rates, yet still allowed for streaming and moderate file sharing without major disruptions.

In conclusion, Norton VPN Ultimate has demonstrated that it can satisfy a wide array of use cases, from streaming high-definition video content and sharing files via peer-to-peer protocols to ensuring secure remote access for business purposes. Its comprehensive feature set, which includes support for multiple protocols and a seamless kill switch, coupled with a user-friendly interface, positions Norton VPN Ultimate as a reliable option for individuals and small teams seeking privacy and security. Although it does not publish detailed transparency reports or advanced security audits, the service's strong performance in leak tests, along with its consistent connection quality and stable speeds, attests to its efficacy in delivering the essential functionalities that users expect from a modern VPN service.

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