Ofcom News Consumption Technical Report 2019

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 News Consumption survey has been conducted on a yearly basis, since 2013, using a face to face omnibus methodology. In 2017/18 we changed the methodology to a standalone survey using a mix of face-to face CAPI and online interviews. This allowed us to increase questionnaire length and sample size in a cost effective way. This enabled, among other things, more granular sub-group analysis and a more detailed exploration of online news consumption.

Jigsaw Research Limited was commissioned to conduct a mixed methodology approach, combining online interviews and face-to-face interviews. Nations were over-represented during fieldwork to produce robust sample sizes for analysis. Interviews were conducted over two waves of research (November & December and March & April) to achieve a robust and representative view of UK adults.

The data has been weighted to correct for over-representation of nations and weights were applied for age, gender and socio-economic group (SEG) within nation to match known population profiles. A final weight step was taken to calibrate between the face to face and online methodologies.

Details of the sample design, research methodologies and weighting procedures are outlined in the following pages. A note on statistical reliability is also included.

B. Sample Design

B.1. Face to Face Interviewing

Jigsaw Research adopted a random location interviewing (RLI) approach to ensure that the sample was representative of UK adults. Sample frames were developed separately for each of the four nations (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland) covering the following key subgroups - age (16-24/25-34/35-44/45-54/55-64/65-74/75+), gender and socio-economic group (AB/C1/C2/DE).

B.1.1. Random Location Interviewing

The random location interviews (RLI) were conducted using a stratified sample, to ensure an adequate representation of all groups of interest. UK Geographics generated the sampling points as follows:

- Based on the 2011 Census Output Areas, the smallest level at which the Census data is collected, containing approximately 125 addresses in England, Wales and NI and approximately 50 addresses in Scotland.
- Prior to selection, the OAs were sorted by BBC TV region and within nation/region by the UK Geographics urbanity indicator
- Sample was allocated proportionately across the 11 English BBC TV regions, based on the population aged 16+. Sample for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales would be structured to ensure at least 350 interviews per TV area

The frame of sampling points had 100% coverage of all residential areas and households. Including the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands.

B.1.2. Quotas

The following quotas were set to represent the population of each sampling point, which meant the overall quotas closely matched the population within each BBC TV region/Nation.

- Age (16-24, 25-44, 45+)
- Gender
- Socio-economic group (AB/C1/C2/DE)

B.2. Online Interviewing

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

- BBC TV region (East, East Midlands, London, North East & Cumbria, North West, South, South East, South West, West, West Midlands, Yorkshire, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales)
- Age (16-24/25-34/35-44/45-54/55-64/65-74/75+)
- Gender
- Socio-economic group (AB/C1/C2/DE)

C. Weighting

At the analysis stage, data from both waves and both methodologies were combined. Two stages of weighting then took place. Stage 1 was used to correct for over-representation of Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish respondents and align demographics to the known UK profile. We then used a methodological weight, during Stage 2, to account for differences between the face to face and online approaches.

C.1. Demographic weights

For stage 1, the data was weighted by nation and within each nation by gender, age and socio-economic group (SEG). Rim weights were applied using targets from the 2011 Census.

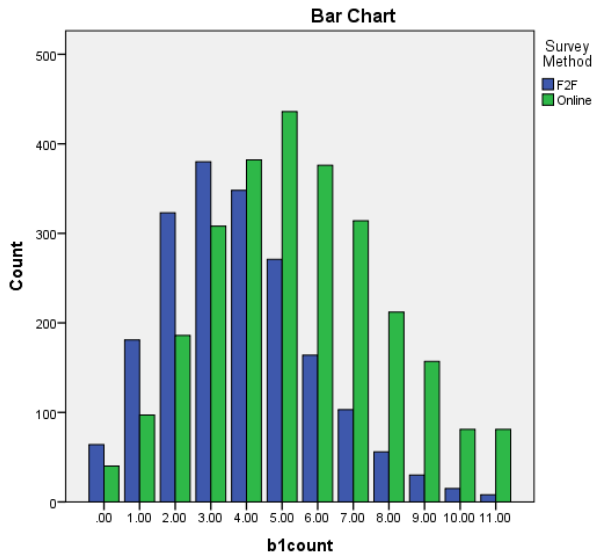
The initial unweighted sample and the weighted sample profiles are illustrated below:

