Ofcom News Consumption Technical Report for Adults Combined online & CATI 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 combined online and CATI 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 online (only) data.

B. Sample Design

Telephone Interviewing (CATI)

Jigsaw Research adopted a quota sample approach to ensure that the CATI interviews were 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).

Jigsaw partnered with Sample Answers to select/supply the telephone numbers. The sample frame consisted of a 15:1 ratio that was split 50/50 between Sample Answers' Lifestyle and Random Digit Dial (RDD) databases. In total, 58% of interviews were sourced from the Lifestyle database, with 42% sourced from RDD. 56% of respondents took part using a landline, whilst 44% used a mobile phone.

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%

Weighting Category	Sub-group	Unweighted	Weighted
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%

The CATI data has been weighted by nation and within each nation by gender, age and socio-economic group (SEG). Rim weights were applied using targets from Nomis, April 2020 (nation, gender and age) and the 2011 Census (SEG).

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

Weighting Category	Sub-group	Unweighted	Weighted
Nation	England	47%	84%
	Scotland	18%	8%
	Wales	18%	5%
	Northern Ireland	18%	3%
Gender	Male	49%	49%
	Female	51%	51%
Age	16-24	14%	13%
	25-39	21%	25%
	40-54	29%	25%
	55-74	26%	27%
	75+	10%	10%
SEG	AB	21%	22%
	C1	33%	30%
	C2	22%	22%
	DE	24%	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 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 combined online and CATI data:

Weighting Category	Sub-group	Actual interviews achieved	Effective sample size (ESS)
Nation	England	3,123	2,636
	Scotland	529	428
	Wales	478	380
	Northern Ireland	475	385
Gender	Male	2,231	1,655
	Female	2,372	1,757
Age	16-24	839	561
	25-34	668	498
	35-44	831	616
	45-54	750	600
	55-64	582	465
	65-74	537	416
	75+	398	305
SEG	AB	1,087	811
	C1	1,471	1,082
	C2	887	661
	DE	1,129	849

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% ±
3,411 (Total)	1.01%	1.34%	1.54%	1.64%	1.68%
1,655 (Male)	1.45%	1.93%	2.21%	2.36%	2.41%
1,082 (C1)	1.79%	2.38%	2.73 %	2.92%	2.98%
498 (25-34)	2.63%	3.51%	4.02%	4.30%	4.39%
385 (NI)	3.00%	4.00%	4.58%	4.89%	4.99%

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 +/- 1.54 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% ±
1,655 vs 1,757 Male vs Female	2.01%	2.69%	3.08%	3.29%	3.36%
1,082 vs 661 C1 vs C2	2.90%	3.87%	4.43%	4.74%	4.84%

For example, comparing a score of 11% for Males and 14% for Females, the scores will need to be at least 2.01% different (using the table) to indicate a significant difference.