

Ofcom News Consumption Technical Report for Adults Online (only) approach

A. Preface

Ofcom is the regulator for the UK communications industries, with responsibilities across television, radio, video-on-demand, telecommunications, wireless and postal communications. Ofcom regularly carries out research into these markets to stay informed on new technology developments and the impact that they might have on the sectors they regulate.

As part of their regulatory duties Ofcom monitors consumption and attitudes towards news across television, radio, print and online.

Ofcom's adult News Consumption survey has been conducted on a yearly basis, since 2013, using a face to face omnibus methodology.

Under the new Royal Charter and Agreement, regulation of the BBC has now passed from the BBC Trust to Ofcom. One of Ofcom's central responsibilities will be to hold the BBC to account for its performance in fulfilling its Mission and promoting its Public Purposes. For this assessment to be meaningful, Ofcom need it to be based in a clear understanding of a range of factors, including audiences' own views on the BBC's performance.

Because of this additional responsibility, in 2017 Ofcom sought to commission a bespoke quantitative survey that could incorporate the adult News Consumption survey and provide additional questioning that would fulfil Ofcom's regulatory requirements of the BBC.

From December 2017 until March 2020, Jigsaw Research conducted a mixed methodology approach, combining online and face to face interviews. However, during the most recent period of research, they were unable to conduct face to face interviews, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Since online methodologies tend to underrepresent low/non internet users, Jigsaw conducted separate CATI interviews to ensure that these groups had the opportunity to express their views. This additional CATI survey achieved 1,278 interviews, with the nations over-represented during fieldwork. This data has been weighted to correct for this over-representation, with weights being applied by age, gender and socio-economic group (SEG) within nation, to provide a representative view of all UK adults. The online and CATI data has been combined to provide a snapshot of opinion across both methodologies. Due to differences in questionnaire and modal affects around channel take-up, the combined dataset looks at platform level data only.

To ensure that any trend data within this publication is comparable, we have also decided to publish the online data separately from the CATI data (*NB: channel usage amongst CATI participants was not consistent with that of CAPI participants, due, in part, to a greater usage of smartphones*). The 3,327 online interviews have been weighted by age, gender, nation/region, working status and ethnicity to ensure they are representative of 'recent' internet users, as found in the ONS Internet Users research (published on 6th April, 2020).

The CATI and online interviews were conducted over two waves of research, from 2nd November – 10th December, 2020 and 27th February – 29th March, 2021. These interviewing periods have remained consistent over the last four years to ensure comparability.

Details of the online sample design and weighting procedures are outlined in the following pages, as well as a note on statistical reliability. A separate technical report is available for the combined online and CATI data.

B. Sample Design

Online Interviewing

Jigsaw Research adopted a quota sample approach to their online interviewing to ensure that the sample was representative of ‘recent’ internet users. The sample frame was developed at a UK level covering the following key subgroups:

- Age (16-24/25-34/35-44/45-54/55-64/65-74/75+)
- Gender
- Nation/Region
- Working status (Employed/unemployed)
- Ethnicity (White, Mixed/multiple ethnic background, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Other Asian background, Black/African/Caribbean/Black British, Any other ethnic group)

C. Weighting

The online data has been weighted by nation/region, gender, age, working status and ethnicity to be representative of ‘recent’ internet users, as found in the ONS Internet Users research (published on 6th April, 2020).

The initial unweighted sample and the weighted sample profiles are illustrated below:

Weighting Category	Sub-group	Unweighted	Weighted
Nation	North East	4%	4%
	North West	10%	11%
	Yorkshire & the Humber	7%	8%
	East Midlands	7%	7%
	West Midlands	8%	9%
	East of England	7%	9%
	London	14%	14%
	South East	12%	14%
	South West	7%	9%
	Scotland	9%	8%
	Wales	8%	5%
	Northern Ireland	8%	3%
Gender	Male	48%	50%
	Female	52%	50%

Weighting Category	Sub-group	Unweighted	Weighted
Age	16-24	20%	14%
	25-34	16%	18%
	35-44	17%	17%
	45-54	16%	18%
	55-64	13%	16%
	65-74	11%	11%
	75+	8%	6%
Working Status	Employed	54%	66%
	Unemployed	46%	34%
Ethnicity	White	83%	88%
	Mixed/multiple ethnic background	2%	1%
	Indian	6%	2%
	Pakistani	1%	2%
	Bangladeshi	1%	1%
	Chinese	3%	1%
	Other Asian background	1%	1%
	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	3%	3%
	Other ethnic group	1%	2%

D. Statistical reliability and significance

D.1. Effective sample size

This section details the variation between the sample results and the “true” values, or the findings that would have been obtained with a census approach. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is chosen to be 95%: that is, the chances are 95 in 100 that the “true” values will fall within a specified range. However, as the sample is weighted, we need to use the effective sample size (ESS) rather than actual sample size to judge the accuracy of results.

The following table compares ESS and actual samples for some of the main analysis groups from the online data:

Weighting Category	Sub-group	Actual interviews achieved	Effective sample size (ESS)
Nation	North East	125	113
	North West	317	283
	Yorkshire & the Humber	231	200
	East Midlands	223	189
	West Midlands	268	231
	East of England	247	225
	London	481	369
	South East	398	348
	South West	232	207
	Scotland	303	269
	Wales	252	225
	Northern Ireland	250	228
Gender	Male	1,602	1,314
	Female	1,723	1,403
Age	16-24	656	465
	25-34	516	422
	35-44	572	488
	45-54	529	466
	55-64	434	380
	65-74	353	316
	75+	267	243

Weighting Category	Sub-group	Actual interviews achieved	Effective sample size (ESS)
Working Status	Employed	1,805	1,575
	Unemployed	1,522	1,271
Ethnicity	White	2,762	2,404
	Mixed/multiple ethnic background	59	54
	Indian	192	168
	Pakistani	45	42
	Bangladeshi	17	16
	Chinese	101	86
	Other Asian background	31	28
	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	90	83
	Other ethnic group	17	16

D.2. Confidence interval

The table below illustrates the required ranges for different sample sizes and percentage results at the “95% confidence interval”:

Effective sample size	10% or 90% ±	20% or 80% ±	30% or 70% ±	40% or 60% ±	50% ±
2,716 (Total)	1.13%	1.50%	1.72%	1.84%	1.88%
1,314 (Male)	1.62%	2.16%	2.48%	2.65%	2.70%
862 (C1)	2.00%	2.67%	3.06%	3.27%	3.34%
422 (25-34)	2.86%	3.82%	4.37%	4.67%	4.77%
228 (NI)	3.89%	5.19%	5.95%	6.36%	6.49%

For example, if 30% or 70% of a sample of 3,411 gives a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that the “true” value will fall within the range of +/- 1.72 percentage points from the sample results.

D.3. Significant differences

When results are compared between separate groups within a sample, different results may be obtained. The difference may be “real”, or it may occur by chance (because not everyone has been interviewed). To test if the difference is a real one – i.e. if it is “statistically significant” – we again have to know the size of the samples, the percentages giving a certain answer and the degree of confidence chosen. If we assume “95% confidence interval”, the difference between two sample results must be greater than the values given in the table below to be significant:

Sample sizes being compared	10% or 90% ±	20% or 80% ±	30% or 70% ±	40% or 60% ±	50% ±
1,314 vs 1,403 Male vs Female	2.26%	3.01%	3.45%	3.69%	3.76%
862 vs 512 C1 vs C2	3.28%	4.37%	5.01%	5.36%	5.47%

For example, comparing a score of 11% for Males and 14% for Females, the scores will need to be at least 2.26% different (using the table) to indicate a significant difference.