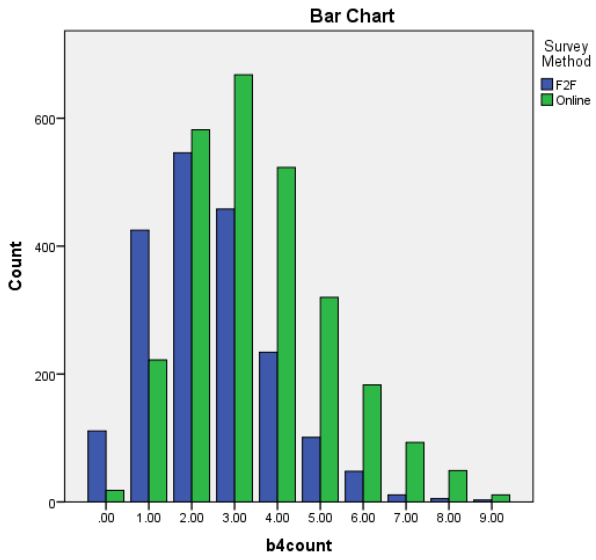
Weighting Category	Sub-group	Unweighted	Weighted
Nation	England	69%	83%
	Scotland	12%	9%
	Wales	10%	5%
	Northern Ireland	9%	3%
Gender	Male	48%	49%
	Female	52%	51%
Age	16-24	14%	15%
	25-34	17%	16%
	35-44	18%	17%
	45-54	17%	17%
	55-64	13%	13%
	65-74	12%	12%
	75+	9%	10%
SEG	AB	24%	22%
	C1	30%	30%
	C2	21%	22%
	DE	25%	26%

C.2. Methodological weight

A second stage of weighting was used to correct for differences between face to face and online methodologies. In the 2018 survey, it was noted that online participants were more likely to have a larger range of interests (from question B1) and a greater number of technology devices in their households (from question B4).

The demographically weighted distribution of these two questions is shown below:





In agreement with Ofcom, a methodological weight was developed and applied to the demographic weights to produce a final weighting scheme. These weights remain consistent for each year of the study.

The final weighted sample profile is illustrated below:

Weighting Category	Sub-group	Demographic weight	Demographic + Methodological weight (Final Weight)
Nation	England	83%	83%
	Scotland	9%	9%
	Wales	5%	5%
	Northern Ireland	3%	3%
Gender	Male	49%	49%
	Female	51%	51%
Age	16-24	15%	15%
	25-34	16%	15%
	35-44	17%	17%
	45-54	17%	18%
	55-64	13%	13%
	65-74	12%	12%
	75+	10%	10%
SEG	AB	22%	24%
	C1	30%	30%
	C2	22%	21%
	DE	26%	26%

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 usually 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:

Category	Sub-group	Actual interviews achieved	Effective sample size (ESS)
Nation	England	3245	2492
	Scotland	551	401
	Wales	475	318
	Northern Ireland	420	326
Gender	Male	2146	1492
	Female	2538	1765
Age	16-24	805	574
	25-34	791	562
	35-44	815	587
	45-54	762	561
	55-64	615	416
	65-74	556	361
	75+	347	229
SEG	AB	1200	842
	C1	1543	1087
	C2	857	592
	DE	1082	774

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% ±
3,245 (Total)	1.03%	1.38%	1.58%	1.69%	1.72%
1,492 (Male)	1.52%	2.03%	2.33%	2.49%	2.54%
1,087 (C1)	1.78%	2.38%	2.72%	2.91%	2.97%
562 (25-34)	2.48%	3.31%	3.79%	4.05%	4.13%
326 (NI)	3.26%	4.34%	4.97%	5.32%	5.43%

For example, if 30% or 70% of a sample of 3,245 gives a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that the "true" value will fall within the range of +/- 1.58 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% ±
1,492 vs 1,765 Male vs Female	2.07%	2.76%	3.16%	3.38%	3.45%
1087 vs 592 C1 vs C2	3.00%	4.00%	4.59%	4.90%	5.01%

For example, comparing a score of 12% for Males and 15% for Females, the scores will need to be at least 2.07% different (using the table) to indicate a significant difference.